
GCSE DRAMA

(8261)

Specification

For teaching from September 2016 onwards
For GCSE exams in 2018 onwards

Version 1.8 June 2026



Contents

1 Introduction	5
1.1 Why choose AQA for GCSE Drama	5
1.2 Support and resources to help you teach	6
2 Specification at a glance	9
2.1 Subject content	9
2.2 Assessments	9
3 Subject content	11
3.1 Understanding drama	11
3.2 Devising drama	15
3.3 Texts in practice	16
3.4 Guidance on theatrical skills	17
4 Scheme of assessment	21
4.1 Aims and learning outcomes	21
4.2 Assessment components	21
4.3 Assessment objectives	37
4.4 Assessment weightings	37
4.5 Assessment criteria	38
5 Non-exam assessment administration	45
5.1 Supervising and authenticating	45
5.2 Avoiding malpractice	45
5.3 Administration for Component 2	46
5.4 Administration for Component 3	47
6 General administration	49
6.1 Entries and codes	49
6.2 Overlaps with other qualifications	49
6.3 Awarding grades and reporting results	49
6.4 Resits and shelf life	50
6.5 Set texts	50
6.6 Previous learning and prerequisites	50
6.7 Access to assessment: diversity and inclusion	50
6.8 Working with AQA for the first time	51
6.9 Private candidates	51

Are you using the latest version of this specification?

- You will always find the most up-to-date version of this specification on our website at aqa.org.uk/8261
- We will write to you if there are significant changes to the specification.

1 Introduction

1.1 Why choose AQA for GCSE Drama

Our specification engages and encourages students to become confident performers and designers with the skills they need for a bright and successful future.

Because performance is paramount

We've built in as much opportunity as possible for students to do what they like best – participate in performance.

All students devise drama.

All students explore texts practically and work on two text-based performances.

Students can choose to develop as a:

- performer
- designer (lighting, sound, set, costume, puppets)
- performer and designer.

Whichever option they choose, students can be sure to gather many invaluable skills, both theatrical and transferable, to expand their horizons.

Aiming for success

Our written exam paper is designed to help all students realise their full potential.

We use a variety of question styles and ask students to combine what they've learned about how drama is performed with their practical experience and imagination.

When setting the paper, quality of marking is at the forefront of our minds. We know how important it is that your students get results that reflect their achievements.

Clear progression to AS and A-level

This specification ensures continuity for students progressing from GCSE Drama to AS and A-level Drama and Theatre.

Students who go on to AS or A-level are already familiar with studying a whole set text for the written paper. They have built solid foundations in reviewing a live theatre production and in interpreting key extracts.

All of these aspects feature in the AS and A-level as well as the GCSE.

Transferable skills

Students learn to collaborate with others, think analytically and evaluate effectively. They gain the confidence to pursue their own ideas, reflect and refine their efforts. Whatever the future holds, students of GCSE Drama emerge with a toolkit of transferable skills, applicable both in further studies and in the workplace.

You can find out about all our Drama qualifications at aqa.org.uk/drama

1.2 Support and resources to help you teach

We've worked with experienced teachers to provide you with a range of resources that will help you confidently plan, teach and prepare for exams.

Teaching resources

Visit aqa.org.uk/8261 to see all our teaching resources. They include:

- schemes of work: ideas to help you plan your course with confidence
- good practice guides: helping you inspire and challenge students to think creatively
- exemplification materials: marked student work supported by examiner commentaries and guidance
- suggested plays: to help you choose appropriate material for practical study. We have developed a broad list of suggested plays that you might like to consider for your students and will keep this updated to ensure it reflects the best of contemporary theatre.

Support service

- Training courses: helping you deliver AQA drama qualifications
- Subject expertise courses: for newly-qualified teachers to experienced teachers looking for fresh inspiration
- Drama advisory service: each school/college is allocated a non-exam assessment (NEA) Adviser. You can contact them for one-to-one advice on any aspect of the NEA and/or support with planning and delivery of course content.
- Subject community: access free resources and services offered by drama organisations and universities
- Support meetings: helping you with course delivery; offering practical teaching strategies and approaches that really work
- Teacher network group: contact colleagues at other schools/colleges to share ideas about resources and teaching strategies for the AQA specification

To find out more about our support service visit aqa.org.uk/drama

Preparing for exams

Visit aqa.org.uk/8261 for everything you need to prepare for our exams, including:

- past papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports
- specimen papers and mark schemes for new courses
- exemplar student answers with examiner commentaries.

Analyse your students' results with Data Insights

We've replaced Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA) with a new platform – Data Insights. It does the same things as ERA – and more. Find out which questions were the most challenging, how the results compare to previous years and where your students need to improve. Data Insights, our free online results analysis tool, will help you see where to focus your teaching. Find out more at aqa.org.uk/data-insights

For information about results, including maintaining standards over time, grade boundaries and our post-results services, visit aqa.org.uk/results

Keep your skills up-to-date with professional development

Time in the classroom is precious, but we understand that as your career develops, the skills and knowledge you need may change. As well as subject-specific training, we offer a range of courses to help boost your skills.

- Feedback sessions to understand how students have performed in this year's exams.
- Virtual communities where you can chat to teachers in your subject area about what's important to you.

This is just the start. Our events calendar is full of different ways for you to learn, understand and be inspired. Find out more at aqa.org.uk/professional-development.

Help and support available

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at aqa.org.uk/8261

If you'd like us to share news and information about this qualification, sign up for emails and updates at aqa.org.uk/keepinformed

Alternatively, you can call or email our subject team direct.

E: drama@aqa.org.uk

T: 01483 556 301

2 Specification at a glance

This qualification is linear. Linear means that students undertake all non-exam assessment (NEA) in the certification year and sit the written exam at the end of the course.

2.1 Subject content

The subject content details the knowledge, understanding and skills that students are expected to develop throughout the course of study.

The subject content for GCSE Drama is divided into three components:

1. [Understanding drama](#) (page 11)
2. [Devising drama](#) (page 15)
3. [Texts in practice](#) (page 16)

Guidance is also provided on the theatrical skills students will need to work on.

In the practical components students may specialise in performing, lighting, sound, set, costume and/or puppets.

2.2 Assessments

Component 1: Understanding drama
What's assessed • Knowledge and understanding of drama and theatre • Study of one set play from a choice of nine • Analysis and evaluation of the work of live theatre makers
How it's assessed • Written exam: 1 hour and 45 minutes • Open book • 80 marks • 40% of GCSE
Questions • Section A: multiple choice (4 marks) • Section B: four questions on a given extract from the set play chosen (44 marks) • Section C: one question (from a choice) on the work of theatre makers in a single live theatre production (32 marks)



Component 2: Devising drama (practical)

What's assessed

- Process of creating devised drama
- Performance of devised drama (students may contribute as performer or designer)
- Analysis and evaluation of own work

How it's assessed

- Devising log (60 marks)
- Devised performance (20 marks)
- 80 marks in total
- 40% of GCSE

This component is marked by teachers and moderated by AQA.



Component 3: Texts in practice (practical)

What's assessed

- Performance of two extracts from one play (students may contribute as performer or designer)

Free choice of play but it must contrast with the set play chosen for Component 1

How it's assessed

- Performance of Extract 1 (20 marks) **and** Extract 2 (20 marks)
- 40 marks in total
- 20% of GCSE

This component is marked by AQA.

3 Subject content

Our GCSE Drama offers students the opportunity to explore drama as a practical art form in which ideas and meaning are communicated to an audience through choices of form, style and convention.

Students will create, perform and respond to drama informed by their theoretical knowledge of drama and theatre.

The subject content details the knowledge, understanding and skills that students are expected to develop throughout the course of study.

The subject content for GCSE Drama is divided into three components:

1. [Understanding drama](#) (page 11)
2. [Devising drama](#) (page 15)
3. [Texts in practice](#) (page 16)

For the practical units students choose to work as performers or designers (design students may choose lighting, sound, set, costume or puppets).

Guidance is provided in [Guidance on theatrical skills](#) (page 17).

3.1 Understanding drama

This subject content is assessed in a written exam.

See [Component 1: Understanding drama](#) (page 21) for details.

3.1.1 Knowledge and understanding

Students must develop knowledge and understanding of the following:

Content	Details
Characteristics of performance text(s) and dramatic work(s)	• genre • structure • character • form • style • language • sub-text • character motivation and interaction • the creation of mood and atmosphere • the development of pace and rhythm • dramatic climax • stage directions • the practical demands of the text.

Content	Details
Social, cultural and historical contexts	- the social, cultural and historical context in which the performance texts studied are set - the theatrical conventions of the period in which the performance texts studied were created.
How meaning is interpreted and communicated	- performance conventions - use of performance space and spatial relationships on stage - actor and audience configuration - relationships between performers and audience - design fundamentals such as scale, shape, colour, texture - the design of props and the design of sets such as revolves, trucks, projection, multimedia, pyrotechnics, smoke machines, flying - the design of costume including hair and make-up - the design of lighting such as direction, colour, intensity, special effects - the design of sound such as direction, amplification, music, sound effects both live and recorded - performers' vocal interpretation of character such as accent, volume, pitch, timing, pace, intonation, phrasing, emotional range, delivery of lines - performers' physical interpretation of character such as build, age, height, facial features, movement, posture, gesture, facial expression.
Drama and theatre terminology and how to use it appropriately	- stage positioning: - upstage (left, right, centre) - downstage (left, right, centre) - centre stage. - staging configuration: - theatre in the round - proscenium arch - thrust stage - traverse - end on staging - promenade. Students should have a general understanding of the implications of the above stage configurations on the use of the performance space.

Content	Details
The roles and responsibilities of theatre makers in contemporary professional practice	Roles: • playwright • performer • understudy • lighting designer • sound designer • set designer • costume designer • puppet designer • technician • director • stage manager • theatre manager. Knowledge and understanding should cover: • the activities each may undertake on a day-to-day basis • the aspect(s) of the rehearsal/performance process each is accountable for (their contribution to the whole production being a success).

3.1.2 Area of study 1 – Set play

Students must study and explore practically **one** set play chosen from the list below.

Specific editions are prescribed for these plays. Please find the ISBN of your chosen set play on our website in the [GCSE Drama: Notes and guidance: Set plays document](#).

Play	Edition
<i>The Crucible</i> by Arthur Miller	Methuen Student Editions
<i>Blood Brothers</i> by Willy Russell	Methuen Modern Classics
<i>Noughts and Crosses</i> by Malorie Blackman/ Dominic Cooke	Nick Hern Modern Plays
<i>Around the World in 80 Days</i> by Jules Verne/ Laura Eason	Nick Hern Modern Plays
<i>Things I know to be True</i> by Andrew Bovell	Nick Hern Modern Plays
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> by William Shakespeare	Palgrave Macmillan
<i>A Taste of Honey</i> by Shelagh Delaney	Methuen Drama
<i>The Great Wave</i> by Francis Turnly	Methuen Drama
<i>The Empress</i> by Tanika Gupta	Methuen Drama, Student Editions

Study should be targeted at:

- developing knowledge and understanding (as described in [Knowledge and understanding](#) (page 11)) of the characteristics and context of the whole play
- exploring ideas for how the play may be interpreted practically.

The exam will include one compulsory short answer question for all students linking design and context and/or theatrical conventions. Students don't need to have gained practical experience of design to answer this question.

One part of Section B will offer students the choice of answering as a performer or designer (lighting, sound, set, costume, puppets).

Students must not answer Section B and Section C of the exam on the same play ie the live production seen cannot be their set play.

3.1.3 Area of study 2 – Live theatre production

Students must learn how to analyse and evaluate the work of live theatre makers (performers and/or designers).

Students should aim to understand productions in terms of the relevant content listed in [Knowledge and understanding](#) (page 11) and in addition consider:

- how the play has been interpreted in the production seen and what messages the company might be trying to communicate
- the skills demonstrated by the performers and how successfully meaning was communicated to the audience by the performers
- the design skills demonstrated in the production and how successfully meaning was communicated to the audience through design.

To aid their analysis students should carry out background research into the production.

They may read the play and reviews of the production and should develop an understanding of:

- the plot and characters
- specific features or hallmarks of the style/genre of the production
- the context of the play/production.

Live theatre could include:

- plays
- physical theatre
- theatre in education
- musical theatre.

Productions may be professional or amateur (not peer).

Students certificating after 1 January 2019 are required to experience live performance – in which they are a member of the audience in the same performance space as the performers. This may be a professional or amateur, but not a peer, performance. Schools/colleges must submit a 'Live Performance Statement' (which will be available on our website) to confirm that all students have completed this requirement. Failure to provide this statement prior to 1 May in the year of certification will be treated as maladministration. Students may still complete the 'Live theatre production' section of the exam paper referring to digital recordings or streamed productions.

Teachers must ensure that students see at least one performance which will enable them to access all of the Section C exam questions and the mark scheme in full. This performance must:

- be a minimum of 50 minutes in duration excluding any intervals or breaks
- include at least two actors
- include dialogue
- include a range of production values (lighting, sound, set and costume).

Students must not answer Section B and Section C of the exam on the same play ie the live production seen cannot be their set play.

3.2 Devising drama

This subject content is assessed practically.

Each student must choose to be assessed as a:

- performer or
- lighting designer or
- sound designer or
- set designer or
- costume designer or
- puppet designer.

Costume designers may choose to include make-up and/or hair and/or masks. Set designers may choose to include design of props.

Each student must choose one specialism only for all the Devising drama content.

See [Component 2: Devising drama](#) (page 23) for details.

3.2.1 Creating devised drama

Students must learn how to create and develop ideas to communicate meaning in a devised theatrical performance.

Students must draw on and demonstrate a practical understanding of the subject content listed in [Knowledge and understanding](#) (page 11).

Students must develop their ability to:

- carry out research
- develop their own ideas
- collaborate with others
- rehearse, refine and amend their work in progress
- analyse and evaluate their own process of creating devised drama.

For assessment, students must produce an individual Devising log documenting their devising process and an analysis and evaluation of their contribution.

See [The Devising log](#) (page 26) for details.

3.2.2 Performing devised drama

Students must learn how to contribute to devised drama in a live theatre context for an audience. They must contribute as either a performer or designer.

Students must draw on and demonstrate a practical understanding of the subject content listed in [Knowledge and understanding](#) (page 11).

They must develop their ability to:

- create and communicate meaning
- realise artistic intention in devised drama.

For assessment, students must perform or create realised designs for a devised duologue or group piece.

See [The devised performance](#) (page 27) for details.

3.3 Texts in practice

This subject content is assessed practically.

Each student must choose to be assessed as a:

- performer or
- lighting designer or
- sound designer or
- set designer or
- costume designer or
- puppet designer.

Costume designers may choose to include make-up and/or hair and/or masks. Set designers may choose to include design of props.

Each student must choose one specialism only for all the Texts in practice content.

Students may choose the same or a different specialism to the one chosen for the Devising drama content.

Students must learn how to contribute to text-based drama in a live theatre context for an audience.

Students must draw on and demonstrate a practical understanding of the subject content listed in [Knowledge and understanding](#) (page 11).

They must develop their ability to:

- interpret texts
- create and communicate meaning
- realise artistic intention in text-based drama.

For assessment, students must perform or create realised designs for two extracts from one play which contrasts to the set play studied in Component 1.

See [Component 3: Texts in practice](#) (page 29) for details.

3.4 Guidance on theatrical skills

3.4.1 Performer

Students who have chosen performing as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to commit dialogue to memory for devised performances and/or learn text they are performing for text-based performances
- develop the ability to interpret and/or create and perform a character as appropriate to the demands of the performance
- develop a range of vocal skills and techniques eg clarity of diction, inflection, accent, intonation and phrasing; pace, pause and timing; projection, pitch; emotional range; song and/or choral speaking
- develop a range of physical skills and techniques eg movement, body language, posture, gesture, gait, co-ordination, stillness, timing, control; facial expression; eye contact, listening, expression of mood; spatial awareness; interaction with other performers; dance and choral movement
- develop an appropriate performer/audience relationship and ensure sustained engagement throughout the performance
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

3.4.2 Lighting designer

Students who have chosen lighting design as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to design and realise lighting that contributes positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicates intended meaning for an audience
- develop the ability to design and realise lighting capable of establishing the location, time and/or to enhance mood or atmosphere
- develop the ability to design and realise a range of lighting effects eg through the use of colour, gobos, gels, filters, gauzes, projections and lighting states through intensity, fading and cross-fading, blackout, shadow, directional lighting
- develop the ability to select the appropriate equipment and determine its position in order to realise the intended design eg choice of lanterns and lamps – profile, Fresnel, flood, moving light, birdies, strobes; rigged, floor and side lights; angle and focus of lanterns
- develop an understanding of how to apply rigging, positioning, angling and focusing
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

It is the student's lighting **design** that is assessed. Although students are expected to operate the lighting equipment when possible, this will not form part of the assessment.

3.4.3 Sound designer

Students who have chosen sound design as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to design and realise sounds that contribute positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicate intended meaning for an audience
- develop the ability to design and realise sounds capable of establishing the location, period, time and/or to enhance the mood or atmosphere
- develop the ability to select the appropriate equipment to realise the intended sound design eg use of microphones, amplifiers, software, musical or percussion instruments

- develop the ability to deploy different types of sounds as appropriate to realise the intended sound design eg live and recorded sound, directional sound, music
- develop the ability to deploy a range of sound effects to realise the intended sound design through eg audio effects, edited and/or mixed sound, distortion, reverb, echo, volume/ amplification, fades, soundscapes
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

It is the student's sound **design** that is assessed. Although students are expected to operate the sound equipment when possible, this will not form part of the assessment.

3.4.4 Set designer

Students who have chosen set design as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to design and realise sets that contribute positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicate intended meaning for an audience
- develop the ability to design and realise sets capable of establishing the location, period, time and/or to enhance the mood or atmosphere
- develop the ability to select the appropriate materials and equipment to realise the set design eg flats, cyclorama, floor coverings, drapes, furnishings, projections/media
- develop the ability to realise sets showing an understanding of stage configuration, performer/audience relationship, action taking place, positioning of entrances/exits, effective, smooth and fluent scene changes, use of space, scale, levels
- develop the ability to design and realise sets selecting as appropriate dressings, furnishings, material, colour, texture, props
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

It is the student's set **design** that is assessed. Although students are expected to construct the set when possible, this will not form part of the assessment.

3.4.5 Costume designer

Costume designs may include masks, hair and make-up as well as clothing.

Students who have chosen costume design as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to design and realise costumes that contribute positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicate intended meaning for an audience
- develop the ability to design and realise costumes capable of establishing the character, period, location and/or contributing to the mood or atmosphere as appropriate
- develop the ability to select appropriate materials to realise costumes showing an understanding of fabrics, textures, trimmings, accessories etc
- develop the ability to create costumes showing an understanding of colour, shape, appropriate fit, period detail, ethnic authenticity, movement constraints
- develop the ability to create costumes showing an understanding of the intentions of the performance, individual performer requirements, theatrical devices
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

Where students include make-up and hair in their designs they are expected to:

- develop the ability to select appropriate materials to realise their make-up design showing an understanding of different types of make-up eg grease-paint, liquids, powders, facial hair, eyelashes, gum, putty, prosthetics, stage blood
- develop the ability to create character through make-up: aging, fantasy characters
- develop the ability to create hairstyles appropriate to character, period, age, ethnicity.

It is the student's costume **design** that is assessed. Although students are expected to assemble the costume(s) when possible, this will not form part of the assessment.

3.4.6 Puppet designer

Students who have chosen puppet design as a specialism are expected to:

- learn how to design and realise puppets that contribute positively to the overall effect of the performance and communicate intended meaning for an audience
- develop the ability to design and realise a puppet with a well-defined character and audience appeal
- develop the ability to select the appropriate materials to realise a puppet showing an understanding of construction materials, colour, texture, shape, costume, potential for characterisation
- develop the ability to realise a puppet showing an understanding of structural design, size, shape, scale; functionality, performer manipulation skills and intentions of the performance
- develop the ability to realise a puppet showing an understanding of a variety of puppet types eg rod, string, human-arm, shadow
- adopt the latest safe working practices.

It is the student's puppet **design** that is assessed. Although students are expected to construct and/or operate the puppet(s) when possible, this will not form part of the assessment.

4 Scheme of assessment

Find past papers and mark schemes, and specimen papers for new courses, on our website at aqa.org.uk/pastpapers

This specification is designed to be taken over two years.

This is a linear qualification. In order to achieve the award, students must complete all assessments at the end of the course and in the same series.

GCSE exams and certification for this specification are available for the first time in May/June 2018 and then every May/June for the life of the specification.

All materials are available in English only.

4.1 Aims and learning outcomes

Courses based on this specification should encourage students to:

- apply knowledge and understanding when making, performing and responding to drama
- explore performance texts, understanding their social, cultural and historical context including the theatrical conventions of the period in which they were created
- develop a range of theatrical skills and apply them to create performance
- work collaboratively to generate, develop and communicate ideas
- develop as creative, effective, independent and reflective students who are able to make informed choices in process and performance
- contribute as an individual to a theatrical performance
- reflect on and evaluate their own work and that of others
- develop an awareness and understanding of the roles and processes undertaken in contemporary professional theatre practice
- adopt safe working practices.

4.2 Assessment components

Component 1: Understanding drama

This component is a written exam in which students are assessed on their knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed (AO3), including in connection to a set play and on their ability to analyse and evaluate the live theatre work of others (AO4).

The paper constitutes 40% of the GCSE.

Students have 1 hour and 45 minutes to answer the paper.

The paper is divided into **three** compulsory sections:

- Section A: Theatre roles and terminology
- Section B: Study of set text
- Section C: Live theatre production.

In the exam students are expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the subject content.

See [Knowledge and understanding](#) (page 11) for details.

Section A: Theatre roles and terminology

In Section A students answer four multiple-choice questions on professional theatre maker roles and/or terminology.

Section A is marked out of 4.

Section B: Study of set text

In Section B students answer short and extended questions on one set play chosen from the list below.

Specific editions are prescribed for these plays. Please find the ISBN of your chosen set play on our website in the [GCSE Drama: Notes and guidance: Set plays document](#).

4.2.1.2.1 Choice of set plays

The choice of set plays for the GCSE exam is:

Play	Edition
<i>The Crucible</i> by Arthur Miller	Methuen Student Editions
<i>Blood Brothers</i> by Willy Russell	Methuen Modern Classics
<i>Noughts and Crosses</i> by Malorie Blackman/ Dominic Cooke	Nick Hern Modern Plays
<i>Around the World in 80 Days</i> by Jules Verne/ Laura Eason	Nick Hern Modern Plays
<i>Things I know to be True</i> by Andrew Bovell	Nick Hern Modern Plays
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> by William Shakespeare	Palgrave Macmillan
<i>A Taste of Honey</i> by Shelagh Delaney	Methuen Drama
<i>The Great Wave</i> by Francis Turnly	Methuen Drama
<i>The Empress</i> by Tanika Gupta	Methuen Drama, Student Editions

Students are expected to know and understand the characteristics and context of the whole play they have studied.

One extract from each set play is printed in the question paper. Students answer questions relating to that extract, referring to the whole play as appropriate to the demands of the question.

Where relevant they may support their answers with sketches or diagrams.

All students must be prepared to answer questions from the perspective of a performer.

The exam will include one compulsory short answer question for all students linking design and context and/or theatrical conventions. Students don't need to have gained practical experience of design to answer this question.

One part of Section B will offer students the choice of answering as either a performer or designer (lighting, sound, set, costume, puppets).

Section B is marked out of 44.

Students are permitted to refer to a clean copy of their chosen play during the exam. This must not be annotated and must not contain any additional notes, marks, alterations or inclusions.

Students must not answer Section B and Section C of the exam on the same play ie the live production seen cannot be their set play.

Section C: Live theatre production

In Section C students answer one question (from a choice) on the work of theatre makers in a single live production.

Students must have experienced live production as an audience member as part of their course.

They should be able to discuss a variety of aspects of one production giving a personal analysis and evaluation of the theatrical elements and how successfully meaning was communicated to the audience.

Students are assessed on their knowledge and understanding of the subject content detailed in [Knowledge and understanding](#) (page 11) as well as their analytical and evaluative skills.

Section C is marked out of 32.

Students must not answer Section B and Section C of the exam on the same play ie the live production seen cannot be their set play.

Component 2: Devising drama

This is a practical component in which students are assessed on their ability to create and develop ideas to communicate meaning for theatrical performance (AO1), apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance (AO2) and analyse and evaluate their own work (AO4).

Component 2 constitutes 40% of the GCSE.

It is marked by teachers and moderated by AQA.

For this component students are required to complete the following **two** assessment tasks:

- produce an individual Devising log documenting the devising process
- contribute to a final devised duologue or group performance.

The Devising log is marked out of 60.

Each student's contribution to the final devised performance is marked out of 20.

Guidance on devising

The starting point for the devised piece must be arrived at in the following way:

1. teacher presents students with a range of stimuli
2. students select one or more on which to base their devised piece.

These stimuli may be, but are not limited to:

- visual (such as a photograph, painting or sculpture)
- printed or spoken word (such as a poem, news article, story or novel)
- musical (such as a song, melody or instrumental piece)
- fact-based (such as a current, political or historical event)
- theme or issue-based (such as conflict, relationships, justice or freedom)

- myths (such as folklore or urban myth)
- cultural (such as traditions or festivals).

We recommend that students choose one or more genres or performance styles for their devised piece but this is not a mandatory requirement. Genres and performance styles include but are not limited to:

- comedy
- tragedy
- melodrama
- commedia dell'arte
- naturalism
- epic theatre
- documentary theatre
- physical theatre.

Specialisms

Each student must choose to be assessed as a:

- performer or
- lighting designer or
- sound designer or
- set designer or
- costume designer or
- puppet designer.

Costume designers may choose to include make-up and/or hair and/or masks. Set designers may choose to include design of props.

Each student must choose **one** specialism only.

They are assessed in relation to this specialism for both the Devising log and devised performance.

Requirements in relation to the number of students per specialism are as follows:

Specialism	Requirement for each performance
Performer	Between two and six students
Lighting designer	Maximum of one student
Sound designer	Maximum of one student
Set designer	Maximum of one student
Costume designer	Maximum of one student
Puppet designer	Maximum of one student

In the case of only two students entering, both students must nominate themselves as performer.

Cross-sex casting is permitted.

Students must apply their chosen specialism as follows:

Specialism chosen	Requirement
Performer	Must develop and perform one character ¹ .

Specialism chosen	Requirement
Lighting designer	Must create one lighting design. The design must show a range of lighting effects/states and cues/transitions designed to meet the demands of the devised piece being performed.
Sound designer	Must create one sound design. The design must show a range of sound effects and cues/transitions designed to meet the demands of the devised piece being performed.
Set designer	Must create one set design. The design must be for one setting, showing dressings and props designed to meet the demands of the devised piece being performed.
Costume designer	Must create one costume design for one performer. The design must show clothing and accessories (and hair and make-up if applicable) designed to meet the demands of the devised piece being performed.
Puppet designer	Must create one puppet design. The design must show a complete puppet designed to meet the demands of the devised piece being performed.

¹Or more than one if appropriate to the subject matter and performance style of the piece.

Teachers must ensure that students have the opportunity to take an equal and active part in the creative and collaborative devising process regardless of their chosen specialism.

All designs must be assessed in live performance:

- For lighting designers the lights and lighting effects must be seen in the live performance.
- For sound designers the sound and sound effects must be heard in the live performance.
- For set designers the set seen in the live performance should follow the student's design.
- For costume designers the costume designed must be worn in the live performance by the relevant character.
- For puppet designers the puppet designed must be a part of the live performance.

Design students are not assessed on their ability to operate equipment associated with their design. Therefore although all students are encouraged to develop their theatrical skills to their full potential the following applies:

- Lighting designers are not required to operate the lighting equipment in the live performance.
- Sound designers are not required to operate the sound equipment in the live performance.
- Set designers are not assessed on the set's construction.
- Costume designers are not assessed on the costume's construction.
- Puppet designers are not assessed on the puppet's construction and need not be the puppet operators during the live performance.

Assessors must assess the design and not its execution.

Designs should be realised in performance to the full extent possible within any practical constraints. Design students should have an awareness of how their design will impact on the live performance as a whole.

The Devising log

Each student is required to complete a Devising log documenting the creation and development of their ideas to communicate meaning through a devised piece and analysing and evaluating their individual contribution to the devising process and the final devised piece.

The Devising log must comprise three sections, each marked out of 20 marks:

- Section 1: Response to a stimulus
- Section 2: Development and collaboration
- Section 3: Analysis and evaluation.

Section 1: Response to a stimulus

In this section students are expected to explain their initial ideas, research and intentions for the devised piece.

The student must explain:

- their initial response to the stimuli presented by the teacher and the stimulus they chose
- the ideas, themes and settings they have considered for the devised piece in response to the stimulus they chose
- their research findings
- their own dramatic aims and intentions
- the dramatic aims and intentions of the piece as a whole.

Section 2: Development and collaboration

In this section students are expected to explain the process they undertook to refine their initial ideas and intentions into a final devised piece.

The student must explain:

- how they developed and refined their own ideas and those of the pair/group
- how they developed and refined the piece in rehearsal
- how they developed and refined their own theatrical skills during the devising process
- how they responded to feedback
- how they as individuals used their refined theatrical skills and ideas in the final piece.

Section 3: Analysis and evaluation

This section offers students the opportunity to demonstrate their analytical and evaluative skills with respect to their own devised work.

Students are expected to analyse and evaluate the ways in which they individually contributed to the devising process as a whole and to the final devised piece, exploring their strengths and the learning opportunities taken from the experience.

Students should analyse and evaluate:

- how far they developed their theatrical skills
- the benefits they brought to the pair/group and the way in which they positively shaped the outcome
- the overall impact they had as individuals.

Students should also appraise those areas for further development in their future devising work (ie the aspects that did not go as well as they'd hoped).

In the context of this section:

- to 'analyse' is to identify and investigate
- to 'evaluate' is to assess the merit of the different approaches used and formulate judgements.

Assessment evidence

The Devising log evidence presented for assessment must be the student's own work.

Details of admissible evidence types for the Devising log can be found below:

Evidence for the Devising log must be one of the following:	Suggested length per section	The Devising log must not exceed in total (evidence beyond this must not count towards the mark)
Entirely written	400–600 words	2,500 words
Written accompanied by: • annotated photographs and/or • annotated sketches/drawings and/or annotated cue sheets.	2–4 A4 pages	15 sides of A4 including no more than 2,500 words
Written accompanied by audio/visual/audiovisual recording(s)	200–400 words and 2–3 minutes	1,500 words and 12 minutes
Entirely audio/visual/audiovisual recording(s)	3–4 minutes	15 minutes

Details of our requirements for recordings are provided at aqa.org.uk/drama

Students and teachers will be required to sign a *Candidate record form* (CRF) to fully authenticate each student's work.

Supervising students

Students do not have to be directly supervised at all times whilst they are completing their Devising log. However there must be adequate supervision to ensure that work can be authenticated.

Teachers may provide guidance and support to students so that they are clear about the requirements of the task they need to undertake and the marking criteria that will be used.

Teachers may provide guidance to students on the suitability of their response to the task particularly if it means they will not meet the requirements of the specification.

Teachers must follow JCQ instructions regarding the provision of feedback to students.

The devised performance

Each student is required to contribute to a devised duologue or devised group piece.

The assessed performance for this component cannot be a monologue.

Type	Performance duration
Duologue (two performers)	Must be between three and ten minutes.
Group performance (three or more performers)	Must be between four and twenty minutes.

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

Teachers are required to ensure minimum performance times are met.

If a student's performance does not meet the required duration a penalty is applied to the mark (the size of the penalty depends on the severity of the timing infringement). It may also result in schools or colleges being investigated for maladministration.

Students must be advised by the teacher that for the Devised performance they will be assessed on the following:

- the level of theatrical skills demonstrated in their performance or design
- the range of theatrical skills demonstrated in their performance or design
- their contribution to the effectiveness of the piece, made through their performance or design
- the inventiveness of their work, as evidenced through their performance or design
- their success in realising their individual artistic intentions, as evidenced by their performance or design when considered against their Statement of Dramatic Intentions (see below for an explanation of what is meant by 'Statement of Dramatic Intentions').

Assessment evidence

The performance/designs presented for assessment must be the student's own work.

Students and teachers will be required to sign a *Candidate record form* (CRF) to fully authenticate each student's work.

Programme notes

Teachers must provide programme notes for the moderator.

These must include photographs of each student so that each student is clearly identifiable to the moderator.

The programme notes must also state each student's chosen specialism.

In addition each student must offer a statement of their individual dramatic intentions to justify their theatrical choices.

The Statement of Dramatic Intentions must be completed by the student on the template AQA provides. This statement is not assessed directly but should be used to support assessment. Assessment must not take place without reference to the student's Statement of Dramatic Intentions.

Recording

Assessed performances must be recorded with a single camera from an audience perspective from start to finish and be unedited.

Each student being assessed must identify themselves by name and candidate number at the start of the recording.

Students must also state their chosen specialism.

Close-ups of set, costume and puppet design students' work must be included at the beginning of the recording.

Final Recorded Assessment: all students must perform, record and submit a single final assessment, which is the only version that will be accepted and evaluated. Multiple recordings and/or re-recordings are not permitted, and previous drafts or alternative versions must not be

submitted. Design students are not required to perform, however they are still required to record and submit a single final assessment.

Full details of our requirements for recordings are provided in [Requirements for recording and submitting performance evidence](#) and these requirements must be met for all students.

Supervising students

It is expected that during the devising process teachers will support students through the provision of workshops.

Teachers may provide guidance and support to students so that they are clear about the requirements of the task they need to undertake and the marking criteria that will be used.

Teachers should offer advice and guidance on the choice of genre, style and content plus suitable working methods and materials as appropriate for the chosen specialism.

Teachers may provide guidance to students on the suitability of their response to the task particularly if it means they will not meet the requirements of the specification.

Teachers must not direct the performance under any circumstances and must follow JCQ instructions regarding the provision of feedback to students.

For authentication regular monitoring should be undertaken by the teacher so that the work is seen at each developmental stage.

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

Teachers are not permitted to provide any guidance to students whilst the assessed performance is being carried out.

Other requirements

Each performance must be carried out in live performance conditions and ideally under stage lighting. There is no requirement for students to perform within a full production context ie with full set and costume.

All performance preparation and the live performance itself must be carried out in a setting which has been formally risk assessed and deemed safe.

The performance space should enable the student to fulfil their chosen specialism as much as possible.

Students should be aware of health and safety factors related to both their chosen specialism and their performance piece as a whole.

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

Technical support may be provided to design students. This may be by non-examinee students or staff.

Component 3: Texts in practice

This component is a practical component in which students are assessed on their ability to apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance (AO2).

Component 3 constitutes 20% of the GCSE.

It is marked by AQA.

For this component students must complete **two** assessment tasks:

- study and present a key extract (monologue, duologue or group performance)
- study and present a second key extract (monologue, duologue or group performance) from the same play.

Each student's contribution to each key extract performance is marked out of 20.

Guidance on key extracts

Extract 1 and Extract 2 must be taken from the same play and understood in the context of the whole play.

The play chosen must:

- have been professionally commissioned or professionally produced
- as a whole be a minimum of 35 minutes in duration if performed in full
- offer interpretive opportunities for performers and designers
- be rich and of substance in terms of content, context, theme and/or characterisation
- offer an appropriate level of theatrical challenge to students at GCSE
- be deemed age-appropriate by the Head of Centre who must submit a declaration to AQA confirming that he/she has approved the plays chosen for practical study
- not be the set play the student has studied for Component 1
- not contravene the prohibited play combinations below (this is to ensure the play the student studies for Component 3 contrasts with the play he/she has studied for Component 1, so that he/she experiences two very different plays on his/her GCSE course).

Teachers must ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their chosen specialism (to enable them to access the full range of marks).

Prohibited play combinations

Play studied for Component 1	Play studied for Component 3 must not match more than one of these four aspects
<i>The Crucible</i>	Playwright: Arthur Miller Description: Historical drama Performance style: Naturalistic Time period: 1945 to 1965
<i>Blood Brothers</i>	Playwright: Willy Russell Description: Musical/adaptation from a musical Performance style: Musical theatre Time period: 1965 to 1985
<i>Noughts and Crosses</i>	Playwright: Dominic Cooke Description: Teen drama Performance style: Epic Time period: 1995 to 2015

Play studied for Component 1	Play studied for Component 3 must not match more than one of these four aspects
<i>Around the World in 80 Days</i>	Playwright: Laura Eason Description: Comedy Performance style: Storytelling theatre Time period: 1995 to 2015
<i>Things I know to be True</i>	Playwright: Andrew Bovell Description: Suburban drama Performance style: Australian realism Time period: 2000 to 2020
<i>A Taste of Honey</i>	Playwright: Shelagh Delaney Description: Kitchen sink drama Performance style: Naturalism Time period: 1950 to 1970
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Playwright: William Shakespeare Description: Tragedy Performance style: Verse drama Time period: Elizabethan
<i>The Great Wave</i>	Playwright: Francis Turnly Description: Political thriller Performance style: Epic Time period: 2010 to present day
<i>The Empress</i>	Playwright: Tanika Gupta Description: Historical drama Performance style: Ensemble Time period: 2010 to present day

Schools/colleges must seek AQA approval of their play choices by submitting a *Play Approval Form* directly to their allocated AQA GCSE NEA (non-exam assessment) adviser. Teachers must seek approval well in advance of the visiting exam date in case they are not approved. All play approval forms must be submitted by 31 January at the latest.

Play choice approval is an essential part of the specification. Failure to seek timely approval will be treated as maladministration and failure to gain timely approval may result in delays to the assessment taking place.

If your school/college is new to teaching this specification, please contact AQA to be allocated an AQA NEA Adviser.

The key extracts chosen for study must be significant to the play as a whole ie pivotal to plot, character(s) or theme(s).

The key extracts chosen must be continuous and individually last at least 10 minutes in duration if the full extract were to be performed.

Students can perform an abridged version of the key extract if needed (to provide a coherent performance within the minimum performance times stated) but the wording itself must not be modified.

We advise the following steps to choose the key extracts:

Step 1: Choose the play (adhering to the requirements above) and start to explore the play practically.

Step 2: Focus on two sections of the play, perhaps a section of the play at the beginning and a section at the end (this is just a suggestion). Each section must be substantial. This is defined as taking at least 10 minutes to perform if performed. Large groups will need to study longer sections (see Step 3). Students should study the two sections chosen in depth, taking time to thoroughly explore and interpret each one.

Step 3: Identify how much of each section needs to be performed to meet the relevant AQA minimum performance time. The minimum performance time varies depending on the number of performers in the group. If the group is large, collectively the group is likely to need to perform the whole section they have studied (which may have needed to have been more than the minimum 10 minutes, see Step 2). If the performance is to be a monologue, the performer will only need to perform part of the section they have studied.

NEA Advisers are able to provide guidance about the selection and use of key extracts.

Specialisms

Each student must choose to be assessed as a:

- performer or
- lighting designer or
- sound designer or
- set designer or
- costume designer or
- puppet designer.

Costume designers may choose to include make-up and/or hair and/or masks. Set designers may choose to include design of props.

Each student must choose one specialism only.

Students have to choose the same specialism for both extracts.

Requirements in relation to the number of students per specialism are as follows:

Specialism	Requirement for each performance
Performer	Between one and six students
Lighting designer	Maximum of one student
Sound designer	Maximum of one student
Set designer	Maximum of one student
Costume designer	Maximum of one student

Specialism	Requirement for each performance
Puppet designer	Maximum of one student

In the case of only one student entering, this student must nominate himself/herself as performer.

Cross-sex casting is permitted.

Students must apply their chosen specialism as follows:

Specialism chosen	Requirement per extract
Performer	Must perform one character/interpret one role per extract². The performer may perform the same character in both extracts or perform different characters in each extract.
Lighting designer	Must create one lighting design per extract. The lighting design must be different for each extract ie the student must design two different lighting plots, one for each extract. Each design must show a range of lighting effects/states and cues/transitions designed to meet the demands of the extract being performed.
Sound designer	Must create one sound design per extract. The sound design must be different for each extract ie the student must create two different sound plots, one for each extract. Each design must show a range of sound effects and cues/transitions designed to meet the demands of the extract being performed.
Set designer	Must create one set design per extract. The set design must be different for each extract ie the student must either design two different settings, one for each extract, or adapt a single set for each extract. Each design must show dressings and props designed to meet the demands of the extract being performed.

Specialism chosen	Requirement per extract
Costume designer	Must create one costume for one Performer per extract. The costume design must be different for each extract ie the student must either design two different costumes, one for each extract, or adapt a single costume for each extract. Each design must show clothing and accessories, and hair and make-up if applicable, designed to meet the demands of the extract being performed.
Puppet designer	Must create one puppet per extract. The puppet design must be different for each extract ie the student must either design two different puppets, one for each extract, or adapt a single puppet for each extract. Each design must show a complete puppet, designed to meet the demands of the extract being performed.

²Or more than one role if appropriate eg in a multi-role play.

Teachers must ensure that students have the opportunity to take an equal and active role in the creative and collaborative process regardless of their chosen specialism.

All designs must be assessed in live performance:

- For lighting designers the lights and lighting effects must be seen in the live performance.
- For sound designers the sound and sound effects must be heard in the live performance.
- For set designers the set seen in the live performance should follow the students' design.
- For costume designers the costume designed must be seen in the live performance.
- For puppet designers the puppet designed must be a part of the live performance.

Design students are not assessed on their ability to operate equipment associated with their design.

- Lighting designers are not required to operate the lighting equipment in the live performance.
- Sound designers are not required to operate the sound equipment in the live performance.
- Set designers are not assessed on the set's construction.
- Costume designers are not assessed on the costume's construction.
- Puppet designers are not assessed on the puppet's construction and need not be the puppet operators during the live performance.

Assessors must assess the design and not its execution.

Designs should be realised in performance to the full extent possible within any practical constraints.

Design students should have an awareness of how their design will impact on the live performance as a whole.

Performance of key extracts

Extract 1 may be a monologue, duologue or a group piece.

Extract 2 may be a monologue, duologue or a group piece.

Type	Performance duration ³
Monologue (one performer)	Must be between two and five minutes.
Duologue (two performers)	Must be between three and ten minutes.
Group performance (three or more performers)	Must be between four and twenty minutes.

³Students are not required to perform the full key extract.

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

Teachers are required to ensure minimum performance times are met.

If a student's performance does not meet the required duration a penalty is applied to the mark (the size of the penalty depends on the severity of the timing infringement). It may also result in schools or colleges being investigated for maladministration.

Students must be advised by the teacher that for their Extract performances they will be assessed on the following:

- the overall contribution to performance made by their performance or design
- the range of theatrical skills demonstrated in their performance or design
- the effectiveness with which they deploy their performance or design skills
- the appropriateness of their interpretation to the play as a whole, as evidenced through their performance or design
- the sensitivity to the context of the play they display through their performance or design
- their success in achieving their artistic intent, as evidenced by their performance or design when considered against their Statement of Dramatic Intentions (see below for an explanation of what is meant by 'Statement of Dramatic Intentions').

Assessment evidence

The performances/designs presented for assessment must be the student's own work.

Students and teachers will be required to sign a *Candidate record form* (CRF) to fully authenticate each student's work.

It must be very clear to the AQA assessor when the performance of Extract 1 is over and the performance of Extract 2 has begun. This is because each student will be awarded two marks for Component 3: one for Extract 1 and one for Extract 2. The distinction between Extract 1 and Extract 2 may be achieved in a variety of different ways and, as long as the distinction is clear to the AQA assessor, any method is acceptable.

Programme notes

Teachers must provide programme notes for the examiner at the start of the performance.

The programme notes must include photographs of each student so that each student is clearly identifiable to the examiner.

The programme notes must also state each student's chosen specialism, chosen play and if they are performing, the character(s) they are playing.

In addition each student must offer a statement of their individual dramatic intentions to justify their theatrical choices and provide the examiner with a context for the productions he/she is assessing.

The Statement of Dramatic Intentions must be completed by the student on the template AQA provides. This statement is not assessed directly but is used to support assessment. Assessment must not take place without reference to the student's Statement of Dramatic Intentions.

Recording

Assessed performances must be recorded with a single camera from an audience perspective from start to finish and be unedited.

Each student being assessed must identify themselves by name and candidate number at the start of the recording.

Students must also state the chosen specialism and chosen play and if they are performing, the character(s) they are playing.

Close-ups of set, costume and puppet design students' work must be included at the beginning of the recording.

Final Recorded Assessment: In extenuating circumstances, where the assessment doesn't take place with a visit, students must perform, record and submit a single final assessment, which is the only version that will be accepted and evaluated. Multiple recordings and/or re-recordings are not permitted, and previous drafts or alternative versions must not be submitted. Design students are not required to perform, however they are still required to record and submit a single final assessment.

Full details of our requirements for recordings are provided in [Requirements for recording and submitting performance evidence](#) and these requirements must be met for all students.

Supervising students

It is expected that during the rehearsal process teachers will support students through the provision of workshops.

Teachers may provide guidance and support to students so that they are clear about the requirements of the task they need to undertake and the marking criteria that will be used.

Teachers may provide guidance to students on the suitability of their response to the task particularly if it means they will not meet the requirements of the specification.

Teachers must follow JCQ instructions regarding the provision of feedback to students.

For authentication, regular monitoring should be undertaken by the teacher so that the work is seen at each developmental stage.

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

Teachers are not permitted to provide any guidance to students whilst the assessed performance is being carried out.

Other requirements

Each performance must be carried out in live performance conditions and ideally under stage lighting. There is no requirement upon students to present their key extracts within a full production context ie with full set and costume.

All performance preparation and the live performance itself must be carried out in a setting which has been formally risk assessed and deemed safe.

The performance space should enable students to fulfil their chosen specialism as much as possible.

Students should be aware of health and safety factors as they relate to both their chosen specialism and the performance piece as a whole.

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

Technical support may be provided to design students. This may be by non-examinee students or staff.

4.3 Assessment objectives

Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual and are the same across all GCSE Drama specifications and all exam boards.

The exams and non-exam assessment will measure how students have achieved the following assessment objectives:

- AO1: Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning for theatrical performance.
- AO2: Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance.
- AO3: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed.
- AO4: Analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others.

4.3.1 Assessment objective weightings for GCSE Drama

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (approx %)			Overall weighting (approx %)
	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	
AO1		20		20
AO2		10	20	30
AO3	30			30
AO4	10	10		20
Overall weighting of components	40	40	20	100

4.4 Assessment weightings

The marks awarded on the papers will be scaled to meet the weighting of the components. Students' final marks will be calculated by adding together the scaled marks for each component. Grade boundaries will be set using this total scaled mark. The scaling and total scaled marks are shown in the table below.

Component	Maximum raw mark	Scaling factor	Maximum scaled mark
Component 1	80	1	80
Component 2	80	1	80
Component 3	40	1	40
Total scaled mark:			200

4.5 Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria below details the mark bands with descriptors for the assessment of students' work.

4.5.1 Component 2: Devising drama assessment grids

Component 2 is marked by the teacher out of 80 marks, with marks divided as follows:

- Devising log Section 1: Response to stimulus AO1 (20 marks)
- Devising log Section 2: Development and collaboration AO1 (20 marks)
- Devising log Section 3: Analysis and evaluation AO4 (20 marks)
- Devised performance AO2 (20 marks).

Marking the Devising log

These are the mark schemes to be used for the Devising log in Component 2. They are level of response mark schemes.

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance. There are marks in each level. Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's response you should review the response.

Step 1 Determine a level – Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the response meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptors for the level indicate the different qualities that might be seen in the student's response. If the response meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptors and the response.

When assigning a level look at the overall quality of the response. If the response covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach and use the variability of the response to decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but awarded a mark near the top because of the level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark – Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The exemplar materials used during teacher standardisation will help. You can compare the student's response with the marked and annotated examples to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse.

Marking Section 1

This is the mark scheme to be used for Section 1 of the Devising log in Component 2. There are 20 marks available for this section.

The assessment objective being assessed is AO1: Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning for theatrical performance.

Devising log Section 1 (20 marks)		
Band	Mark	Descriptors
4	16–20	Excellent response: - The explanations given in the Devising log evidence excellent skills in creating and developing ideas to communicate meaning. - There is evidence of a highly developed and highly creative response to the stimulus. - The explanation is very clear and points are comprehensively explored. - Precise details are provided throughout.
3	11–15	Good response: - The explanations given in the Devising log evidence good skills in creating and developing ideas to communicate meaning. - There is evidence of a creative and engaged response to the stimulus. - The explanation is clear and most points are explored in some detail. - A number of precise details are provided.
2	6–10	Reasonable response: - The explanations given in the Devising log evidence reasonable skills in creating and developing ideas to communicate meaning. - There is evidence of a meaningful response to the stimulus which shows some creativity. - The explanation is reasonably clear but some points are not explored. - A few precise details are provided.
1	1–5	Limited response: - The explanations given in the Devising log evidence limited skills in creating and developing ideas to communicate meaning. - There is evidence of an under-developed response to the stimulus. - The explanation lacks clarity and depth. - Minimal detail is provided.
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

Marking Section 2

This is the mark scheme to be used for Section 2 of the Devising log in Component 2. There are 20 marks available for this section.

The assessment objective being assessed is AO1: Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning for theatrical performance.

Devising log Section 2 (20 marks)		
Band	Mark	Descriptors
4	16–20	Excellent response: • The explanations given in the Devising log evidence excellent skills in creating and developing ideas to communicate meaning. • There is evidence of extensive and highly effective development and refinement of skills and the piece. • The explanation is very clear and points are comprehensively explored. • Precise details are provided throughout.
3	11–15	Good response: • The explanations given in the Devising log evidence good skills in creating and developing ideas to communicate meaning. • There is evidence of considerable and mostly effective development and refinement of skills and the piece. • The explanation is clear and most points are explored in some detail. • A number of precise details are provided.
2	6–10	Reasonable response: • The explanations given in the Devising log evidence reasonable skills in creating and developing ideas to communicate meaning. • There is evidence of some meaningful development and refinement of skills and the piece. • The explanation is reasonably clear but some points are not explored. • A few precise details are provided.
1	1–5	Limited response: • The explanations given in the Devising log evidence limited skills in creating and developing ideas to communicate meaning. • There is evidence of little development and refinement of skills and the piece. • The explanation lacks clarity and depth. • Minimal detail is provided.
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

Marking Section 3

This is the mark scheme to be used for Section 3 of the Devising log in Component 2. There are 20 marks available for this section.

The assessment objective being assessed is AO4: Analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others.

Devising log Section 3 (20 marks)		
Band	Mark	Descriptors
4	16–20	Excellent analysis and evaluation: • Response demonstrates highly developed skills in identifying and investigating how far they developed their theatrical skills and how successfully they contributed to the devising process and to the final devised piece (analysis). • Response demonstrates highly developed skills in assessing the merit of different approaches and formulating judgements about the overall impact they had as an individual (evaluation). • Response is critical and insightful. • Points are comprehensively explored and supported in depth with thorough exemplification.
3	11–15	Good analysis and evaluation: • Response demonstrates developed and secure skills in identifying and investigating how far they developed their theatrical skills and how successfully they contributed to the devising process and to the final devised piece (analysis). • Response demonstrates developed and secure skills in assessing the merit of different approaches and formulating judgements about the overall impact they had as an individual (evaluation). • Response is developed and clear. • Points are explored and supported with a number of examples.
2	6–10	Reasonable analysis and evaluation: • Response demonstrates some developing skill in identifying and investigating how far they developed their theatrical skills and how successfully they contributed to the devising process and to the final devised piece (analysis). • Response demonstrates some developing skill in assessing the merit of different approaches and formulating judgements about the overall impact they had as an individual (evaluation). • Response is reasonably clear but at points relies on description. • Points made are sound but may not be explored or supported.
1	1–5	Limited analysis and evaluation: • Response demonstrates undeveloped skills in identifying and investigating how far they developed their theatrical skills and how successfully they contributed to the devising process and to the final devised piece (analysis). • Response demonstrates undeveloped skills in assessing the merit of different approaches and formulating judgements about the overall impact they had as an individual (evaluation). • Response is mostly descriptive and lacks examples.
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

Marking the Devised performance

This is the mark scheme to be used for the Devised performance in Component 2.

There are 20 marks available. Award either 1 mark, 2 marks, 3 marks, or 4 marks for each of the following five criteria.

The assessment objective being assessed is AO2: Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance.

Mark	Level of theatrical skill	Range of theatrical skills demonstrated	Contribution to the effectiveness of the piece	Inventiveness of individual's work	Success in realising individual artistic intention*
4	Highly competent, highly developed and sustained use of theatrical skill.	Extensive range of theatrical skills demonstrated.	Outstanding contribution to the effectiveness of the piece.	Highly inventive work throughout.	Highly successful realisation of individual artistic intention.
3	Developed, secure and consistent use of theatrical skill.	Wide range of theatrical skills demonstrated.	Considerable contribution to the effectiveness of the piece.	Work has many inventive qualities or moments.	Secure success in realising individual artistic intention.
2	Some developing competency in use of theatrical skill, not always sustained .	Fair range of theatrical skills demonstrated.	Some meaningful contributions to the effectiveness of the piece.	Some useful inventive ideas.	Some success in realising individual artistic intention.
1	Little competency and little consistency in use of theatrical skill.	Narrow range of theatrical skills demonstrated.	Little contribution to the effectiveness of the piece.	Little inventiveness .	Little success in realising individual artistic intention.
0	Nothing worthy of credit.	Nothing worthy of credit.	Nothing worthy of credit.	Nothing worthy of credit.	Nothing worthy of credit.

* This must be judged against the Statement of Dramatic Intentions provided by the student (how far has the student met their aims?).

4.5.2 Component 3: Texts in practice assessment grid

Component 3 is marked by a visiting AQA assessor using the assessment grid below.

Two extracts will be performed to the AQA assessor, each marked out of 20 marks.

The assessment grid below applies to both performances individually.

The assessment objective being assessed is AO2: Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performance.

Mark scheme for the Performance of Extract 1 (20 marks) and Extract 2 (20 marks)

Band	Mark	Descriptors
4	16–20	Excellent contribution to performance: • An extensive range of skills are demonstrated. • Skills are deployed precisely and in a highly effective way. • Personal interpretation is entirely appropriate to the play as a whole. • Personal interpretation is highly sensitive to context. • Artistic intentions are entirely achieved.
3	11–15	Good contribution to performance: • Wide range of skills are demonstrated. • Skills are deployed confidently and in a mostly effective way. • Personal interpretation exhibits a good degree of appropriateness to the play as a whole. • Personal interpretation exhibits a good degree of sensitivity to context. • Artistic intentions are mostly achieved.
2	6–10	Reasonable contribution to performance: • Fair range of skills are demonstrated. • Skills are deployed with care and with effectiveness in places. • Personal interpretation has some relevance to the play as a whole. • Personal interpretation is sensitive to context in places. • Artistic intentions are partly achieved.
1	1–5	Limited contribution to performance: • Narrow range of skills are demonstrated. • Skills are deployed uncertainly with little effectiveness. • Personal interpretation lacks appropriateness for the play as a whole. • Personal interpretation lacks sensitivity to context. • Artistic intentions are achieved to a minimal extent.
0	0	Nothing worthy of credit.

5 Non-exam assessment administration

The non-exam assessment (NEA) for this specification is for Component 2 Devising drama and Component 3 Texts in practice.

Visit aqa.org.uk/8261 for detailed information about all aspects of NEA administration.

The head of the school or college is responsible for making sure that NEA is conducted in line with our instructions and Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) instructions.

5.1 Supervising and authenticating

To meet Ofqual's qualification and subject criteria:

- **students** must sign the *Candidate record form* (CRF) to confirm that the work submitted is their own
- all **teachers** who have marked a student's work must sign the declaration of authentication on the CRF. This is to confirm that the work is solely that of the student concerned and was conducted under the conditions laid down by this specification
- teachers must ensure that a CRF and an audiovisual recording of each student's performance/design is provided with each student's work.

Students must have some direct supervision to ensure that the work submitted can be confidently authenticated as their own.

5.2 Avoiding malpractice

Please inform your students of the AQA regulations concerning malpractice. They must not:

- submit work that is not their own
- lend work to other students
- allow other students access to, or use of, their own independently-sourced source material
- include work copied directly from books, the internet or other sources without acknowledgement
- submit work that is word-processed by a third person without acknowledgement
- include inappropriate, offensive or obscene material.

These actions constitute malpractice and a penalty will be given (for example, disqualification).

If you identify malpractice **before** the student signs the declaration of authentication, you don't need to report it to us. Please deal with it in accordance with your school or college's internal procedures. We expect schools and colleges to treat such cases very seriously.

If you identify malpractice **after** the student has signed the declaration of authentication, the head of your school or college must submit full details of the case to us at the earliest opportunity. Please complete the form *JCQ/M1*, available from the JCQ website at jcq.org.uk

You must record details of any work which is not the student's own on the front of the assessment booklet or other appropriate place.

You should consult your exams officer about these procedures.

5.3 Administration for Component 2

Component 2 is teacher marked and moderated by AQA.

Teacher standardisation

We will provide support for using the marking criteria and developing appropriate tasks through teacher standardisation.

For further information about teacher standardisation visit our website at aqa.org.uk/8261

In the following situations teacher standardisation is essential. We will send you an invitation to complete teacher standardisation if:

- moderation from the previous year indicates a serious misinterpretation of the requirements
- a significant adjustment was made to the marks in the previous year
- your school or college is new to this specification.

For further support and advice please speak to your adviser. Email your subject team at drama@aqa.org.uk for details of your adviser.

Internal standardisation

You must ensure that you have consistent marking standards for all students. One person must manage this process and they must sign the *Centre declaration sheet* to confirm that internal standardisation has taken place.

Internal standardisation may involve:

- all teachers marking some sample pieces of work to identify differences in marking standards
- discussing any differences in marking at a training meeting for all teachers involved
- referring to reference and archive material, such as previous work or examples from our teacher standardisation.

Commenting

To meet Ofqual's qualification and subject criteria, you must show clearly how marks have been awarded against the assessment criteria in this specification.

Your comments will help the moderator see, as precisely as possible, where you think the students have met the assessment criteria.

You must record your comments on the *Candidate record form*.

Submitting marks

You must check that the correct marks are written on the *Candidate record form* and that the total is correct.

The deadline for submitting all your students' marks to AQA for moderation is given at aqa.org.uk/keydates

Keeping students' work

Students' work must be kept under secure conditions from the time that it is marked, with completed CRF. After the moderation period and the deadline for Enquiries about Results (or once any enquiry is resolved) you may return the work to students.

Moderation

You must send all your students' marks to us by the date given at [aqa.org.uk/deadlines](https://www.aqa.org.uk/deadlines). You will be asked to send a sample of your students' NEA evidence to your moderator.

You must show clearly how marks have been awarded against the assessment criteria in this specification. Your comments must help the moderator see, as precisely as possible, where you think the students have met the assessment criteria. You must:

- record your comments on the Candidate Record Form (CRF)
- check that the correct marks are written on the CRF and that the total is correct.

The moderator re-marks a sample of the evidence and compares this with the marks you have provided to check whether any changes are needed to bring the marking in line with our agreed standards. Any changes to marks will normally keep your rank order but, where major inconsistencies are found, we reserve the right to change the rank order.

School and college consortia

If you are in a consortium of schools or colleges with joint teaching arrangements (where students from different schools and colleges have been taught together but entered through the school or college at which they are on roll), you must let us know by:

- filling in the *Application for Centre Consortium Arrangements for centre-assessed work*, which is available from the JCQ website [jqc.org.uk](https://www.jcq.org.uk)
- appointing a consortium co-ordinator who can speak to us on behalf of all schools and colleges in the consortium. If there are different co-ordinators for different specifications, a copy of the form must be sent in for each specification.

We will allocate the same moderator to all schools and colleges in the consortium and treat the students as a single group for moderation.

All the work must be available at the lead school or college.

5.4 Administration for Component 3

Component 3 is marked by AQA.

The assessment visit

All your students' work for Component 3 will be marked by a visiting AQA assessor. The visit will be by arrangement and take place over the course of the certifying year.

Evidence for AQA marked NEA

All NEA evidence, including an audiovisual recording of all performances seen on the day of the visit, must be posted to the examiner. It must arrive within 10 working days of the visit taking place.

Enquiries about results (EARs) will be based on the audiovisual recording of the performance seen by the AQA assessor.

Factors affecting individual students

For advice and guidance about arrangements for any of your students, please email us as early as possible at eos@aqa.org.uk

Occasional absence: you should be able to accept the occasional absence of students by making sure they have the chance to make up what they have missed. You may organise an alternative supervised session for students who were absent at the time you originally arranged.

Lost work: if work is lost you must tell us how and when it was lost and who was responsible, using our special consideration online service at aqa.org.uk/eaqa

Special help: where students need special help which goes beyond normal learning support, please use the CRF to tell us so that this help can be taken into account during moderation.

Students who move schools: students who move from one school or college to another during the course sometimes need additional help to meet the requirements. How you deal with this depends on when the move takes place. If it happens early in the course, the new school or college should be responsible for the work. If it happens late in the course, it may be possible to arrange for the moderator to assess the work as a student who was 'Educated Elsewhere'.

After assessment

You will receive a report when the results are issued, which will give feedback on the appropriateness of the tasks set, interpretation of the marking criteria and how students performed in general.

We will give you the final marks for each component when the results are issued.

We may need to keep some of your students' work to meet Ofqual requirements for awarding, archiving or standardisation purposes.

6 General administration

You can find information about all aspects of administration, as well as all the forms you need, at aqa.org.uk/examsadmin

6.1 Entries and codes

You only need to make one entry for each qualification – this will cover all the question papers, non-exam assessment and certification.

Every specification is given a national discount (classification) code by the Department for Education (DfE), which indicates its subject area.

If a student takes two specifications with the same discount code:

- further and higher education providers are likely to take the view that they have only achieved one of the two qualifications
- only one of them will be counted for the purpose of the *School and College Performance tables* – the DfE's rules on 'early entry' will determine which one.

Please check this before your students start their course.

Qualification title	AQA entry code	DfE discount code
AQA GCSE in Drama	8261	TBC

This specification complies with:

- Ofqual *General conditions of recognition* that apply to all regulated qualifications
- Ofqual GCSE qualification level conditions that apply to all GCSEs
- Ofqual GCSE subject level conditions that apply to all GCSEs in this subject
- all other relevant regulatory documents.

The Ofqual qualification accreditation number (QAN) is 601/8575/2.

6.2 Overlaps with other qualifications

There are no overlaps with any other AQA qualifications at this level.

6.3 Awarding grades and reporting results

The qualification will be graded on a nine-point scale: 1 to 9 – where 9 is the best grade.

Students who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade 1 will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate.

6.4 Resits and shelf life

Students can resit the qualification as many times as they wish, within the shelf life of the qualification.

6.5 Set texts

There may be changes to the set play lists within the lifetime of the specification. We will give schools and colleges at least nine months' notice of any changes prior to first teaching of a two year course. We do not expect there to be any changes to the texts within the first five years.

Notice of any change will be communicated to schools and colleges via our exam bulletins and on our website.

6.6 Previous learning and prerequisites

There are no previous learning requirements. Any requirements for entry to a course based on this specification are at the discretion of schools and colleges.

6.7 Access to assessment: diversity and inclusion

General qualifications are designed to prepare students for a wide range of occupations and further study. Therefore our qualifications must assess a wide range of competences.

The subject criteria have been assessed to see if any of the skills or knowledge required present any possible difficulty to any students, whatever their ethnic background, religion, sex, age, disability or sexuality. If any difficulties were encountered, the criteria were reviewed again to make sure that tests of specific competences were only included if they were important to the subject.

As members of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) we participate in the production of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments: General and Vocational qualifications*. We follow these guidelines when assessing the needs of individual students who may require an access arrangement or reasonable adjustment. This document is published on the JCQ website at jcq.org.uk

6.7.1 Students with disabilities and special needs

We can make arrangements for disabled students and students with special needs to help them access the assessments, as long as the competences being tested are not changed. Access arrangements must be agreed **before** the assessment. For example, a Braille paper would be a reasonable adjustment for a Braille reader but not for a student who does not read Braille.

We are required by the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to remove or lessen any disadvantage that affects a disabled student.

If you have students who need access arrangements or reasonable adjustments, you can apply using the Access arrangements online service at aqa.org.uk/eaqa

6.7.2 Special consideration

We can give special consideration to students who have been disadvantaged at the time of the assessment through no fault of their own – for example a temporary illness, injury or serious problem such as the death of a relative. We can only do this **after** the assessment.

Your exams officer should apply online for special consideration at aqa.org.uk/eaqa

For more information and advice about access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration please see aqa.org.uk/access or email accessarrangementsqueries@aqa.org.uk

6.8 Working with AQA for the first time

If your school or college has not previously offered any AQA specification, you need to register as an AQA centre to offer our specifications to your students. Find out how at aqa.org.uk/becomeacentre

6.9 Private candidates

This specification is not available to private candidates.

Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at aqa.org.uk/8261

You can talk directly to the Drama subject team:

E: drama@aqa.org.uk

T: 01483 556 301