



Questions matter



GCSE

**Drama**

8261/C NEA: Devising drama

Report on the Examination

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## Report on the Examination

The summer series saw the introduction of online centre submission for the first time on this component, which has replaced the postal submission of samples. Centres are to be commended for how they have adapted to the new procedures and moderation for the vast majority of centres was able to proceed very smoothly with the new paperless system. Further detailed feedback and guidance on online submission can be found towards the end of this report.

The standard of centre administration was generally very good, and samples tended to include all correct paperwork and video recordings.

As ever, it was pleasing to see many genuinely interesting Devising Logs and innovative examples of Devised Performance work. These were often testament to the creativity of the students involved, who clearly enjoyed the opportunity to demonstrate their theatrical skills in response to their chosen stimulus. Centres often took advantage of the openness of the practical task to enable student responses, guiding students in the choice of theatrical styles and offering stimuli suitable to their specific interests and abilities.

## Report on Devised Performance (AO2)

### Stimuli

Once again, the range of stimuli provided by centres was extremely diverse in range. Particular trends this year included:

- **Installations in drama studios**, comprising artefacts, text, images or props organised to suggest characters, locations or narratives (such as a murder mystery or police crime scene scenario). These were sometimes accompanied with evocative music and lighting.
- **A range of stimuli in different media with a shared topic**, such as the combination of a song, poem and image which were linked thematically. Some equally successful responses were drawn from a range of stimuli which were unconnected to each other.
- **Practical workshops with students** exploring particular stimuli, themes or narratives. Where this approach was taken, it was common for students to engage in some initial exercises to explore the stimuli practically. This sometimes enabled students to demonstrate the ability to create and develop ideas theatrically. Occasionally, this became repetitive and not particularly illuminating. For example, many students created a series of freeze frames in response to each stimulus but were not able to highlight how this aided them in developing a potential devised piece. Some description in the Devising Log of every still image created from every discarded stimulus sometimes became laborious without necessarily attracting credit.

Centres are reminded that where practical workshops are used to stimulate ideas, these tend to be more successful when there are clearly identified stimuli which are central to the workshop. Where the initial practical exploration is abstract or vague, students often struggle to clearly identify their stimuli or to concretely address how they created ideas in response to the chosen stimulus.

Workshops exploring theatrical skills, styles and/or practitioners tended to be very valuable when conducted prior to the devising process. However, these workshops tended to be less successful when they represented the entirety of the stimuli provided, as students then tended to lack thematic ideas for the actual content of the piece.

In addition, the various types of stimuli seen in previous years also continued to be prevalent:

- **Images** – these included photographs, paintings, and sculptures. Many interesting responses related to artworks in an abstract style which were open to various readings, enabling the development of original ideas in the Devising Log.
- **Novels and existing stories** – these often had potential for generating ideas for an original devised piece. Centres are reminded that the devised performance must be an original and inventive piece created by students and not simply the performance of existing play scripts.
- **Folk stories, fairy tales, myths, and legends** – these were increasingly common and often provided rich inspiration. Examples of local folklore often engaged students and some students explored traditions of oral storytelling very creatively.
- **Poetry and spoken word** – these were increasingly used as stimuli in this series.
- **News articles, interviews, and verbatim text** – these often led students into investigating topical issues or current affairs. Clever use was made of text, including speeches delivered at conferences, court transcripts, interview testimonies and historic documents. Socio-political pieces resulting from these stimuli continue to be very popular. Some students had very astutely sourced opinions on their chosen topic from online blogs or social media posts, using these as the basis for each scene.
- **Music** – as in previous series, song lyrics have been a valuable source of ideas, and it was common for students who had heard the same lyrics to pick up on a range of different interpretations. Similarly, the musical style, mood or atmosphere generated by a piece of instrumental music often sparked the imagination of students.
- **Films** – video material taken from television series, news programmes, documentaries and online clips were often the catalyst for lively group debate and discussion, which allowed students to generate theatrical ideas by considering the dramatic potential.
- **Text** – including quotations which were provocative, philosophical, or generated debate. Word clouds centred around a particular theme were also an interesting starting point.
- **Physical objects and artefacts** – often with a historical significance or other connotations.

The specification is not prescriptive in terms of the stimuli chosen and centres are encouraged to select material which is likely to engage and inspire students in their particular context. However, it is a requirement to provide a range of stimuli, without which students are unable to respond to these and evidence their choice. There is no need to detail each of the discarded stimuli in the log at great length, but there is a requirement to give a flavour of the stimuli provided, to explain the individual response and evidence the choice of stimulus. It is acceptable to take influence from multiple stimuli, provided this is fully explained.

As in previous series, stimuli which had very obvious connotations were less successful as students lacked scope to give a response which was highly developed or creative. This was particularly evident in some centres where all students had been given one stimulus with limited room for interpretation and a meaning which seemed too blatant. Where this led all students down identical paths, the work sometimes became derivative and repetitive, giving limited scope for developing a Section 1 response.

### Styles and Genres

Working in an identified theatrical style or genre is not a mandatory requirement. However, this is an overwhelmingly common way of working in many centres and often aids students in giving them a clear sense of direction. The most common styles and genres reported were:

- **Political theatre, documentary drama and verbatim** – socio-political source material often lent itself to these styles. Students tended to develop a didactic performance with a clear message often using a non-linear or episodic structure. The resulting performances were often driven by a clear sense of purpose in communicating this. Brechtian influence was often evident in these pieces to varying degrees, with mixed success.
- **Ensemble storytelling and choral work** – this was often a very successful approach to telling a story or exploring an issue and is increasingly prevalent in student practical work. Often students transitioned inventively between scenes, using minimal resources, employing physical skills and abstract movement inventively. Unison of text and/or movement was often effective when used sparingly.
- **Non-naturalistic work** which utilised a mixture of styles is increasingly common and often allows students creative freedom, avoiding the need to adhere too narrowly to the techniques associated with a particular genre or practitioner, but rather to be creative in selecting the most appropriate device in the context of their piece. This enabled some very impressive work, particularly at the top end of achievement. It also created a range of interesting creative challenges for designers to accommodate.
- **Physical theatre** was less common as an overall style in this series, but the techniques associated with the style were very much evident in some scenes. As ever, inserting a formulaic movement sequence without clear purpose in meeting intentions tended to be a feature of less successful work. There is a trend in some centres to have the entire cohort insert a physical theatre sequence, but this does not always aid students without a strong skillset in this area or where the movement seemed out of place.
- **Comedy** was a rarer choice but was successful when students had the necessary performance skills to create humour. This was often in the form of comic timing, heightened characters or a satirical approach to contemporary issues and events. Some very successful examples of melodrama and commedia were also seen. When students lacked the necessary skillset or were simply too indulgent in their performance, this was less successful.
- **Naturalistic** performances were fairly common, but tended to be stronger when realistic scenes were balanced with more stylised segments allowing performers to show a wider range of skills relevant to the contrasting styles. As with the previous series, naturalistic performances which relied on clichéd topics and bland roleplays were rarely successful. Often such work lacked pace and went on far beyond the necessary time. Work which is too pedestrian tends to lack inventiveness and students should be encouraged to make their work theatrical and dramatically interesting to have the best opportunity to meet the criteria.

There was a trend in this series towards more pieces in which it was clear to the moderator that the work was partially or entirely improvised in performance around a basic structure. Improvisation is often used very positively to generate ideas in rehearsal, but the quality of improvisation in performance was usually very poor, as often students simply seemed unprepared. Many pieces of this type seemed aimless, with scenes seeming to go around in circles with little structure or dramatic technique. These pieces also tended to be extremely lengthy (sometimes exceeding the maximum length set out in the specification) without sufficient intrigue or skill to sustain the audience engagement. The marks awarded tend to be far stronger where work is fully prepared, purposeful, and precise and as such, centres are advised to avoid including improvisation.

Practitioner influence was evident in a significant proportion of the work seen, not least in the Devising Log where students outlined the impact their practitioner(s) had in the creation and development of ideas. There were fewer students who chose to make their work entirely consonant with their practitioner, but moderators reported a range of work influenced by Brecht, Stanislavski, The Paper Birds, Frantic Assembly, Gecko, Kneehigh, Artaud and Berkoff. It is not a requirement to utilise a practitioner at GCSE, but this provided a suitable challenge for more able students, particularly where they had seen a relevant live production or had participated in a practical workshop with professionals. Similarly, design students often used research into the work of professional designers as something concrete on which to base their own ideas and take inspiration. For weaker students, this tended to create an unnecessary extra demand and proved to be a hindrance rather than a help.

Very few promenade or immersive performances were seen in this series and most work tended to be performed end-on in a studio space, theatre or school hall.

### Themes

Themes were fairly similar to those seen in previous series. Common themes observed by moderators included:

- Social media, cyberbullying, dangers of technology, artificial intelligence
- Stages of grief, mental health, suicide, body image
- Identity, inequality, sexuality, hate crimes, misogyny (particularly Andrew Tate)
- Women's rights, violence against women, sexual assault, suffragettes
- Racism, discrimination, particularly the Windrush Generation
- Politics and current affairs, elections, political scandals, dystopian societies
- Celebrities, fame, the entertainment industry, corruption in sport
- War and conflict, including the war in Ukraine
- Climate change and the environment, particularly Greta Thunberg
- True crime, murders, missing people, unsolved mysteries, conspiracy theories
- Historic and contemporary events (eg Hillsborough disaster, London Riots, Brexit, Covid)
- Explorations of society and culture in particular times or places (eg American Dream, portrayal of women in 1950s advertising)

### Specialisms

Once again, the vast majority of students were entered as performers. There were a significant number of lighting, set and costume designers. As in previous series, very few examples of sound or puppet design were seen. Unfortunately, moderators again reported examples of students entered with incorrect specialisms in this series, such as 'prop designer' or 'make-up designer.' These are not specialisms offered in the specification (although of course, costume design can include hair and make-up. Set design can include props).

It is not acceptable to combine multiple specialisms or to infringe the maximum number of students for each specialism within a group, as outlined in the specification. Each group must contain between two and six performers and no more than one of each design specialism. The specialism must be clearly noted on page 4 of the Candidate Record Form (CRF), as in a very small number of cases the student's chosen specialism was unclear or had changed during the process.

## Performer

Moderators again reported seeing many performers who made an excellent contribution to their piece, showing a high level of skill and successfully meeting their aims.

Successful performers in this series often:

- Deployed their skills with appropriate energy and characterisation. These performers were committed, precise and suitably expressive in performance, showing a high level of skill and competency vocally and physically.
- Demonstrated an extensive range of the performance skills listed in the specification, as appropriate to the style of piece they had created.
- Appeared in strong performance pieces which gave them opportunities to showcase their skills. All students are marked as individuals, but often the piece enables individual students to demonstrate their capabilities by creating moments in which they can do so. Similarly, some strong ensemble work allowed individual contributors to be credited.
- Showed real flair in their performance and took a creative approach, utilising dramatic styles and techniques inventively, with a real sense of theatricality.
- Had sufficient exposure within a piece of appropriate length, undertaking a pivotal role and making a key contribution to the piece.
- Were engaging to watch, sustaining their performance with focus, control, and a real sense of occasion.
- Clearly defined their intentions in the Statement of Dramatic Intentions, meeting these targets in their individual performance without creating excessive or unattainable goals.
- Had chosen a stimulus which sustained their interest during rehearsals. Stimuli which were sufficiently rich and thought-provoking often avoided a piece that was basic or simplistic. Genuine engagement in the chosen topic often shines through in performance.

Less successful performers:

- Improvised some or all of their scenes, often resulting in a lacklustre performance which dragged on without sustaining the audience engagement.
- Seemed to lack the necessary ‘toolkit’ of theatrical skills, techniques and dramatic devices which might have aided them in constructing their piece, meaning they relied on basic roleplays and clichés.
- Lacked stage presence, struggled with the basics of staging, characterisation, and vocal projection. Some performers were insincere or lacking in energy and commitment to their role/s.
- Appeared in performances which lacked direction or a clear sense of purpose. These performances were often derivative in both content and style, with little originality or creativity and few inventive moments or ideas.
- Showed a narrow range of skills, making little attempt to demonstrate the competencies outlined in the specification.
- Had minimal dialogue, or even no dialogue, which inevitably limited their ability to demonstrate the vocal skills listed in the specification.
- Lacked exposure on stage with minor roles, meaning their contribution to the piece was rather limited.
- Had very basic aims in their Statement of Dramatic Intentions (sometimes only a few words) and were not successful in meeting their aims in performance.

A sense of occasion is an enormously valuable tool in encouraging performers to ‘raise their game’ and this is evident in the work seen by moderators. Many performers rise to the occasion when there is an

audience present and when the work is performed in an appropriate space with basic stage lighting and/or costume. These are not essential requirements and are not marked (unless there is a design student) but are some ways in which centres ensure performers fully invest in their performance. Scene changes are a very common missed opportunity in devised work. Too often, some performances relied on lengthy blackouts or shifting of furniture, out of role and in full view of the audience for extended periods of time. This often results in lost momentum and weakens the sense of performance. Performers are marked for the entirety of the time they are on stage. Stronger students tended to make scene changes slick and disciplined or to find ways of transitioning inventively so that the audience continued to be engaged more seamlessly. Designers also contributed to many scene changes creatively.

## Designer

As in the previous series, many centres entering designers provided extraneous materials. For example, there is no requirement for students to give a presentation to camera explaining their design (unless this is being entered as an audio/visual Devising Log and is clearly divided into the three sections). Like performers, designers are assessed on AO2 only in the recorded performance of the devised piece. If a recorded presentation to camera is provided this is not viewed or marked by moderators.

Designers can attach diagrams, sketches, plots and/or cue sheets to the Statement of Dramatic Intentions if they wish. These are **not** marked but can be useful in clarifying intentions to the moderator. Otherwise, all design materials should be contained within a specific section of the Devising Log and such logs must be within the word/page/time limits outlined in the specification.

Some centres had provided various additional materials for designers (recorded presentations, PowerPoint slides, sketch books, mood boards etc) *in addition to* a Devising Log which was already at the maximum word count. As well as being beyond the accepted word count, these additional materials were often not divided into the three Devising Log sections and did not address the required content of the Devising Log on page 26 of the specification. As such, these materials could not attract any credit. Design students should be reminded that there are only two tasks which are marked: the Devising Log (AO1 and AO4) and the marking of the design in the Devised Performance recording (AO2). It would often be more beneficial to these students to include design materials within the relevant section of the log. Students should ensure that any photographs or diagrams showing their designs are annotated or are alongside text which explains the relevance of what is being shown in relation to the content of the Devising Log, to attract credit.

## Lighting designer

Many impressive lighting designs were seen in this series. Successful lighting designers:

- Were ambitious in covering an extensive range of skills utilising a large number of lighting states and various lanterns effectively to meet the criteria.
- Considered intensity, colour, angle and focus, using washes, spots, gobos, projection, moving lights, floodlights and/or strobes to create their desired effects.
- Had thought carefully about the timing of transitions between states, utilising snaps and crossfades effectively.
- Were able to think creatively about possibilities for their design. Moderators reported examples of practical lighting, handheld torches and battery-powered LEDs used in conjunction with stage lighting. Whilst most lighting was rigged, there were examples of floor-mounted lanterns, side lights and lights attached to scenery or metal rostra on stage.

- Worked closely with the performers to ensure that their lighting design supported the piece and made a strong contribution.
- Achieved intentions, such as creating mood and atmosphere or establishing a setting.
- Had been thorough in their preparations, evident in a detailed cue sheet and/or lighting plot. These are not mandatory but are very useful in clarifying intentions to the moderator when attached to the statement. They can also be annotated to illustrate points made in the log.
- Were able to isolate different areas of the stage, where appropriate, to focus the audience attention.
- Found opportunities to be inventive in the design, showing creativity. For example, one design included a gauze material which had been cleverly backlit to create shadows and silhouettes. In other scenes, LED strip lights in floor-mounted battens created a colour wash on the gauze as a backdrop to the action happening downstage.

#### Less successful lighting designers:

- Included lighting states which appeared rather patchy or messy without a clear sense of what was being achieved. Some of these students were also too vague in their Statement of Dramatic Intention, which made the design seem muddled or without clear purpose.
- Utilised a very basic range of skills and included few lighting states. For example, repeatedly flicking back and forth between a basic stage wash and a single spotlight demonstrated a narrow range of skills and was insufficient to achieve highly.
- Lacked sufficiently inventive ideas, often as a result of lack of collaboration in rehearsal.
- Lit the piece after it had been created, meaning the piece had very few lighting requirements. As such, the lighting designer struggled to make a significant contribution.
- Lacked ambition in the design or seemingly had not made a sincere attempt. Such students often had an incomplete Devising Log and a very brief Statement of Dramatic Intentions.

### Sound Designer

Very few sound designs were seen in this series, but the quality of designs seen represented the full range of achievement.

Successful sound designs often had some of the following features:

- Went beyond the use of basic pre-recorded sound effects and music, showing a more extensive range of the skills listed in the specification.
- Utilised pre-recorded sound, but also considered how live sound might be heard through use of radio mics and/or standing microphones.
- Considered the live output in their design and utilised the sound desk. For example, by adding echo, reverb, amplification, controlling volume levels and adding crossfades.
- Considered positioning of speakers, both on stage and in the auditorium. Some sound designers had collaborated with set designers effectively. For example, in one group using a gramophone, the sound designer had hidden a wireless speaker behind it to make it appear that the music played was coming from this source. Another faded the sound effect of a helicopter between speakers rigged stage left and stage right to create the effect that it was flying overhead whilst crossfading to a piece of instrumental music. These inventive ideas attracted credit.
- Manipulated recorded sound using software to cut, edit, overlap, and add special effects to existing tracks.
- Designed for pieces in which music and sound effects were a useful embellishment, allowing the designer to deploy a range of cues.

- Created mood and atmosphere, helped to establish location or suggested off-stage action using a range of diegetic and non-diegetic sounds.

Less successful sound designers:

- Provided music for the opening and closing or to cover scene changes, but little else, lacking ambition in their design.
- Used a basic range of pre-recorded sound effects but did not attempt to demonstrate many of the skills outlined in the specification.
- Had very few cues and made a minimal contribution to the overall piece.
- Lacked sufficient inventiveness in their approach.
- Had aims which were undeveloped and were not achieved. Often an incomplete Devising Log and lack of cue sheet/sound plot evidenced a cursory approach to the design.

### **Set Designer**

It is very pleasing to see an increasing number of ambitious and skilful set designs, where designers have clearly embellished and supported the performances, they have been a part of.

Successful set designers:

- Ensured any furniture, props and set dressings were suitable to the style and/or period of the devised piece, where relevant.
- Often went beyond basic furniture and props, considering the overall look of the whole stage space to show an extensive range of skills. Some set designers used backdrops, raised levels, steps and flats. One designer had painted the stage floor to give the effect of it being covered in leaves, whilst another had used hessian fabric to create an appropriate texture on the surfaces of their set.
- Were creative in using the resources they had to create the best effects. Moderators reported small items hung from the rig, collages displayed on an easel and stage blocks which had been covered in a sand texture to suggest a desert location.
- Created opportunities for performers to utilise the set inventively and collaborated with other designers, where appropriate. For example, one set designer had included a large white canvas frame within the design which was used effectively for video projection.

Less successful set designers:

- Were careless, leaving much of the overall stage picture with the appearance of a school classroom where this was unsuitable for the style and setting of the piece and/or the stated intentions of the designer.
- Produced very basic or frugal designs which lacked ambition in showing a range of skills. Providing a few basic props or items of furniture will be insufficient to meet the marking criteria of the higher bands.
- Created few opportunities for the performers to utilise the set creatively, to interact with props and/or to enable their movement around the set.
- Had not collaborated with the performers sufficiently and produced a set which made little contribution in performance. For example, in one piece about climate change, a series of small promenade-style settings were positioned around the space depicting various environments and creating levels on wooden crates. However, the entire piece was performed on the floor downstage of this, meaning the set was not utilised in performance and served only as a backdrop. This represented a missed opportunity for inventive moments where the set could be

utilised by the performers. Instances such as this often reflected a lack of collaboration in rehearsal.

### Costume Designer

Some strong costume designs were seen in this series which made a clear contribution to establishing character or reinforcing the chosen style.

The successful costume designers:

- Had considered the performer they were costuming from ‘head to toe’ in addition to a range of carefully chosen garments, this often included footwear, headgear, accessories, hair and make-up designs.
- Considered colour, material, texture, cut, fit, length and any appropriate ornamentation.
- Ensured the design suited the piece and performer in terms of comfort, fit and movement constraints.
- Sourced their garments carefully or made alterations to achieve their desired effect. Costume designers are not assessed on the construction and need not create the costume from scratch, but sometimes simple adaptations were very effective to ensure the design was realised in performance. For example, many students added distress to items of clothing or used fabric paints to add detail to garments they had sourced. Another designer had spray-painted the buttons on the jacket of a circus ringmaster to make them appear golden and metallic.
- Included many inventive ideas, ranging from elaborate headpieces and masks in fantasy performances to the creation of bruises and wounds in war-themed pieces.
- Took a rigorous approach, evidenced through the accompanying sketches and mood boards in the Devising Log and/or attached to the Statement of Dramatic Intentions.

Unfortunately, there was an increase in the trend from the previous series in which many costume designers stated in their Devising Log and/or Statement of Dramatic Intentions that they had designed costumes ‘for the whole group.’ The specification states that costume designers ‘**must** create **one** costume design for **one** performer.’ Students can design more than one costume if they wish, **but only one design is assessed**. Very often this meant weaker costume designers created unnecessary additional demands for themselves.

The **one** costume design presented for assessment should be the main focus of the Devising Log and the sole focus of the Statement of Dramatic Intention. In cases where designers had not identified a single costume, the moderator had to select one of the designs to mark for AO2. Centres are urged to ensure that costume designers follow this guidance.

Less successful costume designers:

- Settled on their design immediately, often in isolation from their group, lacking experimentation or research into different possibilities. This weakened their ability to discuss development and refinement in the Devising Log.
- Produced a basic design which did not encompass the range of skills in the specification.
- Designed costumes for the whole group, which created an unnecessary additional demand and, in many cases, reduced the quality of the one design which was assessed.
- Lacked inventive ideas and made little contribution to the communication of meaning.
- Produced designs inappropriate to demands of the piece in terms of the character, style and/or time period.

## Puppet Designer

No puppet designs were reported to the Principal Moderator in samples moderated in this series.

## Statement of Dramatic Intentions

Once again, the strongest Statements of Dramatic Intentions in this series created suitable individual aims relating to the chosen specialism. The best statements broadly followed the recommended word count, as well as being concise, clear and achievable. The statement itself is not marked but is the basis on which marks are awarded in performance for the ‘success in realising individual artistic intentions.’ As such, it is compulsory to provide one. Students must use the sentence starters provided, explaining what they intend to show through their performance/design and how they wish the audience to respond. A focus on what is being communicated and the desired impact or reaction tends to be the most successful approach. Some statements were self-penalising, for example, stating an intention to multi-role effectively where only one role was played.

## Marking the Devised Performance (AO2)

**Level of theatrical skill** – this refers to the competency with which the theatrical skills relevant to the chosen specialism are sustained. The most common trend in this series was to award full marks to performers who were secure but not highly competent and highly developed. Otherwise, the level of skill was accurately marked in most cases. Centres are reminded to refer to Teacher Online Standardisation (TOLS) before marking, which includes representation of all levels of achievement.

**Range of theatrical skills demonstrated** – this refers to the skills listed under Section 3.4 Guidance on theatrical skills, on pages 17-19 of the specification. This is one of the most common areas to lose marks. Whilst it is not expected that students will demonstrate every skill listed, centres may wish to familiarise students with the range of skills they might show evidence of. This is particularly true of designers, many of whom did not attempt a large number of the skills outlined. Performers tended to be more accurately marked. TOLS contains students achieving at all levels of the mark scheme and centres are again advised to access the materials on this resource before marking students work.

**Contribution to the effectiveness of the piece** – this exists to reward those students whose contribution is outstanding, significant or pivotal to the effectiveness of the overall piece as evidenced in the performance. There is a tendency for centres to award the highest mark for this strand of the criteria to all students within a group. This is sometimes appropriate, but often does not reflect the range of contributions within the group. It is an individual mark for individual contribution rather than an identical mark awarded to all students for the quality of the piece. There is also a misconception evident in some centres that this reflects the contribution to the process or rehearsal period. The contribution to the effectiveness of the piece is marked entirely from the evidence in performance.

**Inventiveness of individual’s work** – students who were most theatrical in their realisation of the material tended to be most successful in this strand, deploying a range of techniques and taking an innovative approach to the structure and staging of their piece. Performers found inventive ways to apply their skills to create characters imaginatively and found inventive moments of ensemble work to which they were key contributors. Designers often contributed to inventive moments in which their design was utilised creatively or ensured that it had inventive qualities.

**Success in realising individual artistic intention** – where aims were too basic, vague or simply unachievable, this became self-penalising for these students. Marks can only be awarded for ‘success in realising individual artistic intention’ if the intentions have been stated. In some cases, marks had been awarded where the statement had been left blank and there was no evidence of the student’s intentions in the Devising Log. In these cases, a mark of zero should be awarded for success in realising these intentions.

### **Report on Devising Log (AO1 and AO4)**

Moderators continue to be impressed by the care and attention to detail that goes into many Devising Logs. Students often present these imaginatively, taking advantage of the opportunity to choose their preferred format from those offered in the specification to present their ideas. There were many successful Devising Logs in this series, from both performers and designers, outlining the entire process from stimulus to final performance. Those who kept focus on the required content (whilst explaining, analysing and evaluating in a strong level of detail) were appropriately rewarded.

Unfortunately, there are still a significant number of centres in which the logs of the entire cohort are not divided into the three clear sections required. This is a compulsory requirement of the task, as each section is marked separately with different content and a different mark scheme. All students **must** clearly title each of the three sections. Where individuals fail to do so, a best fit approach should be taken in which the marker denotes where the marking of one section ceased and the next began. It is **not** acceptable to adopt a ‘mix and match’ approach – points can only be credited when they appear in the correct section. Appendices are not permitted and should not be included. All content should be included in one of the three sections to attract credit.

There are also some instances in which little attention had been paid to the required content of the task under The Devising Log, on page 26 of the specification. Coverage of these points is essential, and students are penalised when they are not addressed. Any material which does not address the required points in the correct section is not awarded credit, so centres are urged to ensure that students focus entirely on the stated content, particularly given the maximum word count.

There is also a trend in some centres for the entire cohort to follow the same writing frame or to complete a highly structured workbook created by the centre with very formulaic and prescriptive prompt questions, sentence starters and paragraph headings. **In line with the JCQ stipulations on non-examined assessment, these approaches are deemed to be improper assistance and are not acceptable. This approach often results in a malpractice investigation.**

In some cases, it is clear that centres have been very prescriptive regarding what to include in the Devising Log. Where this drifts from the content on page 26 of the specification, it does not benefit students as they usually fail to address the task. For example, in one centre it was clear that all students had been told to include a rehearsal schedule, passages of their script and a list of stage types. These were not made relevant to the student’s own work, or the assessment objectives being tested and attracted no credit but used up significant portions of the word count.

Many centres have clearly been rigorous in advising students to adhere to the maximum word/page/time limits for the various log formats and it is the norm in many centres that no student exceeds this. In some centres, the opposite is true with many or all students significantly exceeding the word count. In this series moderators saw a significant number of Devising Logs reaching as many as 5,000 words, double what is permitted by the specification. Section 3 was often beyond the accepted word count in many of

these cases and teacher marking had rarely ceased at the upper limit. This brought the marking significantly out of tolerance in moderation. **Centres are reminded that no evidence beyond the maximum word/page/time limits is credited towards the Devising Log mark. Students must be urged to ensure that they do not exceed the maximum. An accurate word count must be provided on any written log. If a student exceeds the maximum, the teacher must cease marking at the upper limit.**

A small minority of students attempted to exceed the maximum by excluding some material from the total count, such as handwritten text or student annotations on an image. For the avoidance of doubt, **all words are included towards the count.**

In many centres, the standard of annotations on Devising Logs or comments on the Candidate Record Form (CRF) are excellent, demonstrating a rigorous approach to marking the work. It is clear from many annotations that internal standardisation has taken place to bring individual teachers into a shared standard. Many comments on CRFs are detailed, clear and entirely relevant to the work of the individual. Many annotations refer to the mark scheme and content, highlighting to the moderator where criteria have been addressed.

In centres where the marking was problematic or unclear to the moderator, this tended to be:

- Points credited when in the wrong section or crediting material beyond the maximum limit.
- Vague annotations where it was unclear what was being given credit, such as ‘voice’ rather than, for example, ‘*highly developed analysis of how far vocal skills developed.*’
- Annotations which made no reference to the content of the task/mark scheme criteria.
- Generic, copied and pasted comments for the whole cohort which did not reflect the work of the individual accurately.
- Moving a mark towards the top/bottom of a band where evidence of the band above/below was not present in the response.
- Not reflecting omissions in the mark (eg awarding full marks for Section 2 where there was no reference to feedback).
- Poor internal standardisation.

## Formats

The entirely written format remains by far the most popular approach to the Devising Log. The number of logs which use annotated materials or audio/visual content remains consistent with previous series, and these are very much in the minority. Set and costume designers tended to use the option to include annotated photographs, sketches and/or drawings. This was often beneficial, as the images included provided a useful illustration of the points made. Similarly, lighting and sound designers often included useful annotated cue sheets and/or plots. Unfortunately, some students include these materials without the necessary annotation to be credited.

Students opting for the annotated format must be reminded that:

- Materials **must** be annotated or alongside text with relevant explanation (Sections 1 and 2), analysis and evaluation (Section 3) to be awarded credit.
- The content under The Devising Log on page 26 of the specification and the mark scheme criteria should be addressed. Some students continue to produce very intricate and creative mood boards and other materials, for example, but with few links to the task being assessed.
- All materials must be included within the relevant Devising Log section(s) and not as appendices. Any materials not included in the log sections are not marked for AO1 or AO4. Any design

materials not in the Devising Log can be attached to the Statement of Dramatic Intentions, if desired. These are **not** marked for AO2 but can help to clarify the intentions to the moderator.

Audio/visual logs were a rare occurrence in this series. Where students had attempted this, they typically spoke directly to camera reading a pre-prepared script, meaning the format did not enable these students any more than the written option. Those students who were able to fluently explain their points orally from brief cue cards without reading a script tended to benefit more.

Only one of the formats listed on the CRF can be chosen. It is not acceptable to combine these.

### **Section 1: Response to a Stimulus (AO1)**

This tended to be the section awarded the highest mark in the Devising Log. The strongest students-maintained focus on the content outlined in the specification and progressed through these systematically, whilst ensuring their explanation was very clear and detailed throughout.

#### **Initial response to the stimuli presented by the teacher and the stimulus they chose**

Many responses in this series were very detailed, with students offering thorough explanation of the journey they had gone on from the range of stimuli presented, their initial response and the stimulus they chose. The task refers to ‘stimuli’ (plural), meaning it is important for students to evidence the range of stimuli they were presented with and to explain the reasons for their choice. Students who were presented with one stimulus or only mentioned one of the stimuli were inevitably less able to meet this demand. It is a requirement to provide more than one stimulus.

The most successful approach was to give a flavour of the response to multiple stimuli before developing greater depth on the chosen stimulus, considering its dramatic potential. Many students showed genuine interest in the material and were able to infer a range of connotations and theatrical possibilities from their chosen stimulus.

Weaker students did not explicitly identify their stimuli, alluding to their influences rather vaguely. Less successful responses were unable to infer meaning or to develop these ideas in detail.

#### **Ideas, themes and settings**

Again, students who were systematic in covering these three areas were most successful, developing their response fully and showing creativity in their ability to generate ideas for a devised piece. Those students who wrote about their initial ideas for the piece theatrically were most successful, envisioning how these ideas might be realised as a piece of devised drama. Successful responses tended to identify and explain a range of potential themes and settings, chronicling the journey of how these ideas had been created and developed in the group.

Less successful students tended to omit one or more of the three areas required or to lack development in their explanation, meaning the response was too brief or basic. Weaker students focused entirely on the plot of the proposed piece without giving theatrical performance ideas.

## Research findings

There continues to be a trend in some centres for students to copy and paste lengthy biographical information about a practitioner from the internet without citation and with little relevance to the student's own devised piece. Research is only credited where it is utilised purposefully to create and develop ideas for the devised piece.

Successful responses tended to quote their sources judiciously, giving precise detail of specific findings. Strong responses explained in detail how these findings were applied to aid the creation and development of ideas for the specific devised piece. Most research tended to focus on the ideas, themes and settings students had generated or to further examine the stimulus material. Some research examined practitioners, styles and dramatic techniques or investigated real people who were to be characters in the devised piece.

The least successful responses were not selective, simply including everything they had found with no explanation of how the findings were applied.

## Own dramatic aims and intentions and those of the piece as a whole

Successful responses covered a range of aims in detail, often referring to their intended character(s), the development of theatrical skills, the intended style/genre and the meaning which was to be communicated about the chosen theme(s). A focus on the audience was often helpful: the desired audience response, the intended reaction, the impact they wished to have or the message they wished to communicate (as appropriate). Strong responses tended to comprehensively elaborate on the aims and intentions with precise examples and initial ideas relating to how specific aims might be achieved.

Less successful students wrote about the individual intentions but omitted the intentions of the piece as a whole (or vice versa). Weaker responses tended to make broad sweeping statements with too much vagueness such as '*I want to have better facial expressions.*'

## Section 2: Development and Collaboration (AO1)

The holistic approach continues to be the most successful in this section, in which students synthesise the various points required in Section 2 into detailed examples, taking the reader on the journey from the initial idea for a character/scene/moment through its practical development and refinement, response to feedback and the final outcome.

The most common reason for lost marks was a descriptive approach, where aspects of the devised piece or individual performance were *described* rather than being clearly *developed*. Many stronger responses gave practical explanation of multiple versions of the performance/design to evidence how it had evolved, highlighting how feedback, ideas of the individual/group and practical exercises had been used to refine skills and the piece. Weaker students tended to focus entirely on the narrative of the performance, with no sense of how the piece had been developed practically or the use of theatrical skills. Another feature of weak responses was a focus on absences, illnesses and arguments, giving reasons for the lack of progress rather than explaining what *had* been achieved.

### **Own ideas and those of the pair/group**

Successful students tended to begin each of their examples by explaining where the initial idea for the scene/character/moment had emerged from, often showing a highly collaborative and developmental approach. For example, one student wrote, *'I had come up with the idea to create a satire of the politician's character by making him incredibly heightened, whilst another member of my group then suggested that we could juxtapose my character's speech with an image of my constituents by using a split stage.'* Highlighting the provenance of each idea and explaining the influence of both the individual and group aided students in meeting this demand of the task.

### **Development and refinement of the piece**

Strong responses took a group perspective to distinguish this section from the writing on individual skills. Successful students tended to select key scenes, explaining with a practical focus how the scenes had been developed and refined in rehearsal, with precise detail including quotations of key lines, explanation of staging and positioning and how various techniques had been applied practically to key moments. Rehearsal strategies had also been applied and specific details were given regarding exactly what occurred practically in the process with a clear outcome. Other successful students described an initial version of a scene or moment which was not functioning as intended in meeting the aims, explaining how it was developed and refined towards a more successful outcome.

Weaker students tried to cover too many examples, covering each very briefly. This inevitably meant that that detail was lost. There was also a tendency in less successful responses to focus largely on script writing or the plot of the piece, rather than how it was refined practically. Many students were too descriptive in this section, and some very articulate students wrote evocative descriptions which received very little credit as they lacked explanation of how the piece had evolved. Development and refinement is crucial.

Many design students continue to omit this part of the task, particularly costume designers. All students must cover the development and refinement of the *piece*, not exclusively their own chosen theatrical skill.

### **Development and refinement of own skills**

Some very strong responses explained how the chosen skill had been developed and refined, particularly for the design specialisms. It is very pleasing to see costume and set designers using annotated photographs, sketches and drawings to highlight how their design had evolved at different stages. Similarly, lighting and sound designers often explained how their skills had developed with exemplification from annotated cue sheets and plots. Centres are reminded that these materials must be annotated or alongside text which explains the relevance of the materials being shown, in relation to the required content for the Devising Log, on page 26 of the specification.

Moderators saw the full range of achievement with regards to performers in this section. Successful students gave very precise detail and examples of particular characters, moments and lines of dialogue (with quotation), highlighting how their acting skills had been developed and refined. A significant range of different skills were referred to, with detailed descriptions used to bring the moment to life for the reader and a clear focus on what had been done in rehearsal to improve a specific aspect of that character.

Rehearsal strategies were referred to in many cases, including the use of improvisation, hot seating, role on the wall, character profiles etc. These were given credit only when precise detail was given of how these strategies were utilised, as well as what the practical outcome was for the student's own skills in performance. Many students wrote rather superficially or unconvincingly about these approaches which attracted little credit when the explanation was too broad or vague.

### **Response to feedback**

Successful students included specific feedback from teachers and/or peers throughout each of their examples. The best examples of feedback often related to specifics of character, particular moments and how successfully the intended audience impact had been achieved. Work in progress performances and/or dress rehearsals were often used to facilitate this feedback. Where the feedback was precise, it often enabled a meaningful response in which students could explain how they developed and refined the piece and/or theatrical skills in light of this advice.

Weaker responses tended to utilise very basic or simplistic feedback, which had limited scope for a developed response. This included comments such as *'our teacher told us we had to face the front so we made sure we were always facing the front,'* *'my friend told me she couldn't hear us so we spoke louder'* and *'I was told to stand still and stop fidgeting so I did this.'*

### **How individuals used their refined theatrical skills and ideas in the final piece**

For performers, the most efficient approach to address this part of the content was to ensure that the final outcome of each refinement was clearly explained throughout the response, rather than necessarily dedicating a separate section which became detached from the process of development of skills and the piece.

Many designers dedicated a page of an annotated log to showing their final costume/set design or the final copy of the cue sheet for a lighting/sound design. These could then be annotated with the details of skills used and explanation of the final outcome. Whichever approach students take, there should be evidence of how refined skills and ideas were utilised in the final piece.

### **Section 3: Analysis and Evaluation (AO4)**

Successful students ensured their writing was highly analytical of the meaning communicated by their theatrical choices for an audience and formulated evaluative judgements on the merits and areas for improvement in their work. Moderators saw many responses which were a joy to read, with convincing detail and thorough exemplification of individual work reflecting on the process and performance. The strongest approach tended to be a systematic progression through each of the four areas of content outlined in the specification.

Weaker responses tended to be too broad in their appraisal, making sweeping statements without precise detail or exemplification. Some students were too simplistic in their analysis and evaluation or lacked focus on the content in the specification. A brief sentence of analysis and evaluation at the end of each paragraph was insufficient to meet the higher mark bands – it is essential that students sustain an analytical and evaluative approach throughout the response. The task demands a focus largely on the individual contribution rather than the group.

### **How far they developed their theatrical skills**

This section requires a clear focus on individual performance or design skills, as appropriate. The most successful responses tended to focus on a precise example where specific skills had been developed during the devising process, then using the outcome in the final performance to analyse precisely how far those skills had developed, evaluating the effectiveness. Successful students kept focus on AO4 by punctuating their response with analytical and evaluative comments throughout, giving a clear appraisal of how far their own theatrical skills had developed.

Weaker responses tended to be overly descriptive or made broad comments about the piece itself, rather than the student's own theatrical skills. A broad overview of the whole performance rarely offered much insight and tended to lack the precise exemplification required.

### **Benefits brought to the pair/group and the way in which they positively shaped the outcome**

As in previous series, most responses fell into one of two categories. The most successful approach was to focus on *creative* contributions which were made to the devising process by the individual. This included suggestions for staging, techniques, characterisation and/or style, for example. Students were then able to trace this suggestion through the process with a thorough example of how the suggestion manifested practically in a given scene or moment from the piece, evidencing the way in which they positively shaped the outcome as theatre makers.

The less successful approach was to lose sight of the theatrical nature of the devising process. Moderators saw a range of comments in this category relating to generic transferrable skills and qualities rather than benefits brought as dramatists. This included '*I always turned up on time*,' '*I always tried to break up arguments in the group*' or '*I was good at time management*.' Such comments lost sight of the creative contribution students are expected to make and lacked scope for detailed analysis and evaluation relevant to the process of devising a piece of original drama.

### **Overall impact they had as individuals**

This often seemed to be the area which many students found most straightforward to analyse and evaluate, leading to some very successful responses. Many students gave precise examples from their performance, comprehensively detailing the impact had on the audience and evaluating the success of the approach taken. Designers often highlighted how pivotal their work had been to the communication of meaning in the piece, exemplifying this with specific aspects of the design. Weaker responses tended to focus on the group/piece as a whole rather than the individual contribution.

### **Areas for further development**

There is a tendency to make broad generalisations regarding areas for further development. Comments such as '*If we did it again we would spend more time rehearsing and make the piece longer*' were typical of less successful responses. Some students in the lower bands of the mark scheme also tend to focus on simplistic points ('*This scene was rubbish so we should have cut it*') or small errors and mistakes with little room for analysis, such as '*I forgot my line so I need to spend more time learning them*' or '*I missed my cue for the lights so I need to remember it*.'

The key to success is analysing and evaluating these areas for further development in equal depth to the earlier points. This was often achieved with more specific examples of things which did not *quite* go as well as they'd hoped, rather than writing off an aspect of the performance as irredeemable. Successful responses tended to analyse and evaluate the chosen example and make detailed suggestions for improvement.

### Centre Administration

Centres are to be commended for their approach in the first year of online submission for this component. The vast majority of samples were well-administered, including all necessary materials, uploaded correctly and appropriately tagged to individual students. Moderators appreciate this enormously and, in most cases, the paperless submission and moderation ran very smoothly this year. We hope centres will welcome the ability to upload materials in future series rather than relying on postal submission.

Most centres met the deadline for mark submission. **7<sup>th</sup> May 2025** is the deadline for online mark submission in the Summer 2025 series. Centres then have **three working days** to upload the sample. Inevitably there were some teething problems with the new system and moderators endeavoured to be sensitive to this when chasing up missing work. Most student samples were submitted on time. Deadlines are published [here](#).

### Online submission

There was confusion amongst some centres this year regarding which system to use. Component 2 (8261/C) uses **Centre Mark Submission (CMS)** to input marks and upload samples. Please note that this is different to the **Digital Media Submissions Portal** which is used by other subjects. Access to Centre Mark Submission is via Centre Services, but ability to upload depends on the permissions given to individual user accounts. We recommend liaising with your Exams Officer to administer the submission. Full guidance on the online submission is available [here](#).

There was also some confusion around Component 3 (8261/X), as some centres mistakenly uploaded and submitted Component 3 work to the Component 2 moderator. Please note that at present, Component 3 does **not** use the online submission system and work is sent to the examiner on USB, as per all previous series.

In some rare cases where students were affected by illness or other special circumstances, teachers had attempted to estimate a mark for that student without the necessary assessment evidence. Please note that such marks are **not** accepted and centres are instructed to adjust to the correct mark for the evidence available. In these cases, centres should apply for special consideration. Full details are available [here](#). Please do not submit marks for moderation where the assessment evidence to support the mark does not exist unless this has been appropriately reported as lost coursework.

In some instances where a centre had lost student work, this had not been appropriately reported in advance. Moderators cannot moderate work where evidence is lost or incomplete unless this is due to non-submission and a mark of zero has been recorded for the relevant piece of work. Centres are urged to follow the [guidance](#) for lost coursework well in advance to ensure that the moderation can proceed.

Moderators reported examples of incorrect addition in the totalling of marks and disparities between marks recorded online and those recorded on the Candidate Record Form or the work itself. This causes

delays in the process as centres must unlock the sample to correct any errors. There were also some cases where the breakdown of marks was not included or was unclear (eg awarding five marks for one of the AO2 criteria rather than the maximum mark of four). Please ensure all marks are recorded clearly and accurately.

### **Paperwork Required**

The following materials must be uploaded to the **Student Files** section in the online sample and tagged to the relevant student(s):

- [Candidate Record Form](#) for each student (electronic signatures are acceptable)
- **Devising Log** for each student
- **Recordings of Devised Performance(s)** for each student in the sample (plus close-ups of the work of set, costume and puppet designers)
- **Programme Notes** – organised by performance group, containing a photograph of each student with their student number, name and specialism.

The following form should be uploaded to the **Centre Declarations** section in the online sample:

- [Centre Declaration Sheet](#)

Please send the following forms to [neadeclaration@aqa.org.uk](mailto:neadeclaration@aqa.org.uk) by **15<sup>th</sup> May** in the certificating year:

- [Performance Duration Declaration](#)
- [Live Performance Declaration](#)

Occasionally, centres contact AQA when special circumstances or issues arise. Where written permission has been given (such as for the use of non-examinees), centres must provide evidence of this to the moderator. In these cases, please upload a copy of the relevant written permission to the **Centre Declarations** section of the online sample. Any specific arrangements must also be made very clear in the Programme Notes (such as which student is being assessed in which performance in the cases of non-examinees).

Some work had been scanned from hard copy in an incorrect order or with pages missing, which created difficulties for moderators. Where specific pieces of material are missing from the sample or files are corrupted, moderators made contact with the centre which often created a delay. Please ensure all necessary materials are correctly uploaded. In the event that centres need to make amendments when contacted by the moderator after submission, the Exams Officer must contact [eos@aqa.org.uk](mailto:eos@aqa.org.uk) to unlock the sample.

Please ensure that all files are correctly tagged to the relevant student(s) as moderators can only view the files relevant to the students they are sampling. It is possible to upload a document once, but tag to multiple students (eg performance recordings and programme notes). Detailed guidance on online submission is available [here](#). This includes file naming conventions, accepted file formats and tagging files to students.

## Rubric Infringements

There was an increase in the number of rubric infringements reported by moderators in this series. Centres are reminded that the following constitute rubric infringements:

- Devised Performances which are shorter than the minimum time permitted by the specification. In these instances, a penalty is applied to the mark by AQA. The size of the reduction is proportionate to the severity of the timing infringement.
- Devised Performances which are longer than the maximum time permitted by the specification.
- Devising Logs which exceed the maximum word/page/time limits. In these instances, teachers and moderators **must** stop marking at the upper limit. This was by far the most common rubric infringement and in most cases, teachers had not ceased marking at the upper limit. This brought these students significantly out of tolerance in moderation and caused marks to be adjusted. An accurate word count **must** be clearly stated on any written Devising Log. **All** words within the log are included towards the count.

In addition:

- It is not acceptable to use non-examined students unless written permission has been obtained from AQA in special circumstances. The exception is where the centre is entering only one student, in which case a non-examinee is permitted to make up the minimum number of two performers.
- Performances must not be edited. Each performance must appear in a continuous video file without breaks (though separate performances can be in separate video files).
- Performances must be recorded with a single camera from the audience perspective.
- Performances must contain between two and six performers, and no more than one design student for each of the design specialisms. **Monologues are not accepted as evidence of a Devised Performance under any circumstances.**

## Recordings of Performances and Audio/Visual Devising Logs

Most centres followed the guidance for the recording of the Devised Performance on page 29 of the specification. It is a requirement for students to state their name, student number and specialism at the start of the video recording. Some centres had not included this, which made the identification of students extremely difficult. It is strongly recommended to avoid students of similar appearance being in identical costumes where possible. Giving each student a unique identifying feature is a very helpful approach which is much appreciated by moderators.

It is also a requirement to provide close-ups of the work of costume, set and puppet designers. Unfortunately, these were very often missing from the sample. Small details in designs are often not visible in the performance recording and cannot be awarded credit if a close-up has not been provided for the moderator.

Similarly, recordings taken from considerable distance from the stage space often make marking of performance students very difficult, particularly where this takes place in a very large auditorium with the camera positioned at the very back. Where possible, it is preferable for the camera to be positioned close enough to see the nuances of each performer, although we understand that every performance space is subject to different restrictions. Harsh stage lighting can often 'wash out' the faces of performers where the video is of poor quality. Please ensure that all recording equipment is tested in advance to ensure that the quality is sufficient for assessment. Full guidance is available [here](#).

## Programme Notes

Programme Notes aided moderators in identifying individual students but these were sometimes missing, unclear or featured photographs in school uniform taken many years earlier. It is strongly recommended that the Programme Notes feature students in costume as they appear in performance. There is no prescribed template for Programme Notes, but they should be organised by performance group and contain each individual's name, student number and specialism.

## Centre Declaration Sheet

Most centres uploaded the Centre Declaration Sheet, but it was missing from some samples. It is a crucial piece of paperwork required for regulatory reasons, which declares that internal standardisation has taken place and authenticates student work.

## Malpractice

Misuse of artificial intelligence (AI) is an increasingly prevalent form of malpractice by students. There were a significant number of reports by moderators of work which was suspected to be partially or entirely generated by AI. Centres are urged to remind students that misuse of AI can result in a malpractice investigation and disqualification. Students must sign the Candidate Record Form (CRF) to declare that the work is their own. New guidance on misuse of AI is available [here](#).

Centres are reminded that teachers must also declare on the CRF that the work produced is solely that of the student. Where centres suspect malpractice, this should be reported. Full guidance is available [here](#).

Students must also ensure that they do not plagiarise from other sources or each other. Presenting materials from other sources without acknowledgement is regarded as deliberate deception. Any sources used should be recorded on page 2 of the CRF. Anything which is not the student's own words should be included in quotation marks with the source clearly identified. Failure to do so can result in a malpractice investigation.

## JCQ Instructions for Conducting Non-Examination Assessments

JCQ instructions apply to this component. It is entirely appropriate to share the task, the content of the Devising Log on page 26 of the specification with students and to ensure they understand the marking criteria. However, centres **must not** provide writing frames specific to the task. In addition, any feedback must be provided at a general level. Moderators reported some examples of Devising Log submissions in which teacher feedback comments had been left in, and it was clear that the help being given by the teacher went beyond what is permitted by the JCQ rules. This can result in a malpractice investigation and can be classed as improper assistance. Please refer to the [JCQ instructions](#) for further guidance, particularly Section 4. Further information is also on page 29 of the specification.

## Teacher Online Standardisation (TOLS)

As ever, it is essential for all teachers marking the internally assessed component to complete the Teacher Online Standardisation (TOLS) and to standardise internally with colleagues where applicable. Teacher Online Standardisation contains a range of examples of student work in various specialisms and formats, representing all levels of achievement across all tasks. Commentaries on the awarding of marks are also included. The materials for Summer 2025 will go live in Autumn 2024 on [Centre Services](#).

## **Help and Support**

The specification is the definitive source of information on all aspects of the qualification. In addition, all centres have an NEA Adviser who can answer questions on the non-examined components. We have also recently published further supplementary guidance for Component 2 which is available [here](#).

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

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