# GCSE
# **DRAMA**

8261/C: Non-exam assessment – Devising drama
Report on the Examination

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**Centre Administration**

It was noted that the majority of centres appreciated the revised and streamlined Candidate Record Form (CRF), however perhaps a word of explanation is needed as to why it was felt unnecessary for teachers to write a comment when entering the Devised performance mark. The reasoning behind this decision was because, unlike the Devising Log where there are a range of marks within a band, the mark awarded for the performance skill is self-explanatory as there is only one mark per band and the marking band therefore explains the reason for the mark awarded.

An important requirement of the CRF is the authentication of the Devising Log and confirmation of the word count; whilst most centres acknowledged this, some did not and it was clear that the interpretation of the 2500-word upper limit was often treated with considerable flexibility.

Requests for missing Centre Declaration Sheets were an unusual occurrence this year.

Teachers are encouraged to ensure that the different sections of the Devising Log are in the correct order and are identified by either section number or section heading. Moderators reported that there were occasions when they had to take a 'best fit' approach to the identification of the individual sections.

Moderators noted that most centres had wisely encouraged students to respond to the individual bullet points for each section of the Devising Log, with the result that responses were more clearly focused on the specific demands of the specification. Some anxiety was expressed by the addition of an extra bullet point to Section 3. The requirement that students should appraise areas for further development in their future devising work has not always been considered, even though it is clearly stated in the specification; it was hoped that the addition of this bullet point on the CRF would support centres to consider this requirement.

It is worth reminding centres that JCQ regulations do not allow the use of writing frames, sentence starters or question headings however there was evidence that these were being used by some centres in the creation of the Devising Log responses.

The majority of centres provided clear written comments which reflected the relevant descriptors from the mark bands to support the marks awarded for each section of the Devising Log, either on the actual responses or on the CRF. Moderators found these most helpful. Less helpful were the instances of over-ticking work, particularly where almost every other word of a response was obliterated by a large tick; this does not tend to guide the marking but merely shows that something has been read.

**Statement of Dramatic Intention**

Moderators noted a somewhat uneven approach to the completion of the statement of dramatic intention and felt that many students missed the opportunity to express their intentions; the demonstration of their theatrical skill and relevance of their own specialism was not shown clearly, with little awareness of audience. The statement of dramatic intention must be completed as a written response and may only be delivered orally if permission is granted by AQA. The statement of dramatic intention provides a context for the teacher and moderator when awarding a mark for 'success in realising individual artistic intention'. 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 to determine what it is they

want to demonstrate, with regard to both their deployment of theatrical skill and intention for their audience. The statement of dramatic intentions should be approximately 150 words, to encourage focused statements rather than overlong examples which often simply retell the plot of the piece. Designers may also attach additional material such as cue sheets, photographs and ground plans to the statement of dramatic intentions; these are not included in the word count for the Devising Log.

**Group sizes**

Some centres ignored the group size requirements outlined in the specification. AQA will be sympathetic to those centres that find themselves in difficulty when a new student is introduced into the class or a student leaves or is unwell, but permission must be obtained from drama@aqa.org.uk for any variation which is likely to exceed the number of permitted performers in a group. Likewise, permission must be obtained for a non-examinee performer who stands in for a missing student. 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. Unfortunately, there were groups of six performers with at least 2 designers who worked to the lower time limit and therefore were unable to demonstrate an extensive range of skills. Work exceeding the upper limit would have benefited from some judicious cutting to ensure that the performance conformed to the requirements of the specification. It is worth mentioning that overlong performances very rarely benefitted students.

**Programme notes**

These varied in their efficacy in helping moderators to identify students. The most helpful were those that had a good size photograph of the student, either on their own or with their group and preferably, for performers, in the clothing they wore in the recording. A most helpful example came from a centre where the performers had a clear identifier: 'My name is… my candidate number is… I am playing… my identifying feature is my yellow scarf.' This could be clearly seen by moderators in the recording of the performance.

The presentation and format of the performance notes is vital to the smooth running of the moderation process, in that it ensures that each student and their chosen specialism is clearly identified for the moderator.

The more effective examples conformed completely to the requirements of the specification and were presented as follows:

- clear identification of the performance group
- title of the piece
- a recent colour photograph of the student; performers were photographed in the costume they were wearing in the performance; costume designers were photographed standing next to the performer wearing the costume they had designed, puppet designers were either holding their puppet or were standing next to the performer who manipulated the puppet on stage and set designers tended to be photographed standing in or by the set they had designed
- student's name and candidate number
- student's chosen specialism.

The obligation to encrypt all video media devices before sending them to AQA was introduced this year, in line with recommended standards for data protection. This did cause some problems, particularly when passwords were entered incorrectly; the most common fault being the confusion between lower case L and upper-case i. Centres should use the password that AQA have provided however if centres must use their own password then they <u>must</u> inform AQA in order that the password is passed on to the moderator.

**Advice for recording the final devised performance**

- Prior to recording devised performances, it is recommended that centres test the equipment first and also run a sound and lighting check.
- Check the duration of the performance/s to ensure that minimum and maximum performance times are adhered to. A dress and technical rehearsal is strongly advised to ensure the smooth running of the final performance.
- Students must be identified by name and candidate number at the start of the performance. Please refer to AQA guidance which advises that students should hold a card/piece of paper with their candidate number to ensure clear identification is facilitated; it is also helpful, if students who are wearing drama blacks or masks ensure that there is a clear means of identification during the performance such as a coloured ribbon or a fabric swatch pinned to their clothing.
- Do allow the camera to linger on the set, puppet or costume design students so that it is absolutely clear to the moderator who and what they are moderating.
- Please note that performances must be recorded with a single camera from an audience perspective from start to finish and the recording must be unedited.
- It is helpful when work is clearly labelled on a USB, with the title, group number, or student names.
- All recordings should be split into navigable chapters, again clearly labelled, rather than be on one continuous run.
- Moderators were grateful to those centres that included separate files for individual group performances because this is a much more efficient way to access and identify individual students.
- It may be useful for some groups if the performance space covered by the camera was marked out before recording so that performers do not wander out of shot.
- Try not to let the sound drown out the words being spoken and avoid noisy or overlong scene changes.

**Guidance on devising**

Devising a piece of work for performance is an exciting opportunity for students to draw on the skills they have acquired during their GCSE course, as well as their experiences of live theatre. It is evident from the work seen that many students have been inspired by the work of practitioners either through participation in workshops or research via YouTube videos. It is encouraging to note the productions that have stimulated student creativity during the devising process, particularly with regard to the integration of design skills.

The range of stimuli the students are offered is fundamental for success in this component. The specification is clear that a range must be offered but students are completely free to focus on one stimulus that encourages inventiveness in terms of theme and subject matter. Most centres tended to introduce the stimuli over a series of lessons, which also afforded the students the opportunity to explore group dynamics and make decisions with regard to the skill they wanted to offer for examination. It is essential that designers work closely with the group they are designing for, if the

devised piece is to become a truly collaborative process. It was apparent when centres only gave one lesson to the introduction of the stimuli, or in some instances provided one stimulus to the students, as the devised pieces tended to be rather generic. One student wrote in their Devising log that, 'Sir gave us the title for our play and put us in groups to make it up'.

The most interesting pieces of work seen by moderators were those which allowed students to demonstrate an extensive range of theatrical skills. It was clear when reading Section 2 of the Devising Log that a high standard of work had been achieved because students had been prepared to take risks during an intense period of exploration in the devising process.

It is recommended that students choose a genre or performance style for their devised piece, but this is not a mandatory requirement. Many pieces of work focused on the work of a practitioner, generally Brecht, Stanislavski, Berkoff, Artaud, Kneehigh or Frantic Assembly. The most successful work influenced by a practitioner demonstrated an excellent understanding of their practices and philosophy, and was sustained throughout the piece. Less effective work often reflected confused ideas: 'We used placards because Brecht wanted to teach the audience but we wanted to be real and so we used Stanislavski. We wanted to scare our audience so we used Artaud and screamed and shouted at the audience'. With the latter practitioner, there was too often a sense of self-indulgence.

There were many excellent examples of work that was not linked to a practitioner, where students had used different approaches and theatrical techniques with the sole focus of achieving their own aims as either performers or designers. As previously mentioned, it was clear that many students had been motivated in their choice of style and genre by the live theatre productions they had seen and the workshops they had experienced.

**Strategies for introducing the stimuli**

The most popular strategies were:

- themed packs which included a range of material such as cartoons, poems, newspaper articles etc
- off site visits to places of interest – one teacher had taken students to a sewage plant and another to a local park
- quests which required students to respond to a series of questions. One example was a map of an area local to the school which had 5 locations identified on it. Students had to use various research tools in order to discover what the signifying features of these were. One of the locations was a block of flats and so the students had to find out what had been there before this had been built. Another quest, set each student 3 specific tasks which they had to carry out over a period of 3 days. These tasks ranged from remaining silent in a particular lesson, leading a blindfolded friend from one area of the school to another and finally carrying out one act of kindness either at school or at home; this had to be authenticated from either a carer or teacher
- practical workshops based on a theme, style, theatre maker or design skill were frequently used to encourage students to explore possibilities for devising. The most successful of these ensured that students were able to respond to the demands of Section 1 of the Devising Log by including specific stimuli. One workshop focused on using found objects as puppets; these ranged from a long-striped sock to a kitchen colander. Another workshop focused on lighting and sound to create mood and atmosphere and encouraged students to explore the use of torches, LED candles and different stage lighting states, alongside a range of music and sound effects. A popular way of introducing stimuli was to

- set students the task of bringing something that was special, interesting or evocative to share with the group during a lesson
- documentaries and podcasts provided a wealth of material for this component, for example a documentary about the Grenfell Tower and another about 9/11 were useful stimuli for some students
- the use of play texts as stimuli produced mixed results. A successful example was a piece influenced by Lysistrata. Research carried out by the students found several modern examples of women who had used the same strike strategy as the women in the play in order to achieve a particular aim. Less successful were those pieces that simply mimicked the characters or plot of the play text
- diaries, real and imagined, were used to take students into the lives of others, with the most popular resource being from service personnel and their partners.

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

- conflict/war/gangs/family/bullying/school shootings/terrorism
- urban legends/myths/folk tales/cautionary tales/children's poems and stories
- social history/current events/suffragettes/strikes/refugees/Windrush
- 'Me Too' movement/equality issues/domestic abuse/sexual abuse
- poverty/food banks/period poverty/homelessness/pay day loans
- addiction/gambling/drugs/alcohol/social media
- crime/scooter robbery/heists/murder/knife/shoplifting
- media/internet/photographs/newspaper reports/documentaries/video clips
- the environment/fracking/plastics/landfill/land erosion/extreme weather
- fantasy/alien life/space exploration/settlers in an invented world/zombies/vampire
- mental and physical health/OCD/schizophrenia/autism/paraplegia/eating disorders.

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

- physical theatre/Meta theatre/puppetry
- documentary theatre/verbatim theatre
- naturalism/realism
- comedy/mischief plays/farce/black comedy
- theatre in education
- melodrama/pantomime
- epic Theatre/tragedy.

**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**

As with last year this was the most popular skill offered and it was clear that most students embraced the opportunity to produce highly creative work that enabled them to demonstrate an extensive range of theatrical skills.

The most inventive work was created by students who:

- demonstrated an excellent understanding of working in an ensemble where timing and synchronisation was precise and fully appropriate
- were not afraid to be inventive within a highly stylised piece
- clearly differentiated the characters played both vocally and physically, when multi-roling
- were able to sustain a convincing accent that was not their own
- showed sensitivity and understanding of the needs of the piece and remained focused throughout
- used direct address confidently and, where appropriate, made eye contact with the audience and understood the value of using a pause
- used mime effectively to show action, weight, shape, object, action and reaction
- were audience aware and targeted the piece fittingly
- had sufficient exposure within the piece to allow for development of both the character and the role played
- used the performance space effectively
- made appropriate choices with respect to the use of properties and costumes
- if working with a designer or designers made full use of the designer/s skills.

It cannot be stressed enough that the group size should influence the length of the performance. It is vital that students are given appropriate exposure within the piece in order to achieve their full potential. Less successful work was often the result of groups producing devised performances that were at the lower time limit and inhibited creativity.

It is a pity to note that moderators are still seeing a number of performances with students in school uniform rather than drama blacks or a semblance of some costume to indicate character, because pieces with students in school uniform tend to lack a sense of performance.

To use props or not to use props is also a question that groups need to make. It may add to the humour in a comedy when one actor is drinking from a cup and another is miming, but it is incongruous in a naturalistic piece. Other weaknesses are fussy scene changes, overlong blackouts, noisy backstage activity and underscoring which dominates the action and drowns out the voices of the actors.

The least inventive work featured students who:

- produced work which restricted their demonstration of theatrical skill, either because the piece was rather static, uninspired, too short or poorly staged
- failed to react appropriately to others within the performance space
- used a limited range of theatrical skill in the creation of a character or role
- lacked focus, sensitivity and faded from time to time; often corpsing or making inappropriate eye-contact with the audience
- used poor vocal skills by either failing to project their voice or rushing words so that lines became incoherent to the audience
- 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
- were unable to sustain a characterisation, role or accent and failed to differentiate characters when multi-roling
- were out of sync within an ensemble

- lacked an understanding and awareness of the needs of both the piece and the intended audience
- had insufficient exposure within the piece to allow for development of both the character and the role played
- did not make appropriate choices with respect to the use of properties and costumes
- 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 on-line standardisation 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

The majority of students who opt to demonstrate a design skill do so because they have a genuine enthusiasm for their chosen specialism. It was also evident that there were others who have been influenced by their experience of live theatre. The Devising logs are evidence of where the inspiration has come from, be it small touring TIE groups or big theatrical productions. With reference to the Devising log, moderators noted that some student's focused more on the devising of the piece as a whole rather than justification of the student's own design choices. Collaboration with the group is vital but the focus must be on how the devising process informs the student's chosen skill. Moderators commented on their confusion when they came across such work because the specialism was generally only identified on the statement of dramatic intention.

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

- have the resources to do so
- work cooperatively with one group only in order for their design to be integral to the piece produced and demonstrate one chosen design 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 has proved to be a popular specialism this year and success has been noted for those students who have worked on fairly demanding designs with their group. One design in particular, for a mischief piece, had a moment where a follow spot was used in sync with an actor and a sound effect of footsteps. When the actor paused the spot moved in time with the actor's actions of thinking. When he nodded his head, the spot flicked from side to side and then up and down. This was an excellent example of a designer working with the group to develop and realise an idea.

The most successful lighting designs were achieved by students who:

- tended to work with larger groups on performances lasting between 10 and 20 minutes, in order to have the opportunity to create a more complex design
- ensured, when working with smaller groups, that their design was an important influence on the development of the piece – the example given previously was for a group of 3 and it was the lighting that became in many ways the fourth performer

- were always an active participant in the devising process
- understood how to use their design to create mood and atmosphere, location and time of day
- made effective use of special effects such as shadows, flashes, UV and gobos
- understood that there are other ways of showing a change of scene without resorting to numerous blackouts
- 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:

- had limited knowledge and understanding of lighting design
- were unused to or had limited access to lighting equipment
- produced rather limited designs which featured simple effects of, for example a green wash to show envy and a red wash to show anger; too often these coloured washes were flashed on and off repeatedly during an argument on stage
- produced poor notes, basic rigging plans and cue sheets
- failed to work cooperatively with the group they should have been collaborating with
- relied too heavily on blackouts and basic lighting states
- had little regard for how to work safely.

**Sound designer**

Once again, the most successful designs came from students whose Devising logs revealed a thorough understanding of the technicalities associated with live, recorded and directional sound. One student, as evidenced by her log, was passionate about sourcing the period appropriate sound effects for a piece set in the 1930s. The sounds required included a telephone bell, police siren, grandmother clock and a car being driven away.

The most successful students were able to:

- select appropriate methods to support the action of the performance
- collaborate with a group, which may include other designers, on a devised piece which lasted between 10 and 20 minutes, in order to create work which enhanced the Devised performance and allowed an extensive range of skills to be demonstrated
- use appropriate software to mix sound or download material
- be aware of the intensity of sound and use levels which enhanced rather than detracted from the action on stage
- know where and how to access sound effects
- create, if needed, appropriate live effects
- set up equipment which might include floor mics, head pieces, directional speakers and so forth
- produced 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 work came from students who:

- had a limited knowledge and understanding of how sound might be created and used in performance
- produced a basic intro and outro plot
- simply underscored the action of the piece without any real regard for the action on stage
- worked in isolation so that the sound became something of an add-on to the performance
- missed the opportunity to experiment with mixing and streaming
- relied heavily on sound clips which were snapped on and off
- was unable to use anything other than very basic resources and equipment
- had little understanding of how to work safely.

**Set designer**

Very few students chose this specialism but the majority of those who did were able to produce designs that worked within the constraints of the performance space and piece they were designing for. There was a real sense of group collaboration in the most successful designs, which was evidenced by the way in which the actors made full use of the set. One set design used stage blocks painted in different colours to evoke a video game. Instructions for playing the game were flashed onto the cyclorama wall and as the game became more complex, other boxes were added to create different levels. The boxes also had compartments in them so that actors could appear out of or from behind the largest boxes and props could be taken out of the smaller ones. Please note that properties are not a stand-alone skill in this specification. It is worth checking the specification for information on the requirements for set designers.

The most successful designs came from students who:

- worked collaboratively with the group which may have included other designers
- understood 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
- ensured their design communicates meaning for the audience
- produced detailed plans and sketches which showed the development of the design
- considered colour and texture and the effect of lighting on these
- may have made a model box in order to test their design
- sourced set dressings and properties to establish location and period
- if appropriate, when using a door as part of a set, provided a backing flat to mask the backstage area
- had an excellent understanding of how to work safely.

The least successful designs came from students who:

- thought this might be an easy option and made little effort to produce a creative response to support the group and any other designer working with them
- produced basic designs featuring items which may not have been especially representative of the period or location
- failed to produce detailed sketches and plans for their design
- produced devising logs that often lacked evidence of research and collaboration and the development of their own ideas and those of the group
- lacked an understanding of the needs of the piece, the actors and the audience

- had little understanding of how to work safely.

**Costume designer**

Thankfully the emphasis this year was actually on the costume design rather than hair and make-up. The specification does state that costume designs may include hair and make-up as well as accessories but it is what the actor actually wears which is most important. Students may decide to design more than one costume but they must clearly identify the costume they wish to be marked on in performance. Refer back to the notes on filming the final devised performance for further guidance.

The most successful costume designers:

- understood the need to produce designs which could either be made, adapted or assembled (hiring a costume is not an option)
- worked collaboratively with the group, which may have included other designers
- were aware that the costume had to be something a performer would actually wear and needed to allow the actor to move in it
- understood the effect of lighting on certain colours and fabrics
- used research to inform their choice of style and fabrics, in order to establish the period of the piece
- created mood boards and used sketches and diagrams to explain the development of their ideas
- made effective decisions with regard to fastenings where a costume had to be changed quickly
- made age appropriate decisions with regard to costume choices, in order to support the actor's characterisation and role
- considered the costume as a whole, sourced appropriate footwear and accessories and ensured that the actor's hair and make-up supported the costume design
- had an excellent understanding of how to work safely.

Less successful designers:

- relied on the performers to supply their own clothing and accessories, which in some instances was simply either the school uniform or the performer's PE kit
- worked alone rather than with the group and so had little or no input in the development of the piece as a whole
- undertook little or no research to help with the development of ideas
- tended to produce only brief notes, diagrams and sketches
- lacked an understanding of the effective use of colour, texture and style
- had little understanding of how to work safely.

**Puppet designer**

Very few students opted for this specialism and those that did produced very mixed results. The most effective designs were used throughout the devised piece and it was evident that purposeful collaboration had informed the designs. In order to succeed in this specialism students, need to go beyond the mere 'dolly-wagging' and experiment with shape and size as well as style of puppet.

The most successful designs came from:

- enthusiastic students who had generally been influenced by the work of companies such as Kneehigh Theatre, Little Angel Theatre, Hand to Mouth Theatre and Handspring Puppet Company
- extensive exposure of the puppet in the final performance
- those who dared to experiment and stretch their imaginations – there was a particularly clever kitchen snake made out of tin cans and cutlery and an almost life-sized Eve made out of stocking fabric; both examples were manipulated by actors in role
- focused research and a collaborative response to the development of the piece as a whole
- sketches, plans and diagrams 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
- focused research into the different types of puppet and how this affected the final design
- good practical skills in realising the final design
- working closely with the actor who would be operating the puppet to ensure that the size and weight of it did not hinder the performance
- those with an excellent understanding of how to work safely.

Less successful designs were often the result of:

- a less than cooperative approach to devising and working with others
- some initial enthusiasm and then loss of motivation
- a lack of practical skill in the development and realisation of the design
- little research into the different types of puppets resulting in some inappropriate choices
- poorly executed designs, notes and sketches which give little insight into the final design
- limited exposure of the puppet in the final performance
- little understanding of how to work safely.

**Marking the performance**

Initial feedback from teachers and moderators is most positive about the 'user friendly' marking criteria and there was very little disagreement over the marks that had been awarded. A mark of zero was awarded only if there was really nothing worthy of credit.

**Level of theatrical skill**

This mark relates to the consistency of the student's application of the relevant theatrical skill.

- 1 mark was awarded to students who showed little competency and little consistency in the use of theatrical skill. Examples of this were performers who were not able to either develop or sustain a character, had very little engagement with the piece and lost focus. Some designers failed to make an impact with their design: for example a costume that was a simple addition of a badge on the school uniform, sound which was too loud and lacked significance to the piece, overlong blackouts and the same basic lighting state and a set which may only consist of a school table and chair.
- 2 marks recognised a student's developing competency, such as performers who did not always sustain an accent or were a little slow on cues, or designs, which needed a little more effort in their realisation, in order to make a stronger impact.
- 3 marks were awarded to those students who demonstrated secure and consistent use of theatrical skill but needed a little more finesse in the realisation of their role or design.

- 4 marks were awarded to those students who demonstrated in their performance or design highly developed and sustained use of theatrical skill. These tended to be the actors who really led their audience on a journey and designers who produced work of an outstanding quality.

**Range of theatrical skills demonstrated**

Please refer to the specification for guidance on the range of skills assessed for each specialism.

- 1 mark awarded represented those students who demonstrated a narrow range of skills, for example the performer who mumbled or didn't make eye contact or the designer who produced an insubstantial design.
- 2 marks were achieved by those performers who very often took on a less demanding acting role or failed to sustain an accent or characterisation to a high degree. Designers were generally awarded this mark for efficiency in the demonstration of their skill but lacking detail in aspects of the design.
- 3 marks demonstrated a student's ability to exhibit a high level of theatrical skills in their performance or design.
- 4 marks were achieved by those students who were able to demonstrate an extensive range of skills. An example of this was a performer whose characterisation of an elderly woman was utterly convincing both physically and vocally. Many designers were able to produce outstanding work, particularly in the case of set designers who had realised an exceptionally high level of sophistication in the realisation of their design.

**Contribution to the effectiveness of the piece**

This mark must be awarded for the actual contribution made during the final devised performance by the individual student and not retrospectively for their contribution during the devising process.

- 1 mark was awarded for those who were present as performers but contributed little, and designers who had made little attempt to produce an effective design.
- 2 marks generally went to those who, as performers, supported the group but were followers rather than leaders. Designers who made some meaningful contribution, such as a basic costume, set, lighting, sound or puppet were also able to achieve this mark.
- 3 marks went to those students who made a considerable and effective contribution largely through their support for others and the piece as a performer or designer.
- 4 marks were achieved by those who demonstrated an outstanding contribution to the effectiveness of the piece. These were the students who as performers tended to take control of the leadership of the piece and drove the action along and designers who were able to ensure their design not only supported the piece but also enhanced its effectiveness.

**Inventiveness of individual's work**

Sometimes students failed to gain marks here because perfectly competent work lacked a certain edge or was rather pedestrian.

- 1 mark was awarded for work as described above.
- 2 marks validated work that was able to rise above the merely pedestrian but lacked sustained inventiveness.

- 3 marks were achieved by those students whose work exhibited many inventive qualities or moments during the final devised performance.
- 4 marks were achieved by those students whose work was highly inventive and sustained throughout the performance.

**Success in realising individual artistic intention**

Moderators found that marks for this indicator were not always awarded appropriately because some teachers discounted the statement of dramatic intention and tended to award this mark in line with others already achieved by students. Marks were occasionally awarded even though the statement had not been completed.

- 1 mark, as stated, was awarded for little success in realising individual artistic intention. This often occurred when a student had dried or corpsed and when the design just didn't meet the ambition of the designer.
- 2 marks were given for some success in realising individual artistic intention usually reflected the work of a student, be it a designer or a performer, who started off confidently but could not sustain their artistic intention.
- 3 marks were awarded to students who had produced a secure realisation of their intention, but needed to go a little further to move into Mark Band 4.
- 4 marks were achieved by many students because they had been highly successful in the realisation of their artistic intention. These were the students who had high expectations and aims and were able to set themselves an achievable target to ensure success.

**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 2500 words.

**Formats**

Little has changed since last year with the most popular format for the Devising Log being entirely written and, in the main, divided into 3 distinct sections. Most entirely written logs conformed to the upper limit of 2500 words. Many designers took advantage of the written form accompanied by annotated photographs and/or sketches/drawings and/or cue sheets. Some did exceed the 15 pages. The use of hard-backed notebooks was used by many designers and meant that loose pages were not placed in the wrong order. It is helpful to remind students that it is the content which is being marked and not the adornments and embellishments; it was occasionally difficult to actually get to the heart of some of this material because moderators had, for example, to work their way through opening small packages tied with ribbon which had been glued to the page.

The least effective 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 and were very difficult to mark, with moderators having to take a 'best fit' approach to moderating them.

Written logs accompanied by audio/visual recording/s and entirely audio/visual/audio-visual recording(s) were, on the whole, rather disappointing because most students simply read from prepared notes. It was noted that, in some instances, a teacher or a fellow student were either interviewing the student or asking direct questions. The most expressive and informative delivery

came from students who used a power-point presentation. This was particularly successful for design students who were able to guide the observer through each section of the log using their own notes to prompt themselves.

**The Devising Log sections**

The specification clearly states that the log must be in 3 separate sections but sadly this was not always the case, and resulted in moderators having to work on a 'best fit' basis. Another problem for moderators occurred when centres had mixed elements of criteria for all three sections, for example analysis and evaluation in Section 2, which could not be credited. A smaller number of centres had given incorrect titles to the different sections which caused confusion, such as 'Section 2a/2b', 'Section 4', 'Analysis and collaboration', 'Evaluation of development', 'My Working Notebook' etc. It is also helpful if students are encouraged to note word/timing counts at the end of each section.

**Section 1: Response to a stimulus**

The mark scheme is looking for evidence of 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.

Successful student responses:

- clearly identified the stimuli 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 plot of the piece the group planned to develop; many students also identified the character/role they were going to take in the piece
- offering design skills explained how they saw their design supporting the piece
- explained the research they had personally undertaken and noted their research findings; some students used footnotes to identify their research sources
- explained succinctly why the group had chosen to work in a particular style or genre
- when acknowledging the influence of a particular practitioner did so concisely without giving an overlong biographical description of their work
- identified their own dramatic aims and intentions, going beyond the 'I want to do my best'
- identified the group aims and intentions for the piece as a whole
- left the moderator with a clear idea of what the piece is likely to be, 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 and likely scenarios for their piece
- failed to note their own personal response to the stimuli and focused solely on group ideas
- identified the chosen stimulus and then simply outlined the plot of the piece
- failed to explore the potential of stimuli in any detail they just got straight into outlining the plot of their piece

- either completely ignored or fell into a rather general statement about having done an internet search; many students wrote in very general terms about group research and failed to note their findings
- offered muddled reasons for choice of style, genre or work of practitioner
- tended to include material which would have been better placed in sections 2 or 3
- 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
- left the moderator uncertain about what the theme, setting, style or content of the piece would be
- ignored the other elements required and therefore failed to respond fully to the demands of this section of the log.

## Section 2: Development and collaboration

In this section 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. Many students chose to identify key moments in the devising process when either a particular skill or part of the piece had been developed and refined.

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
- gave very clear details of the techniques and strategies employed to move work forward
- showed that they were able to work cooperatively with others and focused clearly on the devising process
- used their research findings to inform the development of both their own skill and the piece as a whole
- 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, teacher observations, mid-development audience observations.
- summed up how they had as individuals used their refined theatrical skills and idea in the final piece.

Less successful student responses:

- focused on script writing rather than the actual physical exploration necessary in the devising process
- 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
- were rather generalised and focused on the work of group members rather than themselves
- showed very little engagement with the group; 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
- 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
- often completely ignored any reference to feedback

- failed to consider how they as individuals had used their refined skills and ideas in the final piece.

**Section 3: Analysis and evaluation**

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, their 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.

Successful student responses:

- were reflective and critical, supporting the analysis and evaluation with close reference to both the devising process and the final devised performance
- offered insightful 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
- recognised both the benefits they had brought to the group and the overall impact they had as individuals
- appraised areas for further improvement

Less successful student responses:

- were very short and rather general; some students analysed and evaluated the final performance, whilst others analysed and evaluated the process and ignored the final performance
- did not refer to specific theatrical skills but noted, for example, how they had written the script, always turned up to rehearsals, provided props and so forth. One moderator noted that often bickering with peers in group work was documented more thoroughly than the actual performance
- provided little or no exemplification to support very general observations
- 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
- made very little effort to consider areas for further development
- were too often self-limiting because in order to complete this section, they would have to go over the word count of 2,500 words.

**Use of statistics**

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.