

NCEA Review and Maintenance Programme – 2026 updates

Review and maintenance work has been undertaken for all three levels of NZC NCEA for 2026. This pdf document contains the updated assessment materials for **Drama Level 1**. In January 2026 the NCEA website will be updated with these changes for Level 1, and the pdf version will be removed as it will no longer be necessary. For Levels 2 and 3, assessment materials will be updated on TKI in January. For external assessment specifications, refer to the NZQA website.

Subject: Drama Level 1

Product	What's changed?
Conditions of Assessment across all internal standards	Updated to provide clearer guidance around authenticity.
AS1.1 91940 Unpacking	Clarification for submitted evidence.
AS1.2 91941 Unpacking	Clarification for submitted evidence.
AS1.3 91942 Unpacking	Clarification for submitted evidence.
AS1.4 91943 Unpacking	Clarification for submitted evidence.

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NCEA Conditions of Assessment across all internally assessed standards

Subject:	All NZC subjects
Achievement Standard:	All NZC internal Achievement Standards

The Conditions of Assessment across all Level 1 internally assessed standards have been updated to include clearer guidance about authenticity. Any changes to Standard Specific Conditions of Assessment will be shown separately within this document.

Conditions of Assessment for internally assessed standards

These Conditions provide guidelines for assessment against internally assessed Achievement Standards. Guidance is provided on:

- specific requirements for all assessments against this Standard
- appropriate ways of, and conditions for, gathering evidence
- ensuring that evidence is authentic.

Assessors must be familiar with guidance on assessment practice in learning centres, including enforcing timeframes and deadlines. The [NZQA](#) website offers resources that would be useful to read in conjunction with these Conditions of Assessment.

The learning centre's Assessment Policy and Conditions of Assessment must be consistent with NZQA's [Assessment Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess](#). This link includes guidance for managing internal moderation and the collection of evidence.

Gathering Evidence

Internal assessment provides considerable flexibility in the collection of evidence. Evidence can be collected in different ways to suit a range of teaching and learning styles, and a range of contexts of teaching and learning. Care needs to be taken to allow students opportunities to present their best evidence against the Standard(s) that are free from unnecessary constraints.

It is recommended that the design of assessment reflects and reinforces the ways students have been learning. Collection of evidence for the internally assessed Standards could include, but is not restricted to, an extended task, an investigation, digital evidence (such as recorded interviews, blogs, photographs, or film), or a portfolio of evidence.

Effective assessment should suit the nature of the learning being assessed, provide opportunities to meet the diverse needs of all students, and be valid and fair.

Ensuring Authenticity of Evidence

Authenticity of student evidence needs to be assured regardless of the method of collecting evidence. This must be in line with the learning centre's policy and NZQA's [Assessment Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess](#).

Ensure that the student's evidence is individually identifiable and represents the student's own work. The evidence must be an accurate reflection of what the student independently knows and can do, according to the Standard being assessed. This includes evidence submitted as part of a group assessment, evidence produced outside of class time or without assessor supervision, and evidence produced with any use of generative artificial intelligence tools (GenAI). GenAI use should be carefully considered in the context of the Standard being assessed and its Conditions of Assessment, discussed with students before the assessment, and its use must be acknowledged. For example, an investigation carried out over several sessions could include:

- teacher guidance on the nature and extent of [acceptable GenAI use](#), if any
- assessor observations and conversations
- meeting with the student at set milestones or checkpoints
- the student's record of progress, such as photographic entries or any GenAI prompts used.

NCEA Unpacking the Standard

Subject:	Drama
Achievement Standard:	1.1 Explore the function of theatre Aotearoa
Credits:	5

The intent of the Achievement Standard

Theatre Aotearoa is an expansive term encompassing a wide range of drama and theatrical performance that draws from, or is connected to, Aotearoa New Zealand through its content, creators, or context. This Achievement Standard provides ākonga with the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the function of theatre and drama — to heal, educate, entertain, or transform — by participating in a performance from theatre Aotearoa and providing an individual reflection.

In theatre and performance, manaakitanga can be demonstrated by collaboration and support for each other and for the theatre process. Participants may show care for one another during the creation of the performance, for the characters being represented, and for the story being told. Participants may also show care for the audience of the performance with the story they tell and the manner in which they tell it. Exploring and experimenting with drama components allows ākonga to understand how these components can be combined within a performance, and communicated through manaakitanga, to promote the function of drama.

As members of society, the audience is the conduit through which the function of drama can be realised. Society consists of specific communities that the audience may or may not be a part of. As such, audiences may represent a multitude of demographics, identities, and worldviews, and each audience member will experience a drama performance through their own unique perceptions and backgrounds. This is where channelling the wairua of a performance and establishing a connection with the audience is vital. The relationship between performer and audience is reciprocal and relies on the intellectual, emotional, and physical – ‘head, heart, and stomach’ – reactions to make meaning from the drama and create a successful performance.

Making reliable judgements

As part of the evidence provided, ākonga must demonstrate that they have shown collaboration and care for one another during the creation of the performance through manaakitanga. This includes showing care for the characters being represented and the story being told. They must also show manaakitanga for the audience of the performance by considering the potential effects the performance may have with the story they tell and the manner in which they tell it.

Through their participation in, and reflection on, a performance, ākonga will demonstrate their knowledge about different forms of drama. They will understand that different times, places, and contexts give rise to different types of drama and that there are protocols and conventions for drama that may be different in different contexts.

While memorising lines helps to sustain a role and is level appropriate, the emphasis of the Standard is on the use of drama components to establish a dramatic context, and communicate meaning.

To explore the function of theatre Aotearoa, ākonga will use drama components to connect with the audience. They will be able to communicate the cultural, social, or historical context of the drama to the audience, who are members of specific communities, as well as the wider society. This allows exploration of how meaning is made, and ideas are expressed through these components, which ākonga can then include in their reflection.

Establishing lines of communication with an audience through drama components is the first step towards fulfilling the function of drama to heal, educate, entertain, or transform society. Drama components are the tangible methods with which the performers connect with the audience and that allow the intangible essence of a performance to be felt and understood.

Drama components include:

- *elements* such as role, time, place, situation, action, tension, mood, focus, and symbol
- *conventions* such as freeze frame and spoken thought
- *techniques* such as body, space, movement, and voice
- *technologies* such as lighting, sound, props, and costume.

Within their reflection, ākonga will discuss the scene, or scenes, that they have performed. However, there may also be opportunity to extend their reflection to the entire play if appropriate to support their submission.

Kaiako observations of naturally occurring evidence must focus on how effectively ākonga demonstrate understanding and critical thinking around making choices about drama components to better communicate the dramatic context. A successful performance will clearly demonstrate the link between ākonga performance and the function of drama in this context. This will allow ākonga to reflect at a higher level on the connections between the performance and the function of drama, as well as the relationship the function of drama has to communities today.

Communities are the groups, cultures, and subcultures that make up society and exist as subsets of society. They are formed through shared identities, such as ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, and others. They may also be formed through shared common interests and values that include fandoms, activist groups, performance troupes, and others.

Through this focus on performance, learning for this Achievement Standard could emerge from the preparation work for Achievement Standard 1.3 (*Perform a scripted role for an audience using drama techniques*) with potential for the two Achievement Standards to work alongside each other.

Collecting evidence

The internal mode of assessment for this Achievement Standard allows for the collection of evidence over a period of time as understanding of the function of drama deepens and becomes more complex. It also allows ākonga to present evidence of their understanding in multiple forms including performance, presentation, visual, verbal, or written.

All evidence statements must reflect that demonstrating understanding of the function of drama can either be from the performer's perspective or the perspective of the audience. While ākonga should engage with multiple contexts of theatre Aotearoa within their learning, the evidence they provide for assessment can only be from one context.

To engage with the function of theatre Aotearoa, ākonga are required to participate in a performance that will consolidate, and provide evidence for, their learning. Evidence is best assessed through ākonga exploration leading up to the performance (where it will be naturally occurring), as well as conversations with other ākonga and with the kaiako.

Kaiako observations may include conference with ākonga, note-taking or recording, watching performances and rehearsals etc. They may also provide opportunities for the collection of supporting evidence. Evidence provided for this Standard should contain a title and a clear statement of intention.

Possible contexts

Theatre Aotearoa offers a significant and distinct contribution to global performance, shaped by the histories and performance practices of people connected to Aotearoa New Zealand. Te Whare Tapere is the indigenous performance tradition of the whenua and Māori theatre – theatre made by Māori, with kaupapa Māori and tikanga Māori – and is a taonga of theatre Aotearoa. Theatre Aotearoa has developed through an intermix of cultural identities, perspectives, and practices, including contributions by Māori, Pacific, Pākehā, and other practitioners. Theatre Aotearoa includes drama set in Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as work made by New Zealanders with international settings. The term also recognises our place in the Pacific, allowing us to access the work of Pacific writers across the moana.

Standard Exclusions

This Standard has one or more exclusions, or Standards that assess the same or similar learning. These Standards are excluded against one another to prevent assessing the same learning twice. You can only use credits gained from one of these standards towards your NCEA qualification.

Find out more about the [NCEA Level 1 Exclusions List](#).

NCEA Unpacking the Standard

Subject:	Drama
Achievement Standard:	1.2 Perform a scripted role for an audience using drama techniques
Credits:	5

The intent of the Achievement Standard

Ākonga will demonstrate their ability to participate in, and contribute to, a collaborative creative process. This involves ways of working that promote whanaungatanga, where meaning in performance is created. Ākonga will show that they can contribute to an effective and compassionate group culture that encourages whanaungatanga and the strategic use of the relationships they build with each other to develop an ensemble.

Through the devising process, ākonga will investigate, explore, and practise different ways of creating and structuring drama through using:

- linear, thematic, cyclical, episodic, or non-narrative storytelling
- the elements of drama (role, place, time, situation, action, tension, mood, contrast, focus, and symbol)
- a range of dramatic conventions to develop characters and deepen the audience's engagement
- production technologies (such as lighting, sound, digital projection, properties, makeup, costumes, the set etc) to enhance mood and settings (place and time)
- characters and situations brought to life in an imagined world
- ways of creating drama from a diverse range of cultures and perspectives – this may include perspectives or practices found within te ao Māori (Te Kore, Te Pō, and Te Ao Mārama) and Pacific cultures beyond Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as diverse groups such as deaf and Rainbow communities.

Ākonga will demonstrate ability to give and receive feedback, explore different ideas, and translate those ideas into a piece of dramatic work. In order to devise drama, ākonga will need to participate in discussion to select or develop shared kaupapa for their group and a shared artistic vision for their work.

Making reliable judgements

Ākonga will experiment with elements and conventions to communicate dramatic meaning. They will need to identify and select ideas that strongly support the drama and let go of those

that don't.

The devising process they participate in must be undertaken in a way that incorporates and promotes whanaungatanga to realise the shared vision of the drama and create meaning through the performance. Ākonga will need to refine the shared vision throughout the devising process.

Drama elements are the key ingredients of drama, including role, time, place, action, tension, mood, and focus.

Drama conventions consist of process conventions and performance conventions.

Drama process conventions include:

- actioning
- hot-seating
- visualisation.

Drama performance (structural) conventions include:

- aside or direct address
- entrances and exits
- flashback and flashforward
- narration
- physical and vocal chorus
- slow motion
- soundscape
- split focus
- split stage
- spoken thoughts
- stage directions
- still image
- telephone conversations.

Each ākonga is required to show individual evidence of how they have used creative strategies to create a drama. This can be captured through written or oral observations, or recordings of kōrero during the devising process. This includes how ākonga may have used creative strategies to overcome blocks or obstacles, such as group dynamics, regardless of the outcome.

When demonstrating deeper understanding of creative strategies, to 'shape' a devised drama involves creating relationships between ideas during the devising process. 'Shaping' is the editing phase of the devising process, where ākonga are finding ways of combining and complementing ideas to enhance and give form to the drama.

When demonstrating high-level thinking, 'extending the use of elements and conventions' involves building and reinforcing ideas that complement each other. It demonstrates depth and sophistication in understanding of the selected elements and conventions used in the

performance. This includes the ability to integrate the selected elements in a way that provides deeper understanding or accessibility for the audience.

Furthermore, in the context of high-level thinking, 'coherent' can be understood as the synergy of relationships between the selected elements and conventions, and the way they create the theme of the performance. A coherent performance delves deeper into the context and ideas of the drama and challenges the audience to reflect on them.

Collecting evidence

The internal mode of assessment for this Achievement Standard allows for the collection of evidence over a period of time, as the creative process takes place.

While kaiako observation can form part of the evidence of ākonga reflection, it is intended that this is limited to what the kaiako is observing. The devising process must be ākonga-led without kaiako feedforward to guide it. Evidence provided for this standard should contain a title and a clear statement of intention.

Possible contexts

Ākonga should be encouraged to draw from their local contexts and the knowledges and skills they bring with them, recognising and celebrating their diverse backgrounds and past experiences. They are encouraged to explore a sense of who they are through the drama they devise.

Kaiako should ensure that the chosen context provides opportunities for being safely framed so that ākonga wellbeing is ensured. Promoting whanaungatanga will help ākonga to uphold and nurture their relationships with one another, supporting a positive and cooperative devising process. It will encourage ākonga to practise empathy and awareness towards their peers when developing and refining their devised drama. Ākonga will be assessed for their contributions individually.

Standard Exclusions

This Standard has one or more exclusions, or Standards that assess the same or similar learning. These Standards are excluded against one another to prevent assessing the same learning twice. You can only use credits gained from one of these standards towards your NCEA qualification.

Find out more about the [NCEA Level 1 Exclusions List](#).

NCEA Unpacking the Standard

Subject:	Drama
Achievement Standard:	1.3 Perform a scripted role for an audience using drama techniques
Credits:	5

The intent of the Standard

Ākonga will demonstrate their ability to perform a scripted role using drama techniques.

Drama techniques include voice, body, movement, and use of space:

- Voice includes pitch, pace, pause, projection, tone, and volume.
- Body includes posture, gesture, facial expressions, and eye-contact.
- Movement includes pace, weight, energy, direction, and pathways.
- Use of space includes personal space and general space, levels, distance from other characters, and groupings.

For this Achievement Standard, ākonga will be able to continue their use of creative strategies from Achievement Standard 1.2 (*Participate in creative strategies to devise a drama*). In particular, practices of whanaungatanga, kotahitanga, and manaakitanga as they are integral in creating any performance. They serve as a foundation to apply drama techniques in a group context. Mahitahi is also inherent in the performance and use of drama techniques as ākonga must collaborate and work together to achieve a shared vision for the performance.

Making reliable judgements

Ākonga will demonstrate the ability to respond to and interact with other characters. They will be assessed on one singular performance of a role captured from a performance event they took part in at any point during the year. The role could be from an existing script or a devised work that has resulted in a written script.

Acting with, and reacting to, another actor, challenges ākonga to perform in the moment, maintain the shared vision, and channel the wairua of the play. Another actor could be either a classmate or another person of their choosing, approved by their kaiako. Potential barriers created through acting and reacting to each other allow for the development of focus, quick thinking, and resilience, which are required to create an effective performance.

Demonstrating deeper understanding of how to use drama techniques requires ākonga to convey a scripted role. To 'convey', in this context, means using drama techniques to effectively communicate the themes and messages of the script through their performance. To be

‘purposeful’ in the use of drama techniques means that ākonga are in control of their movement and voice, performing all actions with the intent and message of the text in focus. Delivering a ‘skilled performance’ means that the techniques are used with foresight and discernment, and in a manner suited to the themes and messages of the script.

To demonstrate high-level thinking, ākonga must ‘embody’ the scripted role. They are able to incorporate the themes and message of the script into their performance through the sustained and engaging use of drama techniques, resulting in a ‘convincing performance’. An example is a performance that prompts an immersive and impactful response from the audience.

Collecting evidence

The performance event should be for a live audience, such as for peers, whānau, or general public, and it will need to be recorded for assessment.

Evidence provided for this Standard should contain a title and a clear statement of the intention ākonga have for the performance. They must include how they intend to perform the role, taking into account their relationships to the other characters they may be responding to, and the situation the performance presents to the audience.

Refer to the External Assessment Specifications for further information.

Possible contexts

This Achievement Standard provides opportunities for Aotearoa New Zealand contexts to be used to further ākonga experience of mātauranga Māori and theatre Aotearoa.

NCEA Unpacking the Standard

Subject:	Drama
Achievement Standard:	1.4 Respond to a drama performance
Credits:	5

The intent of the Achievement Standard

Drama transforms the tangible into the intangible. For this Achievement Standard, ākonga will need to identify choices made by the production team of a drama performance they have experienced as an audience member, or were involved in as a performer. They will explain the effect of these choices by constructing a personal response.

Ākonga will show understanding of the reciprocal relationship between audiences and performers. Their personal response will be from their perspective, as either an audience member, or performer. They will also understand how the wairua of a performance is channelled through the performers, and how the use of drama components can influence how effectively it is projected onto the audience.

The wairua of the performance is experienced as the intangible energetic and emotive qualities that carry the spirit and intention of the play. How the wairua is expressed by the performers provokes a response from the audience and allows them to reflect on the ideas and themes of the play based on their own life experiences and perspectives.

There will be opportunities for ākonga to develop understanding of ihi, wehi, and wana by reflecting on how the performers express the work (ihi), the personal reaction of the audience to this expression of the work (wehi), and how this reciprocal interaction between performers and audiences shapes the experience of the performance as a whole (wana).

In particular, ihi and wehi help ākonga to understand the meaning-making process of drama by highlighting the reciprocal relationship between performer and audience. This demonstrates the depth and profundity of this connection in how the wairua of the performance is channelled and experienced. Ihi and wehi speak to the personal gut response that is felt through effective storytelling, communication, and expression. It is the 'in the moment' reaction that performers and audiences experience that immerse them in the performance.

This provides a vantage point for ākonga to understand how personal responses differ between audience members, as the wairua of the performance may be experienced through an audience member's own personal backgrounds, beliefs, perceptions, and worldviews. Therefore, as part of the teaching and learning programme, ākonga should have the opportunity to learn about the key message, drama components, and wairua of performance, and how to use these as a framework for responding to drama performances in different contexts.

Learning for this Achievement Standard can occur in a 'hands-on', teacher-directed fashion until ākonga are ready to be assessed. Ākonga can collect examples throughout the year as appropriate to provide naturally occurring 'hands-off' evidence. This could include a mix of written, verbal, or recorded physical drama work accompanied by explanation, which is then combined by ākonga to create a portfolio of evidence that reflects their ongoing learning and development.

This Achievement Standard supports ākonga in developing their understanding of drama performance throughout the teaching and learning programme. Alongside 'hands-on', teacher-directed learning, there should be opportunities for ākonga to gather naturally occurring, 'hands off' evidence. This could include a mix of written, verbal, or recorded physical drama work accompanied by explanation.

Making reliable judgements

Ākonga will be assessed on their ability to make personal connections and critically respond to a drama performance they have experienced as an audience member, or were involved in as a performer. As personal connections are subjective, it will be how ākonga identify and reflect on these connections in their response that will define this part of the assessment. Within the response ākonga should provide a clear statement of intention or purpose at the start.

A drama performance is a dramatic work that is performed in front of an audience. The performance may be experienced live or through a video recording. Any viewed performances, whether live or recorded, should provide opportunities for ākonga to meet the requirement of the Achievement Standard at all grade levels.

Ākonga must demonstrate understanding of the intangible essence and impact of drama and make their own connections to the wairua of a performance as an audience member. Their personal response must include exploration of the wairua of a performance and how the essence and intention of a dramatic work is channelled through the performers, such as the techniques they used, their stage presence, and so on. They must also demonstrate their literacy in drama components and their understanding of how they can affect the wairua of a performance.

Drama components include:

- *elements* such as role, time, place, situation, action, tension, mood, focus, and symbol
- *conventions* such as freeze frame, spoken thought
- *techniques* such as body, space, movement, and voice
- *technologies* such as lighting, sound, props, and costume.

An understanding of ihi, wehi, and wana allows for deep and robust comprehension of the wairua of the performance and the intangible effects of a drama performance. In the context of this Achievement Standard, wana extends to the student's personal response. The personal response is therefore part of the wairua of the performance, as it documents how meaning has been made from what ākonga have felt and what lasting impression they may carry with them after the performance has ended.

Factors influencing how the wairua of the performance is understood include:

- the environment (ie space and place) of the performance
- the backgrounds and perspectives of the audience members
- the different approaches of the performers and directors and how they interact with each other
- the entertainment technologies used and how they are applied to achieve certain effects.

These combined factors create the mauri of a performance, with which the creators and performers attempt to realise the intention of a play and strive to achieve a shared vision. Mauri is the motion and physicality of the role that carries the wairua of the performance.

Ākonga will demonstrate their understanding of the relationship between aspects of the performance and audience response, including the effect that drama components have on an audience. This will inform their summary of how well the key message is being communicated through the performance in their personal response.

Demonstrating deeper knowledge in this assessment requires ākonga to be able to support and reinforce their personal response, by providing specific examples of how and why the performance prompted certain reactions or gave rise to thoughts or feelings.

High-level thinking requires ākonga to analyse their reaction to a performance and provide an informed personal response, by making connections between the drama components used, the context of the drama, and the wairua of the performance. This is where ākonga must explain the impact or implications of how these aspects of drama have been combined and applied to a performance. Ākonga will show investigation of the place of these drama aspects in the performance as individual pieces, how they operate together to make meaning in the performance as a whole, and how successfully the desired effect is achieved.

Collecting evidence

Refer to the External Assessment Specifications for further information.

Possible contexts

This Achievement Standard provides opportunities for ākonga to use any drama performance they have viewed as a member of the audience, or a drama performance they have participated in, as a context for their personal response. The performance may be experienced live or through a video recording of the performance intended for a live audience. There is also the option for Aotearoa New Zealand contexts to be used to further ākonga experience of mātauranga Māori and theatre Aotearoa.

Ākonga may also have the opportunity to use one of their own performances during the year to respond to as an actor. Or they may use one of their peer's performances to respond to as an audience member.