



Pearson

**A Level Drama and Theatre Studies
Guidance for centres
Component 1: Devising**

Introduction

This guidance is written by the Principal Moderator and is intended to support teachers delivering A Level Drama and Theatre Studies Component 1.

This component is internally assessed and externally moderated. Further details on how to send this work to your moderator will be published in the Administrative Support Guide.

We hope that the following advice will help your students to engage with the demands of each portfolio statement/question as outlined in the specification.

Outline your initial response to the key extract and practitioner and track how it developed throughout the devising process.

A personal response is best. It is far more engaging for a teacher and indeed a moderator to read about personal investigation, discovery and reflection. Writing in the first person is a useful way to keep the individual voice of the student at the heart of the document.

Students will respond to the key extract in a variety of ways and it is often insightful to refer to the key themes and ideas that are central to the play as a whole as this might allow students to provide some knowledge and understanding about the playwright's overall aims and intentions.

The overall objective of this component is to devise an original performance. The key extract is only the starting point for the devised work but it is important to understand how the overall extract fits into the context of the play as a whole.

However, words are a premium – do not encourage description of plot or narrative. The *word count* and/or *time limits* for the portfolio are strict so encourage your students to not waste words, written or spoken.

How was the initial material presented? Did this encourage or prompt ideas and discussion? How was each student encouraged to feedback their initial response? It might be useful to keep a working diary of the process so that the answers to early questions can be logged and then used in the final portfolio.

The same consideration should be made to the introduction of the chosen practitioner. How was their work, practice and methodology introduced and explored? Was it a practical workshop, theoretical presentation, research or a combination of activities? The key to this question is 'initial response'.

The word '*track*' is important as it implies a sense of journey and students might want to document their progress/achievements/ideas throughout the key stages of their rehearsal process. The response should consider significant moments in the process, not just their introduction to the extract or practitioner. It is about how the response to the extract and practitioner has developed over time.

Detailed examples and insight into key stages of the devising process will help to engage with the demands of this particular statement/question.

Connect your research material/s to key stages in the development process and to performance outcomes.

A useful writing/speaking frame to approach this area of the portfolio might be to encourage your students to:

- Give a clear example/evidence of research
- Detail how that research was used in rehearsal (key stage)
- Explain how the research had an impact on the development process **and** performance outcomes

Connection is key. Isolated research may well be relevant but it needs to be linked to the process. Examples that are rooted in key stages of rehearsal will be more successful than those that are general/overly descriptive or unconnected to personal experience and process.

Research material is a deliberately broad term as there is no definitive way to research when making theatre. Research might include:

- practitioner theory / literary criticism
- internet, tv & radio, news and social media
- documentaries, novels, comics, cartoons, proverbs, fairy tales
- leaflets, pamphlets, booklets
- personal experiences, interviews, from friends, family
- outings/visits to specific sites.

The bullet point list is only an example. What is important to acknowledge is that all are equally valid as methods of research. They all have the potential to inform characterisation/performance, style/use of theatrical conventions/context. However, it is important that any key decisions that have been developed as a result of research are documented and connected to key moments in rehearsal **and** performance. It is also important to note that the question asks for a personal response.

Students who are able to give specific examples of how research material has been explored and used in rehearsal and then transformed for audience impact in performance will engage with the demands of this statement/question.

Evaluate how your chosen role/s emerged and developed from initial ideas through to the final performance.

This statement is about the journey of the student and therefore personal reflection is required to engage with the demands of this question. There may be references to the work of the group in the portfolio but the focus here is on the individual skills and development of the **performer/designer**.

Students can evaluate their development in both positive and negative forms. Each are valid choices if supported with detailed examples.

One of the ways students might want to approach this area of the portfolio is to evaluate their role in a chronological format, from start to finish.

Performers may wish to consider how characters/roles emerged and developed in rehearsal and workshop. Some students will play more than one character or role in their final devised production and it may be appropriate to focus on all or some of their performance roles. How were characters established? How were they explored in terms of performance dynamics: vocal, physical, use of space? What worked and why? Evaluation is central to this response. What evolved and changed in the process? Did design have an impact on the development of the role? How were roles received and interpreted by the audience on the day of the performance?

Designers may wish to outline the reasons behind their chosen design skill and then document how this role developed from start to finish. What was their role in each rehearsal/workshop? How did they help to steer the group in the decision making process? How did they work with the rest of the group at key stages of the production process? How did their role develop during technical rehearsals and on the day of the performance?

The key to this question is evaluation and therefore to address the statement successfully students will be required to make judgements on how their role/s developed from the early stages of rehearsal to the final moment of performance.

Students may find it helpful to refer to the overall aims and intentions of the final piece as this will allow them to evaluate their final interpretation within the context of their final performance. It might also be appropriate to refer to practitioner influence as this might have helped to inform or develop the chosen role/s in question. However, there is also room to discuss the impact and influence of the practitioner in the following statement. Be careful not to repeat material.

Students should be reminded that it is important to use a subject-specific vocabulary in their portfolio.

Analyse how your contribution was influenced by the selected theatre practitioner and or/theatre makers, and the impact live theatre has had on your own practical work.

The purpose of this statement/question is for the student to make connections between their own work and the work of other established theatre makers and professionals.

Students will need to analyse how their chosen **practitioner** has influenced and shaped the development of their work as performers/designers. Examples of how the ideas and methodology of the practitioner have influenced the student are key and detailed analysis should be encouraged.

Relevant research about the chosen practitioner might help to support and justify ideas in this question but isolated research is unlikely to provide insight into how the chosen practitioner has influenced the contribution of the student.

Students may write about rehearsal, performance or both in this response.

Students are reminded that the chosen practitioner is singular. It is not in their interest to discuss a variety of practitioners. The word count does not work in favour of writing about more than one practitioner and indeed the mark criteria and component details outlined in the specification focus on one practitioner. The focus on one practitioner will allow detail to emerge and give students the opportunity to fully understand the ideas and methods of their chosen practitioner.

The statement also asks the student to analyse how **live theatre** has impacted their own work. This might involve the analysis of a particular production, theatrical approach, use of convention or performance style, design idea, acting style, to name but a few.

Again, to engage with the demands of the statement, a personal response is required and subject-specific vocabulary is encouraged.

Discuss how social, historical and cultural contexts impacted on your work.

Teachers are reminded that in a recent specification update, the word 'conventions' was replaced with the word 'context'.

Students can approach this statement/question in a variety of ways but are encouraged to keep their response personal, practical and relevant.

Students who simply offer isolated research or 'history' style responses will fail to engage with the demands of this question.

The focus here is to consider how social, historical and cultural contexts have affected key decisions in the rehearsal room and informed artistic choices for performance. The language of the statement/question is deliberately broad as this question will be different for every devised piece of theatre. Some students may find it is relevant to discuss and connect their work with specific social issues or problems whilst others may consider, compare and contrast their work to the context of historical events. Some devised pieces may explore culture patterns or trends. Whatever the focus of the practical work, the key to answering this question is to offer practical examples that help to discuss how context has been explored and interpreted.

This question provides an opportunity for the student to demonstrate an understanding of how their final devised performance connects to their chosen audience and to relevant social, historical and cultural contexts.

Some students might use this area of investigation to outline why and how their devised work is or is not relevant to a contemporary audience.

Some students might use this section of the portfolio to discuss how design elements were used to help reinforce key social/historical/cultural ideas and contexts.

Evaluate the creative choices you made and whether or not they were successful in performance.

This question encourages reflection and evaluation. It asks the student to look back on the creative choices they have made and evaluate their success in front of a live audience. This statement encourages students to outline the aims of the final piece and then measure the success of their artistic intentions.

It might be useful for students to formally record audience feedback and this will help them answer this question. This question is about the audience.

This question asks students to evaluate creative choices and some of those choices *might* refer to:

- the overall performance style of the devised performance
- acting style
- design ideas and realisation
- theatrical conventions and devices
- use of performance space, staging and audience configuration
- practitioner/theatre maker influence
- relationship between actor and audience.

What was the overall intention of the final performance? Did this piece of theatre aim to shock, distance, educate, confuse or amuse the audience? Did it encourage an emotional or immersive response? How did your students try to create the reaction they were after? Were they successful?

This question also encourages reflection and there is an opportunity in this response to consider ways in which the final piece might have been improved or developed.

As with all previous sections, the best responses will be personal.

Other tips from the Principal Moderator:

- make sure your students document their work within the agreed word and/or time limits. Work that exceeds the maximum allowance will NOT be marked. There is no tolerance on this and it is the responsibility of the teacher-examiner to stop marking at the agreed word and/or time limit. If students do exceed the limit, it is useful to draw the moderator's attention to where the marking has stopped
- annotation is key. It helps the moderator understand where and why final marks have been awarded
- when presenting work to camera it is helpful if students introduce themselves in costume and with identification cards. More guidance on recording can be found in Appendix 4 of the specification
- each statement/question is linked to one of the assessment objectives for this component. However, theatre is an art, not a science and therefore it is reasonable to expect that there will be some cross-over between objectives and questions. Teachers should read the guidance offered on 'placing a mark within a level' on page 20 of the specification. Teachers should fill in Appendix 1 in detail to justify the final marks awarded.