



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 2025. It also provides further insights from moderation material viewed throughout the year and outlines the Assessor Support available for Drama. Please note this report does not introduce new criteria, change the requirements of the standard, or change what we expect from assessment.

Insights

91940: Explore the function of theatre Aotearoa

Performance overview:

This standard requires students to explore the function of theatre Aotearoa in a performance context. Evidence can be presented through written, verbal, or visual means, including portfolios and recorded conferencing. Performance evidence should be 2-4 minutes long and does not constitute evidence beyond Achieved (bullet point 1).

Portfolio evidence seen in moderation included written reflections, oral conferencing, and visual documentation to demonstrate understanding of drama components and their connection to the function of theatre in Aotearoa.

Performance evidence showed engagement with key elements such as voice, movement, space, technologies, and cultural concepts.

Many contexts explored te ao Māori values, or historical or social issues such as 'Dawn Raids' and Treaty injustices, which ensured learning was authentic and culturally sustaining.

Digital approaches, including assessor-recorded verbal conferencing, supported reluctant writers and students with diverse needs. Equity and inclusion were promoted through flexible performance durations (2-4 minutes) and multimodal evidence collection, catering to varied learning styles.

Students were encouraged by motivating contexts that allowed them to connect personal experiences and cultural identity to themes, enhancing engagement and depth of reflection.

Explanatory Note 1: Merit evidence explains how drama components used in the performance connect to the identified function.

Extract of evidence:

"In our scene from Dawn Raids, we used lighting and voice techniques to show the tension between Bene, Teresa, and the police officer. To make it feel tense, we used coloured flashing lights and Teresa spoke faster and a bit quieter, which showed she was anxious and trying to calm things down. The police officer's voice was strong and commanding, which made the scene feel more intense and showed who had the power."

Excellence evidence examines how drama components used in the performance promote the identified function (bullet point 1), and the relationship between the performance and communities today (bullet point 2).

Extract of evidence (bullet point 1): *"The red and blue flashing lights built intensity and made the audience feel the fear and pressure the characters were under. This performance helped*

educate the audience about racial profiling and the unfair treatment of Pacific people during the Dawn Raids.”

Extract of evidence (bullet point 2): *“This performance wasn’t just about history—it connects to today because people still face racism and unfair treatment. Our scene made me think about how communities are still fighting for equality, so the play helps people understand that these issues haven’t gone away.”*

Explanatory Note 2: Mātauranga Māori – Manaakitanga

Evidence included examples of how they demonstrated manaakitanga throughout the process and performance. For example, showing care and respect for characters, audience, and kaupapa of the play.

Evidence that reached higher sufficiency levels not only described what they did, but demonstrated reflective awareness of why manaakitanga matters – linking performance choices to collective wellbeing, te ao Māori values, and the transformative potential of theatre.

Practices that need strengthening:

- Assessment materials lack instructional guidance for Merit and Excellence. Address this by adding guiding questions that require students to carefully consider why they have chosen drama components to communicate the key messages of the scene performed. Prompts also need to generate responses that show a detailed reflection on their performance and the societal impact it could have on communities today.
- Insufficient evidence of manaakitanga in reflections. Include explicit prompts in templates and during conferencing for students to describe how manaakitanga was demonstrated before, during, and after performance. Prompts could encourage more explicit examples of reciprocity, leadership, and audience consideration to strengthen authentic cultural connections in performance practice.
- Connections between performance and function are weak. Guide students to link drama components (e.g. techniques and technologies) directly to the function in their scene. For example, what they used, how they used it, and the intended effect.
- Teacher questioning during conferencing is too general. Refine questions to focus on Explanatory Note (EN) 1 and EN2 requirements, such as “How does your performance educate, heal, entertain, or transform? What drama components did you and your group use to communicate the main messages of your scene? How did you demonstrate manaakitanga throughout the exploration and performance of the theatre Aotearoa play?”
- Evidence often focuses on the whole play rather than the performed extract. Clarify in instructions that analysis to meet the requirements for Merit and Excellence needs to relate specifically to the extract performed. Therefore, it is important the selected extract to perform has a strong link to a function of theatre Aotearoa.
- Authenticity concerns. Monitor for AI-generated content through teacher guidance and authenticity checks.
- Performance duration exceeds requirements. Ensure performances remain within the 2–4 minute timeframe to manage workload and maintain consistency.

91941: Participate in creative strategies to create drama

Performance overview:

The standard focuses on devising drama collaboratively using creative strategies and demonstrating whanaungatanga. It requires students to provide portfolio evidence, which is the primary focus of assessment at Merit and Excellence (not quality of performance).

The portfolio includes evidence for two aspects:

EN1 – Participation in creative strategies. The focus is participating in the devising process to create a drama. The quality of this evidence increments to Merit and Excellence.

Merit Evidence:

- Use of “I” statements to clarify personal input.
- Examples of contribution and responding to dramatic ideas. Experimenting and selecting conventions (e.g. freeze frame, narration) to shape drama.
- Documentation of rejecting material to meet the 2-5 minute time restriction.
- Reflection on how choices shaped audience understanding.

Excellence Evidence:

- Examples of negotiation and extension of ideas (e.g. developing and establishing elements, refining transitions).
- Evidence of refining conventions for coherence (e.g. adjusting timing, modifying delivery).
- Integration of technologies (props, sound, projected images) to enhance mood and message.
- Explanatory Note 2 – Mātauranga Māori. Demonstrating whanaungatanga. This does not constitute evidence beyond the Achieved grade. Evidence should include explicit examples of how whanaungatanga was practiced during planning, rehearsal, and performance. For example, demonstrating collaboration, respect, and inclusion throughout the process.
- Evidence that reached higher sufficiency levels not only described what they did, but included explicit reflection on collaboration, resolving conflicts, and ensuring inclusivity. For example, examples of adapting scenes for absent peers or encouraging equal participation.

In 2025 moderation, verbal conferencing, recorded interviews, and visual documentation of rehearsal processes provided alternative ways for students to present evidence.

Assessment contexts that were relevant and engaging drew on themes such as social issues and cultural identity, and incorporating local pūrākau and whakataukāki.

Equity principles were applied through multiple evidence formats and teacher scaffolds that guided students toward higher achievement.

Creative assessment design encouraged experimentation and reflection through contexts like children’s theatre, physical theatre, and contemporary technologies.

Practices that need strengthening:

Portfolio Evidence

- Lack of individualised evidence. Students need to use first person statements to show personal contributions.
Students should clearly identify their own ideas and actions rather than group efforts, to demonstrate ownership of creative decisions.
- Insufficient documentation of refinement and shaping for audience impact, especially for Merit and Excellence. Evidence must show how students refined their drama through rehearsal and feedback to improve clarity and audience engagement.
- Limited reflection on how conventions were trialled, adapted, or rejected during rehearsal. Portfolios could include examples of experimentation, noting what worked, what was changed, and why.

Creative Strategies

- Overemphasis on acting techniques instead of creative strategies. Assessment should focus on using devising processes – such as idea development, exploring elements and conventions, and making structural decisions – rather than performance skills.
- Weak evidence of selection and rejection of dramatic material to meet time constraints (2-5 minutes). Students need to show how they edited and condensed material to create a drama within the required timeframe.
- Lack of evidence showing how students contributed to shaping drama for coherence and time compliance. Portfolios could include reflections on structural decisions, such as rejecting material or adjusting pacing for clarity.
- Inadequate examples of negotiation and extension of ideas for Excellence. Evidence should include how students negotiated with peers and extended ideas or conventions to deepen meaning and coherence.

Assessment Materials

- Templates and prompts focus on participation and description, rather than shaping and refining drama. Lack of scaffolds to elicit evidence for Merit and Excellence criteria (e.g. negotiation, extension, refinement). Prompts should encourage detailed reflection on decision-making, experimentation, and refinement processes. Assessment materials need to guide students to explain how their application of creative strategies shaped and refined the drama for coherency and clarity for an audience.
- Interview questions need to align with EN1 and EN2 requirements. Questions should explicitly target evidence of creative strategies and whanaungatanga throughout the devising process.
- The devised drama frequently exceeded the required 2-5 minute timeframe. Assessment materials need to include this duration as a requirement.

Whanaungatanga (EN2)

- Minimal reflection on demonstrating whanaungatanga during collaborative processes in portfolios. Students need to provide examples of how they demonstrated respect, inclusion, and teamwork during the creative process.

- Evidence often limited to performance rather than explicit examples in documentation. Portfolios need written or verbal reflections showing how whanaungatanga influenced planning and rehearsal decisions.

To give feedback on this report click on [this link](#).

Assessor Support

NZQA offers free 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.

Exemplars, National Moderator Reports, clarifications, and webcasts are hosted on the NZC Subject pages on the NZQA website.

[Subject Pages](#)

Online learning modules and the Assessor Practice Tool are hosted on Pūtake, NZQA's learning management system. You can access these through the Education Sector Logon.

[Log in to Pūtake](#)

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 assessorsupport@nzqa.govt.nz for more information or to lodge a request for support.