



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Drama and Theatre (1DR0)
Component 1: Devising

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Component 1: Devising 1DR0/01
40% of the qualification – 60 marks

Introduction

This report is designed to offer support to centres by highlighting positives from the 2025 series as well as outlining key areas for improvement when looking ahead to the 2026 series.

The Principal Moderator's report is to be used in conjunction with the support materials available on the Pearson website, such as the Administrative Support Guide (ASG), which is updated in the Autumn Term each year, to best support centres for the 2025 series:

Content of 1DR0/01

The 1DR0/01 Component is made up of Portfolio Evidence and a final Devised Performance, covering three Assessment Objectives: AO1, AO4 (Portfolio Evidence) and AO2 (The final Devised Performance/ Design Realisation). The focus of the Component is the creation and development of a Devised Performance inspired by up to three Centre-chosen stimuli which can be linked to a theme, topic or issue.

Key elements of content

For Paper 1DR0/01 learners are provided with up to three stimuli, chosen by the teacher assessor, to explore and use for the basis of their own devised performance. The stimuli **MUST** be selected and provided by the Centre to support the learners in devising their work. The learners should not be allowed to select their own stimuli.

The minimum group size is 3 performing learners, and the maximum group size is 6 performing learners. In addition, each group may have one designer from each of the skill areas; lighting, sound, costume and set design. This means that the minimum group size will always be 3 learners, and the maximum group size can be up to 10 learners if each design option is utilised. It is not permitted to have two design learners following the same skill assigned to the same group. In addition, it is not permitted for one designer to be assessed for their design skills across more than one group or performance.

Learners are not permitted to devise a duologue or monologue. If a learner joins a Centre after the Component 1 assessment has taken place or a learner leaves the Centre so that a group of three performers becomes a group of two performers, then drama.assessment@pearson.com can be contacted in order to seek permission for non-assessed learners to be used.

Learners are assessed on AO2; therefore, the teacher assessor must provide evidence of the learners' final Devised Performance and upload this to the LWT (Learner Work Transfer) with the learners' Portfolio Evidence and all other supporting documentation.

All Devised Performances **MUST** include learner introductions by their full name and learner number. The introduction should be recorded at the beginning of the Devised Performance

recording. The introductions must include any design learners attached to the performance group. It is important that all introductions are audible and clear in order to support the moderation process. It is also important that the learners' appearance and costumes in the introduction match those in the performance.

The learners must produce Portfolio Evidence, which is used to assess learners' work against AO1 and AO4. The Portfolio Evidence details the initial response to the stimuli, exploration of ideas, refinements and rehearsals and final evaluation and analysis of the process and the learners' skill demonstrated in the final Devised Performance/ Design realisation.

There is essential guidance for all Centres about all GCSE Components in the Administrative Support Guide (ASG) document, which is updated for each series. Centres must download this annually from the Pearson website as soon as it is available in the Autumn Term.

The Assessment forms for all three Components are available as editable Word documents and Excel Spreadsheets on the Pearson website and these are also regularly updated and improved, as such Centres should download the new forms annually.

All centres, including those entirely new to Pearson GCSE Drama for entry in 2026, are advised to re-visit the Specification document for further details of the requirements of the component. There are also other useful support documents available to download via the GCSE Drama Home Page including the GCSE Drama 9- 1 Guidance for Component 1 Portfolio, the GCSE Drama Frequently Asked Questions and the Component 1 Exemplars, as well as past training materials with moderator commentaries to support centres in applying the National Standard.

Useful Links:

Specification:	GCSE Drama Specification
Pearson Edexcel Drama Subject homepage:	Edexcel GCSE Drama Web Page
Teaching and learning materials:	Teaching and Learning Materials
New Exemplar Library:	Exemplar Library Component 1
Frequently Asked Questions:	GCSE Drama Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Chosen Stimuli and Themes

Popular themes for 1DR01/ 01 Devising included, but were not limited to:

- Disability
- Bullying and Outcasts
- Teenage Issues
- Body Image
- Climate Change
- Knife Crime
- Gang Culture & Drugs
- Fake News & Deep Fakes
- Social Media
- Mental Health

- Inequality
- Toxic Relationships
- Abuse of Power
- War (WWI & WWII)
- PTSD
- Grenfell Tower
- Suffragettes

Much of the sources of stimuli that were found to be used this year were in line with previous series. Most Centres gave students a stimulus that was visual (a picture) or aural (lyrics from a song), and these proved to be more successful as Learners were able to engage with the stimulus through focussed research or able to describe and interpret the stimuli in more detail. Some Centres this year used TV shows, and the themes and moral questions found within them, such as 'Black Mirror'.

Centres used thought provoking quotes or global events such as the inauguration of Donald Trump, objects or social issues like bullying and social media use and feminism – linking to the rhetoric of controversial figures such as Andrew Tate. There were various pieces of art included as stimulus, for example Munch's *Scream* or the work of Banksy.

Most Centres gave Learners several different stimuli, allowing the Learners to give responses to all before choosing, analysing and justifying their chosen stimulus. Learners given more of a choice were often able to articulate themselves more confidently and thoughtfully, rather than having one stimulus that they found difficult to identify with and engage with. Centres were usually careful in their selection of stimuli to ensure that it was age appropriate for GCSE. Moderators reported that some centres issued a stimulus and theme to the whole group which resulted in much of the work being very similar.

Most stimuli led to devised work on the theme of mental health, social media influence, peer pressure or events from the past such as Suffragettes or war etc. Themes of immigration, Grenfell Tower, mental health impact on young people, dystopia and addiction were all popular themes.

Less successful Centres were found when Centres had been given a broad general topic or idea – such as "Fairytale", as Learners tended to find it difficult to engage with definitive detail, honing down on their interpretation of ideas.

Pearson does not recommend any stimulus materials and there is no preferred stimulus format, content or theme. The choice of stimuli is the Centre's responsibility and as such it is important that Centres issue materials that engage the interests of their learners.

Centres can issue up to three different stimuli materials; however, they must not exceed this maximum. Centres may wish to issue only one or two stimuli materials, this is permissible, but Centres should consider if they have offered the learners enough material to support their creative intentions. Centres may issue different stimuli materials to different groups or classes within their Centre, or they may wish to issue all learners the same stimuli materials; again, this is the Centre's responsibility and there is no preferred approach.

Centres must consider the suitability of any stimulus issued to learners or of chosen themes. All materials must be age appropriate.

Some Centres in 2025 used a play-text as the stimulus for the Devised Performance or had allowed the learners to use sections of a play text within their devised work. This is not in line with the Specification requirements. Play-texts are explored in Component 2 and Component 3, and as such are not permitted in Component 1. Centres are advised that if a play text is issued as a stimulus for Component 1, it may have an impact on the moderation process. Learners should also be discouraged from using play texts to base their plot or characters on. Further details are available in the Frequently Asked Questions document and the Specification.

The role of the teacher in facilitating the devising process is key in terms of learner achievement, as is the choice of stimuli/ theme/ topic. Positive choices showed the teacher as facilitator, enabling learners the strategies to explore the stimuli effectively, allowing them to be clear on their intention for the audience and to make the needed refinements to communicate effectively with their audience. In addition, learners were effective when the teacher assessor had clearly taught the learners discretely about genre, style, structure, language and characterisation to communicate intention to the audience, this was particularly important for the designers within a group. Those learners that had been taught how to devise effectively, research, refine and rehearse their work, achieved better outcomes, as did those who had an assured grasp and use of drama terminology. Teacher- assessors had clearly worked hard to ensure that learners had been taught how to devise and had been given opportunities to collaborate where possible.

Portfolio Evidence

The practical exploration of the stimuli, the devising, rehearsing and refining processes and the analysis and evaluation of the final performance are captured in the learners' Portfolio Evidence. The Portfolio Evidence can be presented in the following way, with no preferred format:

- handwritten/typed evidence between 1500 and 2000 words or
- recorded/verbal evidence between 8 and 10 minutes or
- a combination of handwritten/typed evidence (between 750 and 1000 words) and recorded/verbal evidence (between 4 and 5 minutes)

Most of the Portfolio Evidence sent for moderation in 2025 was typed evidence, with some examples of verbal portfolios and a few examples of a combination of both formats.

Portfolio Evidence was most successful when the six questions, as set out in the Specification, were addressed across the work, or used as headings to structure the Portfolio Evidence. Learners must be given the opportunity to record the exploration, refinements, and rehearsal processes over the course of the Component. These notes may then be used to support the completion of the final Portfolio Evidence.

It was clear that several Centres had completed the Portfolio Evidence in stages across the process, with the learners completing question 1 and 2 immediately after they had responded

to the stimuli materials and completed their initial exploration of the stimuli deciding on an intention for the audience. This was a supportive approach, allowing learners to record their ideas as they occurred, making for more analytical and reflective responses overall.

In many Centres, learners recorded accurate word counts or timings for their Portfolio Evidence on their work or on the CCIS form; however, many Centres failed to provide this information, or the information was not accurate. There was an increase in cases where the word count recorded on the CCIS form was 2,000 words; however, in reality the work was often well over the maximum word count. It is important that the maximum timing or word counts for the Portfolio Evidence are recorded on the documentation and adhered to, as any work beyond the maximum must not be assessed by the teacher assessor and will not be moderated.

In cases where the word limit was exceeded, some of the best work came after the 2,000 words, and often all of the responses for question 5 and question 6 could not be considered which had a significant impact on the assessment of AO4 analysis and evaluation. Furthermore, some learners produced work that was significantly under the word count or timings, this did not allow the learners the opportunity to write analytically and in depth and was therefore self-penalising.

Centres are reminded that this is a coursework component, and feedback can be given on the first draft of the work; therefore, learners can be given the opportunity to edit their work ensuring that they do not exceed the word count. It is not permissible for the teacher-assessor to select sections of the learners' work, across the whole evidence, to omit from the total word count, the section that should not be marked is the final section of the work.

Most of the Portfolio Evidence was word processed and structured using the six questions. Some Centres provided additional questions and writing frames which were not always supportive and are not in line with the JCQ guidance on the use of writing frames for NEAs. Where learners were most successful, they included photographs, mind-maps and diagrams of their devising journey. This was pleasing visually and showed engagement with the process. It was also beneficial in reducing word counts and allowing learners further opportunities to demonstrate high level use of drama terminology.

Where learners were less successful the responses were diary-like, narrative and simply described the work they did step by step. Often this did not detail the exploration of the stimuli, or the exploration undertaken in the studio. There was also a significant amount of work which documented professional workshops which were unrelated to the devising process and were often a distraction. In addition, the less successful learners did not focus on their intentions for performance and planning for an audience response. Some of the best work used the six questions as a structure for the Portfolio Evidence and saw students writing detailed responses to Question 3 and 4, which supported the AO1 mark.

Design learners generally included the additional documentation that is a requirement of all design skills; however, there was an increase in 2025 of learners who did not produce the Additional Documentation. Design learners must answer or address the same six questions as performance learners, and all Additional Documentation that must be provided as an

appendix to the Portfolio Evidence. In addition, all design learners must ensure that they stay focused on their design skill and are not focused on discussing the acting. The same is true of some performance learners who spent large portions of their 'significant moments' or questions 5 and 6 addressing the inclusion of design aspects rather than focusing on moments that supported and developed their role as performers.

Additional information and support in answering the portfolio questions is available on the Pearson website, this includes how the design learners can respond to the questions:

[Component 1 Guidance for Centres on Portfolio Evidence](#)

In 2025, a significant number of learners and Centres failed to cover Health and Safety considerations in their Portfolio Evidence. Whilst this is not marked discretely, this area is one of the essential areas of coverage as outlined in the Specification.

Centres are therefore reminded that learners must be taught discreetly about Health and Safety issues, and they must be considered during the process. Health and Safety considerations can be addressed across any of the six questions, or in a separate section if that is more appropriate for the learners. More guidance can be found in Guidance for Component 1 Portfolio Evidence on the Pearson website.

Question 1 was generally responded to well. Where meaningful and engaging stimuli had been given, learners responded thoroughly, passionately and personally. They showed a strong engagement with the process. Creative Intentions were usually clearly and intelligently offered.

In Question 2, where work was successful, explorative strategies were varied and evaluated well, referring to a clear and well considered creative intention for the piece. Top Level work was written in detail, using drama terminology confidently and frequently, with clear specific examples given. For example, if a hot seating exercise had been used, learners stated the exact question, the response, how this developed the character and how this impacted the final piece. Additionally, learners often researched their chosen stimuli well, and research was often used to deepen understanding and shape their intention. However, a considerable amount of work tended to focus on the outcome of the performance, rather than the practical process that went into the development of the work. A lot of the work seemed to rely heavily on discussion and scriptwriting in earlier stages. In many cases the research mentioned added little to the practical development of the work and seemed to be a procedural exercise rather than part of the journey of creation.

In Question 3, most of the work fell into 3 categories – (1) the most successful learners covered significant changes that were made to the work to refine the piece for performance and were audience focused. These were reflective and fully explained the choices made by the learners and reasons for these refinements. (2) Other work focused on significant scenes within the pieces. In these instances, the learners described the scenes they had created in detail and justified the choice of creation. However, there was no evidence of the journey of refinement, which is crucial to the AO1 mark. (3) Further work focused solely on difficult issues that the learners had encountered during the period of devising. For example, students leaving the school or the lighting rig breaking down etc. this approach was far less effective in

achieving higher AO1 marks.

In Question 4, there was more evidence this year than ever before of learners fully understanding and responding very well to this question. Most of the work seen responded to all areas of the question. Some learners chose to embed their consideration of these key areas and highlight within the portfolio where this had been addressed, whilst others explicitly responded to them under sub-headings within this question. There were successful and less successful examples of these approaches seen. Where the work was very good, learners had demonstrated full understanding of the terms, and their command of Drama terminology was fully embedded and outstanding. In these instances, the learners were able to offer specific examples to justify their responses. However, there were also some learners who had simply listed the key terms and responses were generalised or did not fully demonstrate their comprehension.

Question 5 was challenging for some learners as they did not focus on analysing and evaluating their skill in the final performance, instead there was either a focus on their contributions during the devising process, or they analysed and evaluated design elements. All learners must ensure that they analyse and evaluate their skill in the final performance when addressing this question.

In Question 6, most learners analysed and evaluated how they had realised their intentions for performance; however, often these responses were very shallow and/or the learners had used their word count in the previous questions. It is important that learners save some of their word count for the demands of Question 5 and 6 to ensure that they can achieve AO4 marks in the higher levels. Whilst AO4 should be assessed across the whole evidence base, question 5 and 6 naturally lend themselves to analysis and evaluation by the very nature of the questions.

There was more evidence than ever before of work which was reflective and evaluative throughout the 6 questions this year. It was pleasing to see so many learners considering their effectiveness from the beginning of the process. Much of the work seen was audience focused throughout, and this enabled the learners to be analytical and evaluative from the start.

The most successful responses had detailed analysis and evaluation embedded throughout the portfolio demonstrating critical engagement with the devising process, however when looking at the teacher/assessor comments, some Centres only awarded marks for AO4 within Questions 4, 5 and 6. Centres are reminded that AO4 can be awarded across the portfolio response. Where learners had outlined their intentions with clarity, the balance of evaluation and the choice of analysed examples was much stronger.

Teacher assessors were much more accurate in their application of the assessment criteria in 2025. This was the case across all of the Assessment Objectives, but particularly for AO2 and AO4. Some Centres tended to be lenient when applying the mark for AO1, possibly due to the larger range of marks available for this assessment objective. There was also evidence of Centres awarding marks for what they had witnessed in the drama studio in terms of the process, refinements and rehearsals, rather than assessing the Portfolio Evidence discreetly for AO1 and AO4. Learners can only receive marks for AO1 based upon the evidence they

provide in their Portfolio Evidence. In addition, some learners produced Portfolio Evidence that was secure, but this was not fully credited by the teacher- assessor, possibly due to their lack of collaboration in the classroom.

General summative advice for Centres, based on the 2025 series:

Learners should:

- Ensure that they cover the six questions and essential areas of coverage as outlined in the Specification.
- Ensure they make full use of the word count/ timings to allow for the detail of analysis required and the comprehensive explanations needed to access marks at the higher level; however, ensure that they do not produce work beyond the maximum word count as this will not be considered in the final assessment.
- Ensure they include Health and Safety considerations into their working practices and their Portfolio Evidence.
- Avoid general discussion and a diary like approach and ensure that they analyse and evaluate across the whole of the Portfolio Evidence.
- Ensure they use drama terminology to clearly explain and analyse the ‘drama’ that took place when devising, rehearsing and refining and in the final performance/ design realisation.
- Ensure that they stay focused on their performance/ design skill throughout the Portfolio Evidence.
- Ensure that for question 2, they discuss the exploration of the stimuli material that took place in the drama studio, using explorative strategies such as still images, hot seating, thought tracking, forum theatre etc.
- Ensure that for question 4, all the areas are included; characterisation, genre, style, form, structure and language – by analyse and evaluating key moments of the process and performance, rather than responding in a list that is generic and lacks depth.
- Ensure that in Question 5 and 6 they stay focused on their skill in the final performance, rather than focusing on the process. Learners should analyse and evaluate how their skill contributed to the final performance and the intentions for performance.
- Ensure they use the first person when writing their Portfolio Evidence as this is supportive in responding to the six questions.

Teacher-assessors should:

- Explicitly teach learners how to devise with a focus on structure, style, genre, form, characterisation and language.
- Ensure that learners are placed in a minimum group size of 3 performance learners to a maximum group size of 6 performers.
- Ensure that only one design learner for each skill is attached to any given group.
- Facilitate the devised work by offering engaging stimuli materials that are age appropriate with a maximum of 3 stimuli issued in total.
- Intervene if the learners’ chosen intention or theme is not appropriate for GCSE aged learners.
- Offer opportunities for learners to record clear examples for their notes (during the

- devising process), to support the completion of the Portfolio Evidence
- Offer appropriate support to enable learners to cover the six questions and essential areas of coverage as outlined in the specification.
- Check notes and Portfolio Evidence carefully to guard against plagiarism and to ensure that sources have been acknowledged.
- Encourage learners to write in the first person using 'I' to help guard against work from the same group being too similar.
- Support learners in understanding and addressing Health and Safety issues.
- Ensure all learners who select a design skill complete the additional documentation and that this is included with their Portfolio Evidence.
- Ensure that design learners focus on their chosen skill when addressing the six questions as outlined in the Specification.
- Offer written feedback on one draft of the Portfolio Evidence with comments focused on the assessment criteria only.
- Support learners by setting appropriate deadlines.
- Ensure that the Component 1 work is approached as a Non-Examined Assessment (NEA) in terms of the completion of work and the recording of the Devised Performance. Learners can have an opportunity to redraft and rework their Portfolio Evidence. In addition, the final performance date and time can be flexible, and re-recording is permitted.

The Final Performance/ Design

The requirement of the Component is for each learner to perform in, or design for, a final Devised Performance. This must be recorded from a fixed camera position and uploaded to the LWT (if part of the sample) and stored in a secure place in the Centre.

The quality of the recording is of paramount importance; Centres must ensure that they are able to produce a clear, good quality recording for the moderator. It is important that the learners are clearly visible on the recording and that there is good sound quality. Lighting should also be carefully considered when recording the work for moderation so that the performers' facial expressions can be clearly seen. Further details about the importance of the recording are available in the Administrative Support Guide (ASG) document.

The majority of Centres provided their recorded evidence on the LWT. In the vast majority of cases, recordings were clearly labelled with the group number and learner number. Equally most recordings were of good quality, with some examples of excellent practice. The best practice was seen where the teacher assessors had seemingly viewed the recording although this is not a requirement of the Specification, the work should be marked live as the final performance occurs.

Learners must identify themselves on the recording with a clear statement of full name and candidate number: this is for both performance and design learners. In 2025, whilst many Centres had ensured that learners were easily identifiable, moderators reported that identification was still a problem with some work. It is paramount that identifications take place directly before the recording of the performance and ideally with no breaks in the recording so that the learners' appearance in the identification is the same as their

appearance in the performance.

It is also important that learners wear costumes/ clothing that makes them easily identifiable for moderation purposes. 'Theatre blacks', whilst understandable in many ensemble style performances, do not support the moderation process. In addition, Centres must ensure that the introductions are clearly audible and are not rushed or quiet. Moderators reported that in 2025, they often had to listen to the introductions several times to accurately ascertain who the learners were before they could moderate the work. Centres that opted for 'theatre blacks' but provided learners with different colour ribbons to wear around their wrists really helped to support the moderation process.

Centres are reminded that they must not select more than four performance groups for the purposes of moderation and where possible, all the learners in a performance group should be selected for moderation. Some Centres could have sent the work of two performance groups; however, four groups were uploaded to the LWT with not all the learners included in the sample.

There were very few instances of recordings that would not play, or partial recordings being uploaded to the LWT; however, there were several cases where Centres had to contact Pearson for 'lost coursework' due to the evidence of the final Devised Performances being lost or the files being corrupted. Centres must ensure that they back up all files on their Centre's system. There were also a few Centres who had stated that learners were absent on the day of the performance so they had not provided AO2 evidence for these learners, even though this is a coursework component, and the work could have been filmed at a different time.

Centres must ensure that all learners' work is captured on film, even if this is not on the day assigned by the Centre to complete the work. If a learner does not perform in the final work or their design is not used, then they must not receive a mark for AO2. In addition, the lack of participation in the Final Performance/ Design will also impact their ability to answer question 5, 'their contribution to the final performance' in their Portfolio Evidence.

In 2025, there was a significant increase in the number of Centres using non-assessed learners. Some Centres had not been given permission to use non-assessed learners and the moderation team had to advise these Centres to seek retrospective permission from Drama Assessment. As Component 1 is a non-examined assessment, permission for the use of non-assessed learners should only be sought in exceptional circumstances. It is the Centre's responsibility to group learners so that every group meets the minimum requirement of 3 performance learner. If there are exceptional circumstances that mean this has not been possible, then the Centre must email drama.assessment@pearson.com to request permission to use a non-assessed learner and the written permission must be uploaded to the LWT along with the Centre's work for their sample. If a learner leaves a Centre; therefore, they are not entered but appear in a recording, the Centre must also inform Drama Assessment and ask for written permission.

In 2025, there was work produced from a range of design learners; with lighting and costume again being the most popular choices, with an increase in sound and set designers. There were

some issues with the moderator not being able to clearly see some moments of the performance due to the lighting design; therefore, Centres need to support learners in considering their lighting design and the quality of the recording for moderation. 'Realism' as a chosen style was more challenging for learners in a design role; in particular, lighting and sound. The design learners tended to be more imaginative and creative when the work was episodic and contained elements of surrealism. These learners also responded to the demands of question 4 more effectively.

Overall, the performances were creative and had clear intentions for the audience. A range of styles and genres were adopted, with a didactic and episodic approach being the most popular. Many Centres used the work of practitioners to influence the devised pieces. Frantic Assembly was once again prominent as was Brecht and Berkoff. Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty was evident in many performances. Many Centres used physical theatre and abstract performances to deal with more challenging topics and themes such as suicide and mental health issues. The most popular style was Brechtian using monologues, narration, multirole and direct address to communicate learners' intentions to the audience.

It was reassuring to see so many learners opting to take on a design role with many learners really embracing this opportunity and creating work that was creative and incredibly supportive of the performers and their group's intention for the audience. Many learners created ensemble-style performances, with all performers on stage at all times, this tended to benefit all members of the group. The ensemble performances were often well rehearsed and included a range of techniques and forms. Performances that became too heavily focused on set changes, many properties and blackouts were often disjointed and did not benefit the learners.

Best practice for the recording included:

- Clear, well-paced, introductions with learners stating both their full name and learner number in full length shot – at the beginning of the performance with no break before the performance.
- The use of A4 sheets with learner name and number held up for the camera to support the learners in communicating the correct information.
- Learners dressed in the same way for the introduction as in the performance itself, with learners explaining any costume changes.
- The wearing of different, distinct costumes or clothes, with ensemble groups choosing different colour t-shirts rather than 'theatre blacks'.
- The provision of photographs of the sampled learners in performance groups (if these were in full costume).
- Work that was labelled with the group number and the learner numbers so that this information matched the information on the CCIS forms and the LWT.
- Recordings that were from a fixed camera position, with all the learners in shot at all times.
- Recordings in which any stage lighting had been carefully considered to support the quality of the recording and the moderation process.

General summative advice for Centres, based on the 2025 series:

Learners should:

- Ensure the work is carefully rehearsed and polished for performance with a focus on creativity and impact on the audience.
- Engage fully with their role, thinking about how their role impacts the work as a whole.
- Work collaboratively and actively contribute to the exploration, refinement and rehearsal process.
- Shape and develop ideas practically rather than repeating and polishing without progression.
- Use their research skills to inform their performance and the development of ideas.
- Make clear notes, including examples, throughout the process and reflect on their final performance straight after the performance takes place.

Teacher-assessors should:

- Devote 40% of teaching time to the devising process and the skills that learners need to be taught in order to devise effectively.
- Select stimuli appropriate to the needs, abilities and interests of each individual group of learners or cohort.
- Use verbal evaluation and discussion to support the learners' development of their work, facilitating this process without directing or having creative input.
- Set deadlines to allow learners to work to the final performance date or deadline.
- Ensure learners have the opportunity to conduct technical and dress rehearsals and to consider any health and safety risks or hazards.
- Provide a supportive audience to allow learners to be comfortable when performing.
- Record the performances and ensure that they are saved in the formats as set out in the ASG, as well as ensuring that the files are backed up on the Centre's network.
- Ensure the recordings are made from a fixed position with good quality visuals and sound.
- Provide clear introductions by learner name and number.
- Ensure that the group numbers and/or the names of the performances are accurate on the CCIS form and match how the files are labelled.
- Ensure that learners adhere to the group sizes and timings for the Devised Performances. In 2025 there was an increase in performances over the maximum time.

A group must contain between three and six performance students. In addition, there can be up to one designer per role, per group – making a possible maximum group size of 10 learners (6 performers and 4 designers). Where learners (performance and design) do not meet the regulatory minimum performance requirement for AO2, marks awarded by the teacher - assessor must be capped at level 2, with a maximum of 6 marks to be awarded. There were some examples this year of learners producing work below the regulatory timings; however, teacher-assessors did not always remember to apply the AO2 cap.

The recommended minimum performance times have been provided to ensure that each

learner within the group has sufficient time to access all levels of the assessment criteria:
3–4 performance learners (group) 10 to 15 minutes
5–6 performance learners (group) 20 to 25 minutes

Centres should be aware that performance times that are between the regulatory minimum (4 minutes) and the recommended minimum (10 minutes) may not allow learners to evidence their skills fully in order to access all levels of the assessment criteria. In addition, teacher assessors are required to stop marking after the maximum performance time has passed, this is to ensure that there is parity for all learners nationally. The moderator will not consider any work after the maximum performance time.

Selection of sample for moderation

There was still some confusion in 2025 with regards to the sampling of learners' work. Centres that followed the guidance in the Administrative Support Guide (ASG) sent the correct work; however, several Centres sent the work of all of their learners, or they selected a sample that was not in line with the Specification requirements. In the 2019 series, the pre-selected sample was removed, and Centres were required to send the work of their highest and lowest achieving learner and a further sample of work (usually a maximum of 10 learners' work in total, dependent on your cohort size) from a maximum of 4 performance groups.

The teacher- assessor must select the sample after the internal assessment has taken place to reflect the overall mark range of the cohort. It was noted in 2024 and again in 2025 that many more Centres had thoroughly standardised the work of their learners leading to more accurate marking. Pearson will not select the sample, the reason for this decision is because Pearson and the moderators do not know how Centres have grouped the learners, how many learners are in each group, or which groups the highest and lowest achieving learners are in.

The sample that a Centre selects must include the performance/design realisation and Portfolio Evidence of all sampled learners. This should be selected from a maximum of four different performance groups (although this could be from as few as one group if there are 6 performance learners and 4 designers in that group, containing the highest and achieving learners). Centre must try to send the work of all learners in any selected group.

The sample selected by the Centre must include:

- The highest overall scoring learner
- The lowest overall scoring learner
- The work of at least 8 further learners with a range of marks between the highest and the lowest scoring learners, ideally from the same groups as the lowest and highest achieving learners.

Moderators may contact a Centre and request the work of additional learners. This can be for a variety of reasons and Centres must ensure that all work that is not sent as part of the original sample is in the Centre, available for submission, with the Coursework Authentication Forms (NAS) completed and signed by the learners and the teacher assessor. There are further details regarding these procedures in the JCQ instructions for conducting coursework:

[JCQ Instructions for Conducting Coursework](#)

Administration

Most of the administration for Component 1 was completed accurately by Centres and where errors occurred Centres were generally very quick to resolve these issues. Centres do need to check the total mark is accurate on the CCIS Form and that it is then transferred accurately to Edexcel Online. There was an increased number of cases in 2024 and again in 2025, where moderators had to contact Centres to check the Centre marks, as the mark on the CCIS Form did not match the marks on Edexcel Online or the NAS form. Errors in inputting the Centre's marks can impact on the final mark that the Centre's learners receive and as such all arithmetic must be carefully checked and all marks must be transferred accurately, especially after internal standardisation takes place. It is the Centre's responsibility to contact Edexcel directly to make any amendments to the marks submitted, the moderator is not permitted to make these changes on the Centre's behalf. The Centre must contact courseworkmarks@pearson.com detailing the error that has been made the changes that are required on Edexcel Online.

It is a requirement for Centres to place their work in attainment order, from the highest achieving learner to the lowest achieving learner on the CCIS Form. This clearly supported the moderation process. However, some Centres continued to complete the form in learner number order. The CCIS form for 2024 - 2025 was again reviewed and streamlined. Only one CCIS form is required per Centre and only the learners selected to be in the sample need to be recorded on this document. When completing the CCIS form, teacher-assessors must also ensure that they complete the learner's full name and not just forenames. In addition, all group numbers must be accurate as there were errors on many CCIS forms. Centres are also reminded that the CCIS form needs to be editable by the moderator; therefore, the excel spreadsheet version of this form must be used. Some Centres uploaded the CCIS form as a PDF meaning the moderator had to request an editable version, or they had to create a new version.

Centres are reminded that the teacher-assessor and the learners must sign the NAS form to authenticate the work. This signature can be an electronic signature.

The ASG details how the Portfolio Evidence should be presented for moderation and how documents should be labelled on the LWT. This guidance will be streamlined and updated in the Autumn Term to support Centres with the 2026 series. Where Centres created one PDF document per learner which included the NAS, Portfolio Evidence and any Additional Documentation, the moderation process was more straightforward. For the 2026 series, it will be a requirement to create one PDF form per learner. Centres should avoid sending the Portfolio Evidence on Word Documents or other documents that are editable.

In 2025, a significant number of Centres uploaded Portfolio Evidence with pages missing. Moderators only noticed this error if the six questions were used to structure the work and questions appeared to be missing or if the pages were numbered. Centres need to be careful to ensure that all pages are scanned in and not every other page. Whilst the moderating team contacted Centres to raise this issue, it is the responsibility of the Centre to check that all of the work is complete and accurate before submitting the sample to their moderator. In addition, Centres are reminded that the work is not submitted by simply uploading the work

to the LWT, the orange 'submit request' button needs to be pressed.

Training from Pearson

Pearson has a programme of national face to face, free standardisation meetings, as well as online training. All details are available on the Pearson website via the training home page. This training is delivered for all three components in the Autumn Term annually. All past training materials and examiner/moderator comments are available on the Edexcel/Pearson website.

Conclusion

In the 2025 series of the 9-1 GCSE specification, it is pleasing to note how hard Centres have worked to understand the requirements of the Specification and the National Standard. Many Centres have accessed and used the support materials available on the Pearson website as well as attending inset training and purchasing some of the support materials and guides produced.

Centre marking in most Centres is accurate in terms of the rank order of marks for learners sampled and in placing the learners at the correct level for AO1, AO2 and AO4. The increase in internal standardisation has clearly supported teacher confidence in applying the assessment criteria accurately and teachers have a much better grasp of the National Standard in 2025 than seen in previous years. This is a continuation

of the improvements seen in 2023 and 2024. A small proportion of teacher-assessors have struggled to accurately judge the level at which their learners are working. This is particularly evidenced for AO1 where there is a larger spread of marks available. There is evidence of severe marking by Centres at the lower end of the ability range; for example, where learners have been able to explain their response to the stimuli, their intentions for the audience and some of their ideas and refinements in rehearsals but have not been awarded appropriate for this.

Equally, at the top of the ability range, some teacher-assessors did not always accurately assess their learners' work, over-rewarding achievement when compared to the National Standard. It appeared that some teacher-assessors tended to assume that their highest achieving learner was very often worthy of marks in the top level or full marks. Given the increased rigour of both assessment and content in 9-1 GCSE Drama, only the very highest achieving learners nationwide will consistently meet the demands of level 5 for Component 1, particularly with regards to AO1 'Create and Develop'. In 2025, there was a mix in the calibre of work provided for moderation, with some learners' performances being very unfocused or under-rehearsed.

Free standardisation courses and materials provided by Pearson will continue to be available to support all centres in applying the assessment criteria accurately and in line with the National Standard.

Learners of Pearson GCSE Drama represent a wide and varied range of abilities, cultures and backgrounds. Their devised work for Component 1 continues to reflect learners' personal

interests and experiences. Learners' work on this component allows them further to develop the skills needed for creating devised work for performance, as well as furthering their grasp of each individually selected theme, topic or issue. The shift of focus to not only exploration, but to process, rehearsal and the completion of a final performance appears to have been welcomed and embraced by learners, teacher-assessors and moderators alike.

Moderators in 2025, commented that in the vast majority of case GCSE Drama learners were focused and committed to their work in Drama; for the entire team, there was a sense that it had been a highly positive experience and that learners of all abilities had risen to the challenge of devising a performance, with very few learners failing to complete something worthy of a mark against each of the assessment criteria. However, it was also noted that some Centres found the process more challenging due to the national attendance crisis that we face, this did lead to more non-assessed learners being used: in all cases Drama Assessment supported Centres by giving permission for this to happen even if the permission was given retrospectively.

In 2025, there was an increase in Centres not entering the total marks out of 60, for their full cohort onto Edexcel Online. The submission of the sample on the LWT does not mean that the learners in the Centre will receive their mark for Component 1. The LWT is the moderator's way to check the Centre's rank order and application of the assessment criteria. Edexcel Online is the mechanism by which Centres submit their learners' marks. The deadline for submission of marks to the LWT is the 15 May; however, this can be completed in line with the LWT being available from the 15 April.

