



The following report gives feedback to assist assessors with general issues and trends that have been identified during external moderation of the internally assessed standards in 2024. It also provides further insights from moderation material viewed throughout the year and outlines the Assessor Support available for Drama.

Insights

91940: Explore the function of theatre Aotearoa

Performance overview:

Satisfactory evidence towards the Mātauranga Māori Explanatory Note (EN) 2 requirements was observed when performance evidence demonstrated care and respect for the story being told, and the portfolio included an understanding of the function of drama to heal, educate, entertain, or transform.

High-quality evidence included explicit examples of how students demonstrated manaakitanga in the preparation, performance, and post stages of the work. For example, empathy and understanding was indicated through studying the character/s and the dramatic context. Evidence was of a high standard when examples of manaakitanga were interwoven with the selection and application of a range of drama components to perform theatre Aotearoa extracts.

Successful Merit samples explained how the performed extract communicated the chosen function. These explanations identified the drama components (e.g. techniques and technologies) used, and how they were intentionally applied to convey the chosen function. Students referred to their own contributions as well as those of their group members.

Examples of evidence that innovatively met both bullet points of the Excellence EN1 criteria included:

- Snapshots or videos of key performance moments, with annotations or voiceovers reflecting on how drama components promoted the function.
- Research and statistics supporting the play's themes and issues, connecting the performance to its impact on contemporary communities.
- A deep understanding of roles, relationships, and the dramatic context, explicitly linked to the function of the performance.
- Comprehensive insights into the societal effect of the performance, aligned with the playwright's intention.

Exploring Theatre Aotearoa Contexts

Schools across New Zealand and the Pacific successfully explored culturally sustaining Theatre Aotearoa contexts. Rich opportunities were provided through texts such as:

- *Dawn Raids, Astroman, Purapurawhetū, Night Mechanics, Waiora, Te Kaupoi, Wheeler's Luck, Ed Sheeran Likes Chicken, Shuriken, Peninsula, Once on Chunuk Blair, Rosie, The Gangster's Paradise, The Pohutukawa Tree, Irish Annals of Aotearoa, Inky Pinky Ponky and When Sun and Moon Collide.*

These texts enabled students to explore, explain, and examine the function of theatre Aotearoa.

When assessment materials/templates included questions, prompts, and headings that closely aligned with Explanatory Notes 1 and 2, evidence was generated that met the achievement criteria at all grade levels. For example, prompts that guided students to describe the drama components used in their performance and then connect these components to the function of the scene, or extract supported responses that reflect the higher levels of achievement.

Equity was enhanced when students were given options to present evidence in various modes (e.g. oral, visual, or digital) to suit diverse learning and assessment preferences. Options for evidence collection are available in the Conditions of Assessment on the NCEA website.

Practices that need strengthening:

Many moderation samples exceeded the recommended 2-4 minute performance duration, with lengths ranging from 6-12 minutes. This unnecessarily increased student workload (e.g. rehearsals, memorisation of lines). Scenes or extracts need to be edited to fit the recommended timeframe, as stated in the Conditions of Assessment.

Students were sometimes graded Not Achieved for not fully memorising lines or sustaining roles, which are both not mandatory for achievement. Sufficient evidence is provided when students engage with drama components to establish the dramatic context. Acting techniques are not the focus of this standard.

Samples receiving Not Achieved grades often lacked portfolio descriptions of drama components. However, performance evidence alone can meet the Achieved criteria (EN1, bullet point 1), provided the choice and use of drama components are appropriate and visible.

Some students were awarded Not Achieved grades for failing to provide written evidence for EN1, bullet point 2. As outlined in the Conditions of Assessment, evidence submission can include various modes (e.g. oral, visual, digital) to ensure accessibility.

Some assessment templates required descriptions of multiple functions, which is excessive for EN1, bullet point 2. Evidence for Achieved requires a description (written, visual, or oral) of one core function – heal, educate, entertain, or transform – as it relates to the play as a whole.

In many samples, students described drama components but failed to link them to the function of Theatre Aotearoa. Assessment materials need to include prompts that explicitly elicit this connection, including during verbal conferencing.

Many assessment materials seen in moderation lacked adequate prompts to generate the depth of evidence required for Merit and Excellence grades.

Merit: Headings and questions need to guide students to explain how their performance communicates the chosen function. For instance, they could describe how drama components (e.g. techniques and technologies) were used with the intention of communicating the function. This explanation may refer to their own contributions, or those of their group.

Excellence: Headings and questions need to encourage students to reflect on how their performance promotes the function of theatre Aotearoa and the effect on a segment of

society today. This requires a more detailed examination of the drama components used in performance and their contribution to promote the messages of the performance. For example, students might analyse how their work aims to heal, educate, entertain, or transform society, providing insights into the societal impact of their performance on communities today.

Some samples lacked evidence for the Mātauranga Māori component of EN2. Assessment tasks should include questions, prompts, and headings to generate specific examples of manaakitanga demonstrated during preparation, performance, and post-performance stages.

In some samples, students appeared to use AI tools to source information about the function of Theatre Aotearoa texts. Teachers should guide students to use these tools ethically, ensuring their work remains original and valid for assessment purposes.

91941: Participate in creative strategies to create a drama

Performance overview:

Moderation samples showed sufficient and appropriate evidence for EN2 when students provided explicit examples of how they demonstrated *whanaungatanga* during the collaborative use of creative strategies, and when establishing elements and conventions to develop drama.

High-quality evidence demonstrated that students understood and incorporated the essence of *whanaungatanga* into their creative process, working collaboratively and respectfully.

Examples included:

- Encouraging group members.
- Giving and accepting feedback.
- Talking through disagreements and making compromises.
- Welcoming individual input.
- Creating a safe working environment.
- Respecting others.
- Making group decisions collectively.

Students also reflected on what *whanaungatanga* meant to them personally, how they understood it individually, and how they transferred this understanding into their group work.

Samples that met both bullet points for Merit (EN1) provided clear examples of:

- Personal contributions and responses to ideas during the devising process.
- Experimentation with, and selection of, elements and conventions to shape the drama.

Strong evidence was supported by effective instructional guidance in assessment materials. Prompts that helped students generate relevant evidence included:

- *"Give examples from the devising process of how you personally contributed to creating the drama."*
- *"What did you contribute and respond to during the devising process to support the key message of your drama?"*
- *"What elements and/or conventions did you select, and how did you develop or establish them to structure the drama?"*

Samples meeting both bullet points for Excellence (EN1) provided clear and detailed examples of how students personally negotiated and extended ideas (e.g. elements and conventions) to create a coherent, devised drama.

Key characteristics of high-quality evidence included:

- Use of 'I' statements to accurately describe personal contributions and responses during the devising process.
- Specific examples of how dramatic ideas were extended, such as negotiating the development of elements like role, action, and mood; applying conventions such as telephone conversations or split scenes; and selecting technologies such as projected image and sound to support the key message to be coherently communicated.

Instructional guidance supported students in providing this evidence through targeted prompts, such as:

- *"What dramatic ideas did you extend?"*
- *"How did you negotiate the development of elements in your drama?"*
- *"How did you negotiate the use of a convention and/or technology in your drama?"*
- *"How did you extend an element (e.g. role, time, place, action, tension, mood, focus) to ensure the drama was coherent from the audience's perspective?"*

Practices that need strengthening:

Moderation samples indicate that some students used a scripting process to develop their drama. According to EN5 of the 91941 standard, the development of devised drama must occur through an ongoing cycle of practical experimentation, not scripting. For example, improvisation processes are required for this assessment to create drama collaboratively and dynamically.

Some assessor comments and rationales for awarded grades lacked specific examples of observed evidence. For example, when confirming Merit, teacher observations need to include examples of how the student:

- Contributed and responded to ideas during the devising process.
- Experimented with and selected elements and conventions to shape the devised drama.

Anecdotal evidence must provide clear, specific examples to justify the grade awarded.

Questions during teacher conferencing or interviews need to generate relevant evidence for Merit or Excellence (EN1). To address this:

- Interview questions need to align closely with the assessment criteria, helping students articulate their personal contributions during the devising process.
- Students should discuss how they used creative strategies, contributed ideas, experimented through improvisation, negotiated decisions, and extended dramatic ideas to support the key message.
- Provide questions to students in advance so they have time to reflect and prepare thoughtful responses.

Occasionally, students were awarded Not Achieved when no portfolio evidence was submitted, despite performance evidence showing their use of elements and conventions to create drama. If the assessor can confirm that the student actively participated in the devising process, credit can still be awarded for standard 91941.

In other cases, portfolio evidence documented activities completed during early lessons, which is not valid evidence for EN1. Portfolio evidence must directly relate to the application and refinement of creative strategies, as outlined in the two bullet points of EN1 during the assessment phase.

In some samples, individual evidence was unable to be identified within 'group' portfolio evidence. Colour coding to show individual responses is required, for example when group brainstorming documents are submitted as evidence.

Some moderation samples had performance durations of 6-12 minutes. Devised dramas must fall within the 2-5 minute timeframe specified in the Conditions of Assessment. Selection and rejection of dramatic material during the devising process supports evidence for:

- Shaping the drama (Merit).
- Refining creative strategies to create a coherent devised drama (Excellence).

At times, assessor comments focused on the quality of performance techniques. It is important to note that acting skills are not the focus of this assessment. The emphasis needs to be on the devising process and the application of creative strategies to develop drama.

Some assessment materials did not prompt students to provide evidence of the Mātauranga Māori component of EN2. Assessment tasks should explicitly include opportunities for students to describe how they demonstrated *whanaungatanga* during the devising and performance processes.

Assessor Support

NZQA offers online support for teachers as assessors of NZC achievement standards. These include:

- Exemplars of student work for most standards*
- National Moderator Reports*
- Online learning modules (generic and subject-specific)**
- Clarifications for some standards*
- Assessor Practice Tool for many standards**
- Webcasts*

*hosted on the NZC Subject pages on the NZQA website.

**hosted on Pūtake, NZQA's learning management system. Accessed via Education Sector Login.

We also may provide a speaker to present at national conferences on requests from national subject associations. At the regional or local level, we may be able to provide online support.

Please contact workshops@nzqa.govt.nz for more information or to lodge a request for support.

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