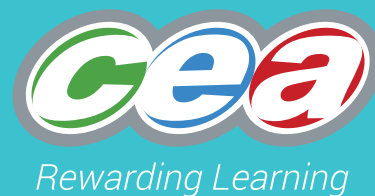


GCSE



**Chief Examiner's and
Principal Moderator's Report
Drama**

Summer Series 2023



Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2023 series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk.

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GCSE DRAMA

Principal Moderator's Report

Internal Assessment Overview

There are two controlled assessment components within GCSE Drama:

- Component 1 - Devised Performance with student log worth 25%; and
- Component 2 - Scripted Performance worth 35%.

Both components are internally assessed and externally moderated and can be undertaken through a performance or design pathway.

Component 1 Devised Performance

Component Overview

Students choose either a performance or design pathway. There is no requirement to choose the same pathway in both Components 1 and 2. In response to pre-release stimulus material, students either devise and present a group performance or devise and give a design presentation. Those choosing the performance pathway are assessed on acting. Those choosing the design pathway are assessed on a presentation on their chosen design discipline. Design students must choose one of the following design disciplines (see Appendix 4 for exact requirements):

- costume;
- lighting;
- multimedia (use of image, sound, text and/or video);
- set; or
- sound.

All students complete a student log at the end of the devising process. They record a summary analysis and evaluation of their own and others' work in their student log, which should be in written form and may contain images. It must include:

- Section 1: an analysis and evaluation of the process of devising a performance by investigating the pre-release stimulus material (maximum 500 words);
- Section 2: an analysis and evaluation of the research influences that contributed to the overall concept for the devised performance (maximum 500 words); and
- Section 3: an analysis and evaluation of self-management and working with others (maximum 1000 words).

2023 Pre-release Stimulus Material

Candidates were asked to create a devised performance that engages a chosen target audience using one of the following stimuli as a starting point:

The theme of “Deception.”

Or

The work of a contemporary playwright.

Or

Music and lyrics of the 21st century.

A04 Student Log (20 marks available)

There was evidence of excellent practice in terms of preparing pupils for the student log. Most centres adhered to the word count and candidates wrote in a personal and meaningful manner, which reflected their engagement with the pre-release stimulus. The pre-release stimulus created a range of diverse concepts, with the more impactful performances steeped in research influences including professional practice of theatre practitioners and live theatre resulting in performances presented with a clear style and genre.

Centres are reminded that candidates should use the student log pro-forma available on the Drama page of the website and a word count for each section should be provided.

**Section 1: An analysis and evaluation of the process of devising by investigating the pre-release stimulus material.
(Maximum 500 words – 5 marks)**

Good practice

- Work was generally well-presented with word counts often identified.
- Effective use was made of relevant illustrations around investigative ideas; this included images of stimulus response sheets and mood boards.
- Annotation was used well to explain the allocation of marks both on the ERS system and on the student logs.
- Stronger candidates presented an individual approach to the investigation of the stimulus and considered all three stimuli in this section.
- Stronger candidates provided details on the staging and shaping of their final devised performance with reference to the target audience.

Points for Consideration

- Candidates should consider the full range of stimuli in this section; candidates who discussed each stimulus with confidence and relevance were able to access mark band four.
- The discussion of the stimulus should present a cohesive and reasoned argument for the choice of one idea.
- Candidates who had explored a breadth of material related to the stimulus generated more diverse ideas i.e. the teacher had guided the candidates to access a range of related material.
- Candidates should detail why they have rejected the other two stimuli.
- This section should emphasise the investigation of the stimulus in line with the requirements of the marking criteria.
- Greater links need to be made between the investigation of the chosen stimuli and the final Devised Performance.
- Design candidates needed to make greater links to their design concept rather than focusing purely on performance.
- Work should include a definite word count.

Section 2: An analysis and evaluation of the research influences that contributed to the overall concept for the devised performance. (Maximum 500 words – 5 marks)

Good practice

- Candidates who had a breadth of research influences accessed the higher mark bands.
- Research which was fully linked to the final choice of stimuli allowed access to the full range of marks.
- The use of live performances and the work of theatre practitioners strengthened the quality of research.
- Research influences outlined clearly, with specific referencing as to where these influences can be seen in the performance, allowed candidates to access mark band four.
- Candidates who incorporated performance styles or staging techniques into their research gave themselves a higher visibility regarding where that influence could be seen in performance.
- Some candidates provided a range of appendix material e.g. photographs of research, rehearsal and performance which supported the analysis and evaluation of their research influences.
- Stronger candidates provided time stamps from the devised recording to indicate where the research influences were evident in performance.
- Stronger design candidates focused on research influences which inspired their design rather than performance.

Points for Consideration

- Candidates, at times, presented research in descriptive terms.
- Not all research, for some candidates, was linked to the final concept.
- Candidates must avoid generalised character research which is not specifically referenced in the performance.
- Some candidates did not complete Section 2 which meant that the research influences were unclear for concept and content.
- Some candidates presented a limited range of research ideas, and focused their research on movies and TV shows.
- Research, at times, contained only tenuous links to the final outcome; research ideas need to be directly linked to the devised piece.
- Design candidates need to make clearer links from the application of design to the performance.
- The use of time stamps is useful to sign post the research influences for the moderator.
- Work should include a definite word count.

Section 3: An analysis and evaluation of self-management and working with others.

(Maximum 1000 words – 10 marks)

Good practice

- Candidates who distinguished clearly between ‘self-management’ and ‘working with others’ by using sub-headings assisted the moderator in tracking their analysis more successfully.
- The strongest candidates had considered the examples given on page 30 of the specification (this was limited and not many centres referred to this); clear referencing to the thinking skills and personal capabilities on page 30 of the specification allowed for robust evaluation of the process.
- Those whose work was divided into two discreet sections tended to explore self-management and working with others in more defined terms.
- The use of action planning and target setting worked well.
- Acting on feedback also aided the quality of the response.

Points for Consideration

- When completing Section 3, candidates should be encouraged to evaluate their contribution to the process of devising and evaluate their final performance or design. Too often this section is a description of the performance or extensive rehearsal techniques used to ready the performance. There was too much emphasis on retelling the process of putting the piece together.
- For a considerable number of candidates, more work was required on understanding the skills of self-management and working with others.
- Some candidates concentrated mainly on their own performance rather than analysing what was required.
- Some candidates used Section 3 to provide further detail on research influences and final decisions made during the rehearsal process.
- Many candidates appeared to be significantly under the word count of 1000.
- Work should include a definite word count.

A01 Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning for theatrical performance.
(30 available marks)

Concept and Content (15 marks)

Good practice

- It was found that candidates who scored highly in Section 2 of the log were more likely to be in the higher mark bands for Concept and Content, as the performance was heavily influenced by their research. Extensive research resulted in a concept that had depth and development.
- Candidates who had researched practitioners created recognisable and impactful moments in performance with clear style and genre.
- The best performances made clear links to the pre-release stimulus.
- Presentations where the research was embedded in the performance enabled candidates to access mark band four.
- Groups who chose a more non-naturalistic approach often created more impact.
- There was some excellent use of set, sound, lighting and multimedia design to bring the performance to life.

Points for Consideration

- Candidates who had very tenuous links to research tended to produce very one-dimensional performances which lacked meaning.
- Performances needed to be of the correct duration to allow access to the full mark range.
- Outside noise could be heard during some recordings which proved distracting and the camera was too close for some candidates meaning they did not have enough room to move during performance.
- All candidates need to complete Section 2 of the Student Log to ensure that research influences are clearly detailed.
- Centres are reminded this is devised and not scripted performance, and should take care to ensure the work is original content.

Application in Performance (15 marks)

Good practice

- It was a pleasure to see candidates who worked confidently to deliver their work. Where careful consideration had been given to transitioning rather than excessive blackouts, candidates tended to engage the audience more.
- Candidates should be discouraged from breaking character while performing even if they are unsure of their direction.
- All candidates presented a finished product which allowed meaning to be conveyed.
- Strong candidates contributed significantly to the overall outcomes.
- The influence of practitioners and professional performers could be seen in some of the better performances; clear style and genre supported the to actors' performances and design presentations.
- The best pieces allowed all candidates an opportunity to communicate meaning.
- Designers made an effective contribution, for the most part, and contributed well to creating mood and atmosphere.

Points for Consideration

- Centres should encourage the group to have parity in performance and avoid having a central character with the remaining candidates in a supportive role.
- For some candidates, the intended meaning was not fully conveyed.
- Pieces which were under-time were self-penalising as ideas were not developed and some performances had an over-reliance on short scenes with long blackouts and unnecessary small set changes.
- Larger groups with minimal dialogue was a feature for some centres.
- Some Design presentations did not meet the requirements as outlined in the specification with many undertime and missing significant sections of work.
- Teachers are reminded that students should not be questioned by the teacher when completing the design presentation. Students may use que cards to support their presentation, but they should not rely on live direction from the teacher.

Summary

Centres are to be congratulated on their efforts to produce engaging and meaningful devised performances which were clearly linked to the pre-release stimulus material. It was exciting to see GCSE Drama pupils creating and developing ideas which had a direct impact on their target audience, with many relevant issues for young people being explored. It was evident to see that candidates, in the main, are being expertly guided through the process of devising theatre, allowing them to work imaginatively and creatively in a collaborative context. It is very encouraging to see the growth of design candidates and the impact of professional practice on the work of GCSE students. It has been interesting to witness the influence of theatre practitioners, theatre companies and style and genre upon the work of GCSE Drama students.

Component 2 Scripted Performance

Component Overview

Students choose either a performance or a design pathway. There is no requirement to choose the same pathway for both internally assessed components. Students research and prepare a performance of their chosen published play script. Those choosing the performance pathway are assessed on acting. Those choosing the design pathway are assessed on a presentation on their chosen design discipline. Design students must choose one of the following design disciplines:

- costume;
- lighting;
- multimedia (use of image, sound, text and/or video);
- set; or
- sound.

General Comments

The team of moderators was generally very impressed with the moderation process for this series and would like to thank teachers for facilitating these moderation visits. Centres went to great lengths to ensure visiting moderation was possible and that was appreciated. It was clear to see that candidates enjoyed the opportunity to perform, and centres mostly provided a very positive atmosphere.

The overall standards found during the moderation visits were generally good, with evidence of thorough preparation, some of which were new to CCEA GCSE Drama. Performances were generally well-prepared and candidates were thoroughly engaged in the process at nearly all centres. Centre marking was mostly accurate and within the acceptable range.

The reports from moderators indicated that there were several centres who were unable to present nine candidates on the day of moderation. This was generally dealt with by others reading in and the moderators were very grateful to the pupils/staff who assisted the process in this way.

Play choices suited the candidates for the most part and generally enabled access to a wide range of marks. The variety of texts explored was extensive, with a broad range of style and genre represented in the choices. The range included texts from the classics to more contemporary choices with a considerable number presented for the first time this year. Centres are to be reminded that texts must be of a published nature, meaning that unsourced internet material and screenplays are not acceptable. It is also not appropriate to write additional scenes or rewrite existing ones.

The most popular choices for group pieces this year were the play titles: 'Living with Lady Macbeth' followed by 'Dreamjobs', 'Bouncers' and 'Girls and Dolls'. Some very strong candidates presented challenging text choices.

There were a number of administrative issues identified by moderators. These were generally related to the eCandidate Record Sheets which had not been completed adequately prior to moderation. Centres are reminded that the artistic intentions for each candidate must be identified on the eCRS along with the style and genre of the play. Artistic intentions should not be generic; they should be generated individually by the candidate and employ technical terms which outline how their actor objectives will be realised during the performance. Both style and genre must also be completed on the eCandidate Record Sheet. Centres should also supply completed copies of the EXA39 assessment sheets for the attending moderator/s.

Moderators require time before the moderation begins to read the eCandidate Record Sheets, and a private space should be provided for this activity. There is also a requirement for access to a similar space to allow the moderator to conduct the assessment of the groups between and after performances. All work must be recorded, and centres should ensure that this is done in line with instructions. Centres should not be recording performances using a handheld iPad. The recording of the work should be on an accessible format and sent to CCEA as soon as possible after moderation. Candidates should be clearly identified at the start of the recording.

A01 Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning for theatrical performance (10 marks)

In general, the performances of the candidates were meaningful and engaging and it was clear that many candidates had worked hard to present pieces which were generally polished and well-rehearsed.

Good Practice

- Candidates fared well with this marking criteria and work was marked accurately for the most part.
- Play choices generally assisted the candidates in conveying meaning to an audience.
- Most candidates were able to make an impact on their audience.
- Levels of creativity were evident for the most part.

Points for Consideration

- Some play choices did not enable candidates to communicate full meaning and the candidates struggled to deliver the subtext.
- Performances which were under the time limit were often underdeveloped and did not allow candidates to showcase their range of skill.
- Some work was lacking in creativity and development for the marks awarded.

A02 Apply theatrical skills to realise artistic intentions in live performances (60 marks)

For the most part, candidates realised their artistic intentions and performed their roles using a range of generally well-developed skills. This assessment objective is split between skills, characterisation, artistic intention and style and genre and there was a tendency to over-mark the work. The marking criteria for voice, movement and facial expression stipulates a range of skills in each performance area. Material which did not allow candidates to access that range restricted them from achieving the full mark range. Marks awarded for artistic intention and style and genre were generally lenient, especially when these assessment objectives had not always been clearly defined in the eCandidate Record Sheet.

Design work, in the main, had merit and contributed positively to the overall outcomes. At times, however, design ideas were not fully integrated, and the work seemed to be superficial or ill-considered and sometimes over-marked with outcomes not as effective as indicated in the presentations.

Acting

Vocal skills (15 marks)

Movement and Facial Expression (15 remarks)

Good Practice

- The best performances showcased a variety of skills enabling candidates to access the full range of marks.
- Plays which suited the wide range of candidates supported the demonstration of skill.
- Candidates who integrated their skills of voice, movement and facial expression were successful in gaining in the top range of marks.

Points for Consideration

- Candidates who were not always secure with dialogue did not display a confident or diverse range of vocal skills.
- Material which made little demand for movement or gesture did not always allow candidates to access the full range of marks.
- The skills of facial expression were often underutilised and sometimes over-marked.
- Candidates who had been intricately directed accessed the full range of marks.

Characterisation and Realisation of Artistic Intentions (15 marks)

Style and Genre (15 marks)

Good Practice

- The best performers presented characterisation which demonstrated full understanding of their role.
- The clarity of the artistic intentions was conveyed in the strongest performances.
- Style and genre were easily identifiable and demonstrated consistently in performance.

Points for Consideration

- Some play choices limited candidates. Candidates who showed character development were able to access the full range of marks.
- Generic or missing artistic intentions restricted candidates from achieving in Mark Band 4.
- Style and Genre that was not identified or defined on the eCandidate Record Sheet often resulted in the candidate failing to access Mark Band 4.

Design

Presentation and Documentation (15 marks)

Use of Materials and Equipment (15 marks)

Good Practice

- Moderators commented on how some of the design work had been effectively incorporated into the piece and had enhanced overall outcomes.
- The best presentations demonstrated all the requirements of a designer as specified in Appendix 4.
- Design skills of the strongest candidates were communicated with confidence and thoroughly realised in performance.

Points for consideration

- Choice of materials is critical to the functionality of the design.
- Design concepts were not always fully identified nor substantiated with relevant research.

Realisation of the Design (15 marks)

Style and Genre (15 marks)

Good Practice

- The best designers presented their own concept demonstrating full understanding of the chosen play and their role as designer.
- Designers who presented their designs with clarity and confidence were able to access the full range of marks.
- Designers should prepare their presentations using all of the available time, as outlined in the specification.

Points for Consideration

- Not all texts offered designers the opportunity to present well developed concepts.
- Designers who do not clearly identify and specify their artistic intentions will not access Mark Band 4.
- Designers who do not clearly identify and specify their style and genre will not access Mark Band 4.

Summary

Centres are to be commended on their moderation outcomes. The work in some centres was outstanding and the wide range of plays offered candidates of all abilities the opportunity to access the full range of marks. Centres were welcoming and generally had all the required forms ready for the moderators. Pupils benefit from performing in a suitable venue with production value and an audience. Thank you to all centres for facilitating the moderation visits.

Chief Examiner's Report

Component 3 Knowledge and Understanding of Drama

The 2023 GCSE Drama examination provided a range of differentiated questions to enable all candidates the opportunity to answer all questions at a level of their ability. It was clear that the Advanced Information provided to centres was helpful for candidates in their exam focus and preparation. The character for Questions 2 (a) and 2 (b) was provided in addition to the character and performance skill of Facial Expression for Part 3 (c). The examination team noted that it was evident from the written responses that the CCEA support materials and the Advance Information material have helped shape the fantastic teaching that takes place in schools, giving candidates of all abilities a good foundation of knowledge and understanding to access the paper.

The paper consists of three questions/seven-part questions on a set text chosen from a list of eight. 'Blood Brothers' remains the most popular text, however, 'Sparkleshark' and 'The Crucible' are close second choices. Candidates also provided responses for 'Juno and the Paycock', 'Philadelphia Here I Come', 'Tea in a China Cup' and 'Across the Barricades'.

Many candidates answered the paper in the order of the questions. A few candidates did struggle to complete all questions in the allocated time or were rushed in the last question resulting in a shorter response, however, the majority of candidates managed their time effectively completing the paper in the allocated time.

Q1 (a) This question requires candidates to 'briefly outline' their ideas for two aspects of the play. There are 6 marks available, 3 marks for each aspect, and these are awarded for any three relevant and appropriate points in line with the mark scheme. Bullet point answers are good practice and help to keep the response concise.

Many candidates answered this question well using the CCEA fact file to direct precise, clear, and relevant responses. Stronger candidates used a subheading of each aspect to clarify their responses. Some candidates wrote extended responses often including information that was not relevant to THEATRICAL CONVENTIONS or GENRE as required for the 2023 paper. Some candidates wrote the aspects they had learnt rather than answering the aspects set on the paper. It was noted that a minority of candidates did not attempt to answer this question.

- (b)** This question asked candidates to refer to ‘one LIGHTING idea’ in a live or recorded theatre event. The examination team were delighted to see that candidates are returning to experience live theatre. Professional and amateur pre-recorded events were also used to explore design ideas in performance. It is good practice to use a theatre production that is not the same as the set text as it can disadvantage candidate responses. The exam team noted that there are still candidates using Blood Brothers as the ‘live performance’, as well as Blood Brothers as their set text.

The question asked for one lighting idea that should be applied to their choice of set text and suggests four aspects to be included: the title of the theatre event, a description of the idea, how you could use this idea in your play and an evaluation of what you achieved. Each section carries marks, and most candidates were rewarded, with top band answers referring appropriately to each section.

Some candidates applied a completely different idea to their set text than the idea described in the ‘live theatre event’. A number of candidates referred to more than one lighting idea and to more than one moment the idea could be applied, but were only awarded for the strongest response. Other design ideas were not awarded marks. Candidates should be encouraged to use subject specific vocabulary/terminology when referring to the given design element.

- Q2 (a)** All candidates generally answered this question well which could be a result of the advanced information given to aide exam preparation. It is good practice to use the whole page to draw and label the character’s costume. The drawing itself is not rewarded as candidates achieve marks for clear, precise and imaginative annotation of the six listed elements of costume detailed in the question.

The costume must relate to the extract stated in the exam, which the majority of candidates did with creative flair. Most candidates referred to all elements of costume, and some could elaborate on the shape. Period, status, quotation, and justification are not required for this question as they should be offered in the Part 2 (b) section of the question.

- (b)** This question was well answered and understood by nearly all candidates using their annotations from Question 2 (a) to help structure their response. A larger number of responses were highly detailed and very perceptive, which may be due to the advanced information and high level of focus on one character. It is important that the costume choices are justified and relevant to the extract.

The six aspects of costume: colour, shape, material, accessories, props and make up should be identified and justified to achieve a higher mark band. Period and status of the character in the extract are required and were often referred to, however, some candidates did not include these details. A relevant reference to text from any part of the play should also be identified. While many candidates included the text reference in their response, some candidates did not link the text reference back to their justification of the costume.

- Q3 (a)** This question continues to provide a diverse collection of set drawings which varied in understanding and knowledge. Candidates and teachers would benefit from exploring online resources to build their vocabulary of staging such as stage positions, upstage/downstage, cyclorama, backdrop, wings, flats, trucks, apron, entrances, exits and audience. Candidates will be awarded marks for each of the bullet points stated in the examination paper: exits and entrances, set, position of the audience, and the positions of the characters on the opening lines, which should also show understanding of sightlines.

A bird's eye view of the stage drawn on a landscape A4 page proved to be the most effective method for candidates. Many candidates included a key which is best placed on the same page as the set drawing. The annotation should be brief, precise and clear, and no additional justification is required.

It is good practice to consider if entrances and exits, such as working doors and windows require 'backing' as part of the staging, if sightlines allow audiences to see directly into the wings. A backdrop, skyline, cityscape or a ground row and lighting on a cyclorama would also be recommended. Curtaining or 'blacks' may also be used as backing but need to be clearly identified in the annotation.

Many of the texts have a 'composite' set which may change very little, but candidates are advised to follow the staging directions suggested by the playwright and not devise their own interpretation. With a composite set such as *Blood Brothers*, the simple placing of a lamp-post would suggest a street and a fence would be enough to suggest a field. Candidates are advised not to over complicate the staging detail as a suggestion of location is often most effective and can be easily removed for the next scene.

Sightlines continue to be problematic for some candidates. Some candidates had placed part of the set, such as a fireplace or sofa at the front of the stage and therefore restricted the audience's view of the stage. The positions of all the characters on the opening lines of the extract should also be clearly labelled. It is advised that staging should be prepared and set for a typical school proscenium-arched stage.

- (b)** The focus of this question is 'rehearsal' work, and it is 'as a director' that the candidate is approaching the answer. Candidates are required to explore one rehearsal idea within the extract provided in the paper. The candidate is being asked 'As a director, give the actors some advice on how they can perform the extract'. The mood and context of the extract should be identified which will support their choice of an appropriate rehearsal idea to improve the performance. The candidate should develop the rehearsal idea explaining how it has been used to inform how they should add the application to their performance and the intended impact on the audience.

The candidate should be able to briefly summarise the mood and context of the extract, develop the rehearsal idea and then look at some text detail. Some candidates looked at a number of rehearsal ideas but only the best one was rewarded. The most popular rehearsal ideas were thought tracking, freeze frame, hot seating, conscience alley and some used improvisation.

It was encouraging to see in this series that most candidates did refer to the mood and context of the extract. Stronger responses linked the rehearsal method back to the moment in the given extract, analysing the intended impact on the audience. Weaker responses gave brief or no detail of the rehearsal method with limited application to the extract.

- (c) This question requires the candidate to provide a response to a performance aspect in relation to the printed extract in the paper. It is from the perspective of the actor and may be answered in the first person, 'I'. The candidate was asked to focus on the use of FACIAL EXPRESSION in performance for one actor (appropriate to the chosen set text), referring to the text in their response. This focus changes each year.

As the focus this year was on facial expression, the candidate was expected to use relevant vocabulary to describe a range of expressions using the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, lips, eyebrows, chin, cheeks and forehead.

Top band answers had chosen perhaps four or five quotations and demonstrated perceptive knowledge and understanding of how the character uses facial expression in performance for an audience. The vocabulary detail should be quite specific and phrases such as 'wide eyes' were often repetitive and did not give the level of detail which is required as it is vague and general. Candidates should try and use a range of text to avoid repetition of the same facial expression for every line.

A stronger response used a variety of vocabulary when describing the facial expression to a specific quote from the extract and analysed the intended impact they wanted to achieve for the audience. A weaker response used repetitive facial expression descriptions, referring to line numbers rather than text.

Time Allowance

Most candidates completed all seven parts of the three questions in the 1 hour 30 minutes time allocation. There was some evidence that candidates had to 'rush' to complete Question 3(c), seen in some shorter responses that lacked detail.

Once again, the examination team wants to congratulate candidates for their knowledge and understanding of their set text. It was encouraging to see that live theatre is being accessed again after a long hiatus.

Contact details

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