

2026 Quick Guide to Marking - IA1: Performance



Drama Queensland has collaborated with drama subject matter experts, teachers who are part of confirmation processes, and the QCAA to create this quick guide to accompany the free webinar resource. The aim of this suit of resources is to ensure we all share a communal understanding of each performance level descriptor but also to support teachers statewide to confidently and accurately match evidence in student work to performance level descriptors.

Please note – The Arts use a lowest performance level descriptor (PLD) up marking approach. This is different from other learning areas. In the Arts we start marking from the lowest mark band 1-2. We look for evidence in the student's work to match the 1-2 PLD. If we can find qualities in the student's work to match ALL of a 1-2 then we may move up and look for evidence of a 3-4. If we can find qualities in the student's work to match ALL of a 3-4 then we may move up and look for evidence of a 5-6. We continue doing this until no further evidence can be found to match the PLD. A mark is then awarded. If there is partial evidence of a PLD then a best fit approach is applied. In Drama, a student must achieve a whole dot point to receive the mark within that PLD. Please see the IA1 ISMG webinar for a fuller explanation.

Demonstration of the skills of acting			
Marks	PLD	Terminology Unpacked	Key Questions
1-2	use of expressive skills to communicate scripted dialogue through - vocal qualities - movement qualities	Use - put into stage action. Expressive Skills – vocal & movement qualities. Communicate - practically deliver a section of scripted text from the endorsed task. Vocal Qualities (part of expressive skills) - may include pronunciation, phrasing, pausing, intonation, modulation, audibility and clarity, volume, pace, silence, projection and breath control (see glossary below). Movement Qualities (part of expressive skills) - may include facial expression, movement, gesture, proximity, walk, stance and use of levels (see glossary below).	- Did they demonstrate multiple distinct features of a performer's voice, such as pitch, pace, tone, volume, clarity, projection and expression (see glossary below), to communicate a section of scripted dialogue? - Did they demonstrate multiple specific characteristics of an actor's physical actions, such as facial expression, movement, gesture, proximity, walk, stance and use of levels (see glossary below) to communicate a section of scripted dialogue?
3-4	demonstration of skills of acting using - expressive skills - performance skills	Demonstrate - making conscious planned choices of the application of expressive skills (vocal & movement qualities) and performance skills with consideration of character and audience. Expressive Skills – vocal & movement qualities (as above).	Did they demonstrate a fuller use of movement qualities (facial expressions, movement, walk, gestures, proximity, stance, use of levels), and a fuller use of vocal qualities (pronunciation, phrasing, pausing, intonation, modulation, audibility and clarity, volume, projection, pace, silence, breath control) (see glossary below) to enhance

		Performance Skills - may include audience awareness, listening to other performers, energy levels, focus (commitment to role/actor engagement), timing, memorisation of lines, working as an ensemble and interacting with stage craft (see glossary below).	characterisation and communicate dramatic action and meaning? Did they demonstrate audience awareness, listening to other performers, energy levels, focus (commitment to role/actor engagement), timing, working as an ensemble, memorisation of lines, and/or interacting with stagecraft (see glossary below)? Note: Performance skills are significantly impacted if students do not have lines memorised.
5-6	Demonstration of skills of acting is - controlled and intentional - suited to identified form/style	Controlled - precise, focused & disciplined seen throughout the response. Intentional - deliberate, purposeful and clear seen throughout the response. Suited to the identified form/style - choices in expressive skills (voice & movement) & performance skills are aligned with the stylistic characteristics (see pg. 15-28 SMSR) inherited in the endorsed stimulus text seen throughout the response.	- Was their performance controlled - precise, focused and disciplined? Was their performance intentional - did they demonstrate deliberate, purposeful and clear choices? Was this seen throughout the response? Were their lines memorised? - Did they demonstrate expressive and performance skills that aligned with the stylistic characteristics (see pg. 15-28 SMSR) inherited in the endorsed stimulus text. Was this seen throughout the response? Were their lines memorised?
7-8	demonstration of skills of acting - creates energy and focus through commitment to roles, reacting to cues, rhythms of performance and ensemble (as appropriate) - is convincing, refined and sustained	Energy - engaging presence which evokes response from the other actors & audience along with the intensity & commitment an actor brings to a performance. Focus - commitment to their performance and to use concentration to sustain character. Commitment to role – fully engaged with character. Reacting to cues - responding to verbal, physical, or technical (e.g. lighting sound) cues. Rhythms of performance - pace, tempo, and flow of a performance. Ensemble - working together as group of actors. Convincing - compelling, creditable & engaging. Refined - sophisticated, carefully chosen and applied whilst being executed in thoroughly polished way. Sustained - consistently demonstrated throughout.	- Did they demonstrate energy through their physical, vocal, emotional intensity in the performance? Were they focused, i.e. committed and fully present throughout the performance? Did they create energy and focus through: - commitment to role, by fully engaging with character (movement, voice projection, tone, and emotion appropriate and authentic to the role) - reacting to cues, by responding to verbal, physical, or technical (e.g. lighting, sound) cues to maintain flow and believable interactions between characters - demonstrating rhythms of performance, in terms of pace, tempo, and flow of a performance, ensuring emotional and physical energy of a scene and how it rises, falls, or shifts to create dramatic action and meaning, working together as group of actors (ensemble)? - Was their performance:

			- convincing, making character, emotions, and dramatic action real, believable and authentic? - refined, being carefully crafted, and polished, as well as being disciplined with attention to detail? - sustained, demonstrating continuous control?
--	--	--	---

Communicating meaning in performance			
Marks	PLD	Terminology Unpacked	Key Questions
1-2	- text is recited - use of isolated elements of drama	Text – a dialogue excerpt from the endorsed stimulus text. Recite - say lines of text aloud. Use - put into stage action. Elements of drama - may include character, contrast, dramatic focus, language, mood, movement, place, relationship, role, situation, space, symbol, tension & time (see pg. 2 SMSR).	• Was the text from the published stimulus script spoken? For this descriptor, lines may have been spoken, without intent, genuine emotion or engagement, and lacking expression, energy, or character embodiment. • Was there use of multiple elements of drama (see pg. 2 SMSR) evident in the performance?
2-3	- interpretation shows an understanding of situation, roles and relationship in chosen text - use of elements of drama and stagecraft to create action	Interpretation – bring out meaning by making conscious choices. situation - the physical, emotional, social and sometimes nontangible environment. role - the status, values, attitudes, narrative function, relationships and behaviours of a character. relationship - connections or interactions realised between characters or roles, between characters and ideas, or between characters and their staged environment. Stage craft - use of blocking, avoiding masking other actors, maintaining sightlines, management of stage properties and taking cue (see glossary below).	• Did they demonstrate understanding through: - situation, by interacting with the stage space and technical elements to indicate the physical, emotional, social and sometimes nontangible environment? - role, by adopting the status, values, attitudes, narrative function, relationships and behaviours of their chosen character/s? - relationship, through connections or interactions realised between characters or roles, between characters and ideas, or between characters and their staged environment? • Did they use and layer the elements of drama (character, contrast, dramatic focus, language, mood, movement, place, relationship, role, situation, space, symbol, tension & time) and stagecraft (blocking, avoiding marking other actors, maintaining sightlines, management of stage properties and/or taking cues) (see glossary below) to create action within the performance space?

5-6	- interpretation of purpose and context within the chosen text - manipulation of elements of drama, stagecraft and conventions to create dramatic action and meaning	Interpretation - bring out dramatic meaning by giving one's own original creative vision for the text. Purpose - desired impact on the audience. Is the purpose to challenge, provoke, educate, inform, celebrate, entertain, empower, and/or document, etc.? What should the audience think & feel? Context - the lens and frame through which dramatic action and meaning is created and received. What is the performance space? Who is the target audience? What is the form/style of the performance? How will the historical, social and/or cultural rules which govern the world of the scene be shown? Manipulate - purposeful and thought-out choices in stage action to create meaning for the audience. Conventions - Dramatic techniques employed using the skills of drama (see pg. 5-11 & pg. 12-28 SMSR).	• Were the intentions (their chosen purpose) and lens/frame through which the dramatic action and meaning are created (their chosen context) evident in the performance? For instance, was the purpose and context, as identified by the student on the annotated, highlighted published script, evident in the performance? Was this an original creative interpretation? • Did the performance create dramatic action by making purposeful and thought-out choices in the use of the elements of drama, stagecraft and conventions (see pg. 5-11 & pg. 12-28 SMSR) to communicate meaning for the audience? Was this an original creative interpretation? Note: Communication of purpose, context and dramatic meaning is significantly impacted if students do not have lines memorised.
7-8	- interpretation shows valid interrelationships between purpose, context and text - manipulation of elements of drama, stagecraft and conventions to create dramatic action and meaning that communicates social comment <i>(or for Alternative Sequence that communicates a story)</i>	Valid Interrelationships - The purpose & context is well-founded, reasonable and able to be supported by the text. Text - the scripted text excerpt in relation to the whole playtext Social Comment (story) - The student's social comment (or story) on their annotated script is made clear through the manipulation of the elements of drama, stage craft and conventions in their stage action.	• Did the performance show well founded, plausible and reasonable connections, interplay and/or fusion between purpose, context and text? Is their choice in purpose and context founded, plausible and reasonable connected to the unit of work, scene excerpt, and whole playtext? • Did the staged dramatic action communicate the social comment identified in the annotated published script? Or for Alternative sequence unit 1: Did the staged dramatic action communicate the story identified in the annotated published script?

9-10	- interpretation intentionally integrates dramatic languages to communicate meaning - manipulation of elements of drama, stagecraft and conventions to communicate stylistic characteristics and create coherent dramatic action and meaning	Intentionally integrates - deliberate/considered selection and combination of dramatic languages in a unified and purposeful way. Dramatic Languages - outlined throughout the subject matter support resource and include skills of drama acting, stage craft, elements of drama, form, style and conventions. Stylistic Characteristics - distinct features & techniques that are typical of the form/style of the selected stimulus text (see pg. 15-28 SMSR). Coherent - work together seamlessly to focus dramatic action and clearly communicate intended meaning.	• Did the performance demonstrate deliberate/considered selection and combination of dramatic languages (skills of drama acting, stage craft, elements of drama, form, style and conventions) in a unified and purposeful way to communicate intended meaning? • Did the performance communicate the stylistic characteristics, i.e. the distinct features and techniques that are typical of the form or style of the selected stimulus text for the performance (see pg. 15-28 SMSR)? Did the performance create coherent dramatic action and meaning? Did the choice and combination of dramatic languages work together seamlessly to focus dramatic action and clearly communicate intended meaning?
11-12	- interpretation exploits dramatic languages to reveal layers of meaning - manipulation synthesises elements of drama, stagecraft and conventions to create engaging dramatic action and realise form and style of the stimulus text	Exploits - taking full advantage of dramatic moments or nuances in the script, and capitalising on key moments &/or subtext. Layers of Meaning - multiple levels of interpretation, symbolism, and emotional or thematic depth within a concept, while engaging the audience in complex or subtle ways. Synthesises - seamlessly integrate to create engaging action Engaging - compelling & holding audience's attention Realise - make apparent, make visible and bring to life the stylistic characteristics of the stimulus text	• Did they exploit dramatic languages by taking full advantage of dramatic moments or nuances in the script, and capitalising on key moments &/or subtext? Did the performance reveal layers of meaning, i.e. multiple levels of interpretation, symbolism, and emotional or thematic depth within a concept, while engaging the audience in complex or subtle ways? • Did the performance seamlessly integrate (synthesise) elements of drama, stagecraft and conventions to create engaging dramatic action? Was the dramatic action compelling, i.e. did it capture and hold the audience's attention (engaging)? Did the performance make apparent (realise), make visible and bring to life the stylistic characteristics of the stimulus text?

Glossary of Terminology for IA1

Expressive Skills, Performance Skills & Stagecraft



Please see the **Subject Matter Support Resource** for definitions for the elements of drama, dramatic conventions, and characteristics of forms/styles. The document is available on the **QCAA website**.

EXPRESSIVE SKILLS

Movement Qualities

Facial Expression – the visual display of emotion and attitude using facial muscles.

Gestures – a movement through a part of the body like the arm, leg or head.

Posture – the way in which a performer holds their body through a standing, sitting or lying position.

Proximity – the physical distance between actor/actor, actor/set and actor/audience.

Use of Levels – use of different heights through physical positioning and using set.

Walk/Gait - the way the actor moves through the space including walk.

Vocal Qualities

Audibility & Clarity – Using projection, which is the strength and control of the voice, to ensure the dialogue is delivered clearly and loudly enough to be heard.

Breath Control – To ability to regulate breath to allow the controlled use of voice to ensure clarity.

Emphasis – The amount of stress, force or vocal weight placed upon a particular word or words to make them stand out.

Intonation – The pitch: how high or low.

Pace – The speed: how fast or slow.

Pause – Breaks or silences between words.

Phrasing – How the actor chooses to break up the delivery of dialogue.

Projection – using volume and control to ensure the voice can be heard.

Pronunciation – The precision of articulation of the voice ensuring words are spoken accurately and understandably.

Silence – Deliberately not speaking.

Tone – The emotion or attitude behind the meaning of the words.

Vocal Modulation – Refers to the actor's intentional control and choices in variation of vocal qualities.

Volume – The level: how loud or soft.

PERFORMANCE SKILLS

Audience Awareness - The actor considers what impact they intend their performance to have on an audience linked to their purpose. The actor-audience relationship is the way in which an actor deliberately establishes, maintains and/or manipulates an audience's emotions and responses to a performance. This may be done through the body positioning (blocking) of the actor in relation to the audience, interaction with other performers and stage craft, the way the actor engages the audience, and the emotional and intellectual response to a character's situation by an audience, intended or otherwise.

Energy Levels - Energy is about having an engaging presence on stage to enable the performer to evoke responses from the other actors and the audience. It can also be defined as the intensity and commitment an actor brings to a performance. At different times, an actor will manipulate and control their voice and movement differently to deliberately display different levels of energy for example lethargic to invigorated in their character delivery.

Focus (commitment to role/actor engagement) - Focus is the ability of the actor to commit to their performance and to use concentration to sustain character/multiple role and/or their role in the dramatic action. Focus can be executed through where the performer is looking, how they are controlling their body and their mental concentration.

Interacting with Stage Craft - The actor considers the use of stage craft and responds effectively to it. This may include being aware of their positioning, movement and timing on stage in relation to the lighting cues; interacting with the set to establish the situation; using props with care and purpose; listening and responding to sound cues and listening and responding to the functions of other actors.

Listening to other performers - Listening to the other performers refers to being engaged, connected and reacting to the other performers on stage. This is achieved through active listening, staying focus, use of eye contact, timing and reacting using the expressive skills.

Memorisation of lines - Committing dialogue to memory is a foundational skill for effective acting. Actors must deliver their dialogue fluidly as scripted without a script in hands and prompts.

Timing - Timing of voice and movement is used to control or regulate the pace of a performance. Timing may be manipulated in drama to build tension, to control the shape of a scene, to evoke feeling for an audience, to coordinate effective synchronisation within an ensemble, and/or to develop the comic or dramatic potential of a scene.

Working as an ensemble - Working as an ensemble is the deliberate and purposeful choices that cast members make to create action and meaning for the audience together. It relies on planned and rehearsed action to work with and respond to others.

STAGECRAFT - ACTING

Avoiding masking other actors – the actor considers the other performers' positioning and movement to ensure their choices in blocking don't interrupt the audience's clear view of other actors on stage.

Blocking – the positioning and movement of the actor within the stage space. Blocking includes where the actor is, their level, where they move to, which direction they are facing and how they interact with each other. It assists in focusing the audience's attention, adding interest, revealing the dramatic action within the script and conveying the human context.

Maintaining sightlines – the actor considers the audience's viewing angle when creating and executing their blocking to ensure a clear line of sight.

Management of stage properties – the actor's manipulation of props, costume items, set and technical elements is planned, rehearsed and polished.

Taking Cue – the actor's stage action is planned and rehearsed so they can engage in the performance ensuring that they are responding timely to their fellow performers along with technical cues.