



GENERAL COMMENTS

This report addresses a series of issues that should be considered in preparation for the Dance performance examination. Students and teachers should note that a revised Dance study design was implemented in 2007. The examination is described on pages 37–38 of the recredited *Dance VCE Study Design* and in the Performance Examination Specifications and Advice on the VCAA website <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au>.

Dress requirements

Students need to ensure they wear appropriate attire for both the Unit 3 (Technique) and Unit 4 (Composition) components of the examination, as outlined in the Dance Information to Students that is sent to schools in Term 3 with notice of the examination date, time and venue.

When presenting the Technique Solo, generally both female and male students wore plain form-fitting dancewear such as a leotard, tights, unitard (with transparent skirt/shorts if appropriate) or jazz/dance pants. These sorts of dancewear ensure that assessors can clearly view students' control of their body's alignment. Students need to ensure that their hair is firmly secured off their face so as not to impede the assessors' view of the student's use of projection.

When presenting the Composition Solo, costumes and make-up which supported and clarified the expressive intention of the solo were used appropriately; however, students should be mindful of wearing long skirts, costumes they have not rehearsed in and/or properties such as full face masks, as these may impede the student's ability to communicate the intent of the dance.

It is the student's task to choose appropriate footwear for the examination; therefore, they must also accept responsibility for their choice. The VCAA advised all teachers and students through the *VCE Exams Navigator* that the selected venues have a sprung floor with a tarquette surface. As VCE Dance is not a stylistic study, care should be taken to choose a movement vocabulary which can be performed on the prescribed surface. Several students chose footwear which was inappropriate for the prescribed surface and, as a result, experienced difficulties during the examination. It is advisable for students to familiarise themselves with performing on a tarquette surface as this may influence their selection. As part of safe dance practice, appropriate dance footwear, such as toe thongs, bare feet, ballet shoes or jazz shoes, is recommended when performing the solos.

Music preparation

Some students experienced technical difficulties with their tapes. In 2008 the following guidelines should be adhered to.

- All recorded music accompanying the performance should be provided on cassette tape rather than CD; this will prevent problems such as the music jumping while the student is performing or music not playing at all (which may happen with burnt CDs).
- Only the music required for the solos should be recorded on the tape. There should be no other recordings on the tape.
- The tape should be of good quality.
- Silence, when used, should be recorded on the tape to ensure that the duration of the dance is appropriate.
- Tapes should be cued and ready to play when the assessors are ready to assess in order to avoid unnecessary waiting.
- It is recommended that students have the music recorded at the **beginning** of the tape, preferably twice to avoid rewinding. One recording can then be used for the rehearsal and one for the assessment.
- Each student must bring a backup tape, as frequent playing sometimes diminishes the overall quality or the tape may become faulty.

Time Limits

Some students seemed unaware of the time limits prescribed for each component of the practical examination. Failure to adhere to the minimum time limit may incur a marking penalty as the dance may be too short to be developed or meet the assessment criteria. Students should be reminded that both the Technique Solo and the Composition Solo should be presented as a single uninterrupted performance of between two and a half minutes and five minutes in duration.

If students perform either of their solos without music they must still ensure that the duration of the performance is at least two and a half minutes. The dance is timed from the moment the student begins to move, not when the music starts.



The time prescription for both solos is included in the Information to Students that is sent to schools in Term 3 with notice of the examination date, time and venue.

Safe Dance

The knowledge and understanding of safe dance principles that is developed in the Dance Technique Area of Study should be applied in all areas of dance-making, including performance work.

At times students attempted to include movement vocabulary which was either beyond their physical capabilities or executed without any technical understanding. This resulted in poor technique when elevating, turning and/or falling and often demonstrated unsafe dance practice, such as landing on flat feet or falling onto knee joints.

Teachers should foster an understanding of the safe use of a dancer's body when teaching students dance technique, and provide opportunities for students to develop their technical skills through regular participation in technique classes.

Students who enter the study at Unit 3 will need to revise their understanding of safe dance practices.

Other issues

Students should be advised to use their rehearsal time in the assessment space effectively. During this time, the student should consider how to orientate the dance in the space, the volume of the music and nuances of the floor surface. They should not perform the dance to full performance level during this time as this may contribute to a loss of stamina during the actual assessment.

Students who use a music operator during the exam should refrain from any non verbal interaction during their performance, as loss of projection will impact the overall mark received in criterion 8 for both solos.

If the performance is interrupted, for example if the student forgets the dance or there is a costume mishap, the student should continue performing as soon as possible. The music should not be turned off unless the student clearly indicates to the assessors that he/she does not wish to continue with his/her performance.

Any properties that are used should be easily positioned in the performance area within the allocated practice time. Also, the student should make sure they understand the relevance and purpose of including the prop and should make sure it is not relied upon as a substitute for a purposeful movement vocabulary in communicating the expressive intention within the solos.

Teachers must familiarise themselves with the dance terminology related to this study when interpreting the assessment criteria. It is essential that students are also familiar with these terms and apply them throughout their practical work.

UNIT 3 – TECHNIQUE SOLO

General Comments

The Technique Solo, which is based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 2 of Unit 3, is designed to assess students' ability to demonstrate technical/physical skills through a range of body actions, skill in the choreographic manipulation of the elements of movement and performance skills in solo performance. It is important to note that this dance is based on an expressive intention. The choice of expressive intention and/or technique(s) used in the dance should allow the student to address each of the criteria at the highest level.

Expressive Intention

The choice of expressive intention should not impede the student's ability to meet the assessment criteria. There are no preferred expressive intentions and they may be derived from many sources, including the choreographer's ideas, emotions, observations or exploration of movement itself.

The choice of expressive intention should enable students to demonstrate a range of technical/physical skills and performance qualities, and avoid focusing on the theatricality or dramatic qualities of the performance. Teachers should consider using checklists to help students monitor the degree to which they have included all aspects of the examination criteria.



Choice of technique

The student's selected movement vocabulary should be based on a 'personalised' movement selection and therefore does not need to reflect a particular style.

Various stylistic techniques were used in 2007 in order to fulfil the requirements of each criterion. A student's dance technique can be developed through one style of dance training, a mixture of various stylistic techniques or through a holistic approach. Reproduction and repetition of movement phrases combined with exploration of movement using improvisation will help students begin to generate their own personal movement vocabulary and preferences.

Criteria 1 to 4 require students to demonstrate control of technical/physical skills within a range of safely executed body actions.

Many students understood that they needed to present a range of body actions, which included gesture, locomotion, elevation, falling, turning and stillness. High-scoring students presented variation within each action, underpinned by a high standard of technique, to show a highly skilled application of various physical skills. Some students were not able to achieve full marks because they presented a series of gestures, which often reflected the lyrics of the selected music, without thinking about how the individual movement(s) could be extended through the body and further developed through the use of phrasing.

Students should be encouraged to explore possible movement vocabulary from a more technical perspective in order to meet the requirements of the criteria. For example, applied knowledge of alignment principles will promote a deeper understanding of how to maintain control over balances, falls, turns, elevations, and weight transferences within phrasing.

The exploration and selection of movements are crucial stages of the overall dance-making process. At these stages students should aim to challenge themselves and extend their existing skills and movement vocabulary.

Safe dance principles must be understood and practiced within the context of the individual dancer. Teachers can assist by monitoring the level of difficulty within the movements and advising students to include safe movements which challenge them but still remain within their capabilities. Knowledge and understanding of safe dance principles developed in the Dance Technique Area of Study, such as safe preparations and landings from elevated positions, use of spotting when turning and sequential bending through the body when falling, should be applied in order to meet criteria 1–4 of the Technique Solo.

Criteria 5 to 7 require students to demonstrate skill in the choreographic manipulation of each element of movement – time, space (body shape) and energy – to create expression throughout the solo.

Students do not need to be skilful technicians in order to score highly in criteria 5–7 as the focus is on creating expression. Students who selected music with dynamic shifts or understood how to create contrasts against the music were generally more successful at expressively demonstrating variations in time as well as energy to create expression.

Generally the use of energy was handled with the least understanding. Energy can be defined as the 'inner attitude' to the execution of the movement. Therefore, teachers should encourage students to explore a greater range of the qualities of movement to experience the variations in the force and flow of various actions, and note the differences of feeling within the body. These experiences in turn should inform the manipulations selected for the solo. Student performances which varied the energy qualities were generally also more inventive with time durations, tempos and rhythms.

Students should be mindful that their choice of movement vocabulary or style does not impede their ability to work through a variety of body shapes. For example, choosing to work technically within a funk style often favours the use of angular body shapes.

Achieving expression relies on the student communicating more than the accurate reproduction of a series of movements from a particular technique. Students can develop a range of body actions that expressively vary the use of the elements of movement by participating in composition classes where they expressively manipulate movement phrases by engaging in improvisational activities.

Criterion 8 requires students to demonstrate skill in projecting the whole body to communicate to the audience.



It is important that students allocate sufficient time to develop their skills in projection during the rehearsal process and participate in actual performances to develop skills in performing. It appeared that some students were not well rehearsed and concentrated too heavily on remembering and/or executing the movement, or lapsed into improvisation, or were distracted by their music operator. Students are reminded that their performance should demonstrate use of whole body focus and control in transitions between movements.

Specific Information

The criteria assessed a range of movement skills, the use of the elements of movement and performance skills. Each criterion is weighted equally and is marked on an eight-point scale (0–7) that assesses the extent to which the performance demonstrated the following capabilities.

Criterion 1: Control of body alignment and coordination of body parts within a range of body actions

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled application of the principles of alignment to maintain control through a range of safely executed body actions. This involved maintaining appropriate muscle tone; safe and appropriate alignment of head, shoulder girdle, hip, knee and ankle joints; and complex coordination of body parts.

Criterion 2: Maintenance of stamina and control of muscular strength within a range of body actions

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled application of stamina/endurance to maintain control through a range of safely executed body actions. These students performed complex sequences of movements which showed a high level of muscular strength through a range of safely executed body actions. This involved the use of balanced positions; turns; falls and recoveries; elevated movements and landings; and very fast or very slow movements.

Criterion 3: Control in the use of transference of weight and balance within a range of body actions

A high level performance demonstrated subtle adjustments of weight and transitions and these students maintained a highly skilled awareness of alignment principles and balance when transferring weight through a range of safely executed body actions including turns, falls and elevated movements.

Criterion 4: Control in the use of flexibility within a range of body actions

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled range of motion in a range of joints and maintained consistent control of flexibility through a range of safely executed body actions, including turns, falls and elevated movements.

Criterion 5: Skill in the varied use of time

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled manipulation in the use of time throughout the execution of phrases/sections of the dance to create expression. This involved the variation of duration, tempo, accent and rhythm.

Criterion 6: Skill in the varied use of space (shape)

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled manipulation in the use of shape throughout the execution of phrases/sections of the dance to create expression. This involved the use of a range of curved and angular movements in both the upper and lower parts of the body.

Criterion 7: Skill in the varied use of energy

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled manipulation in the use of energy. This involved exploring a range of movement qualities to show variations in the flow and force of the movement.

Criterion 8: Skill in projection of the whole body to communicate to the audience

A high level performance consistently maintained projection of the whole body throughout the dance, which led to a clear interpretation of the selected movement vocabulary and communication of performance skills to the audience.

‘Projection’ refers to the use of whole body focus, including control in the use of transitions between movements, commitment and use of kinaesthetic awareness, which leads to a clear interpretation of the selected movement vocabulary and communication of performance skills to the audience. Use of ‘eye line’ is also considered in this criterion.

UNIT 4 – COMPOSITION SOLO

General Comments

The Composition Solo, which is based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 2 of Unit 4, is designed to assess students’ ability to demonstrate solo composition skills through the expressive use of spatial organisation and



the development of a unified composition. A unified dance composition includes a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution.

Selection of the expressive intention to generate movement vocabulary

Students' choice and refinement of an expressive intention on which the Composition Solo is based can be influential in determining their score for the examination. The expressive intention must provide stimulus for the movement vocabulary and spatial organisation to be developed, and enough scope to present a unified composition with a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution.

The final selection of the expressive intention should be derived from the student's personal experiences, or from an idea the student has some empathy with, or from an idea which can be researched. Sources of suitable stimuli include poetry, narratives or plays, myths, legends, paintings, current issues, historical events, technology, nature, etc.

Generally, Composition Solos that were awarded low marks presented an expressive intention which was unsuitable for addressing the criteria. In such cases, it seemed evident that the student had not given enough thought to how the intention could be manipulated to address each aspect of the criteria before commencing the dance-making processes. In order to ensure that the choice of expressive intention is appropriate, teachers need to support students as they conceptualise how the expressive intention might translate into at least three different sections. For example, a work plan could be devised that maps out the expressive intention in terms of the beginning, development and resolution. Students could brainstorm the different types of movement and movement qualities which reflect the chosen intent of each section. When exploring movement through improvisation, students should refer back to their work plan and the meaning they want to communicate through their movement and movement quality choices before making their final selection(s).

The better students appeared to have spent time researching, crafting and refining their dance ideas. The movement vocabulary which resulted from this process had a personal stamp on it and related strongly to the expressive intention, rather than being derived solely from a technique base. Many dances did show some good initial movement ideas, however too many remained simplistic. Either the movement material was not developed or explored through the use of choreographic devices, or the movement did not progress to a resolution and simply petered out.

Structuring the composition

Students need to understand the importance of using sections to develop a unified composition. The solo should not be presented as three distinctly different dances.

Some students used music segments as a method of forming their dance. The choice of music should enhance the students' ability to find movement solutions that communicate the expressive intention and create a unified composition. If students do combine music, they need to ensure there are appropriate transitions between the pieces and that a clear musical structure is formed. Any cuts in the music need to be clean, as badly cut music will affect the transitions between the sections and the ability to unify the composition.

The better students understood that the main task of constructing the solo was to devise and manipulate phrases into sections, and to demonstrate transitions between the sections to create a sense of unity relevant to the whole composition.

Consideration of the overall pace of the work and the progression to and from highlights or climaxes within the structure would enable students to create a more interesting and unified composition.

Statement of Expressive Intention

The Composition Solo is assessed against the student's Statement of Expressive Intention. All students presented the Statement of Expressive Intention on the pro forma provided by the VCAA, which outlined the expressive intention of their Composition Solo from beginning to resolution. Generally students provided succinct information concerning the ideas being expressed in each section of the solo. It is **not** necessary to describe the use of spatial organisation or the movement vocabulary used, or to write in great detail.

Criteria 1 to 4 require students to demonstrate skill in the varied use of spatial organisation.

The *Dance VCE Study Design* defines spatial organisation as including the use of direction, level, eye and/or body focus and dimension. High-scoring students included a range of each of these aspects throughout the phrases/sections of their Unit 4 Composition Solo to communicate the expressive intention.



In low-scoring Composition Solos the various aspects of spatial organisation were not manipulated in purposeful ways and consequently did not communicate the expressive intention as outlined on the Statement of Expressive Intention.

Students should experiment with properties such as masks, body bags, scarves and material so that they are able to use their chosen prop as an extension of their body and as an integral part of their body shape. This will enable them to create appropriate variations in eye and/or body focus to communicate the expressive intention.

It is important that students plan and develop their spatial organisation specifically to support their chosen expressive intention. An understanding of spatial organisation can initially be developed in a theoretical way when completing Outcome 1 of Unit 4.

Criteria 5 to 7 require students to demonstrate skill in the varied arrangement of movement into thematically related phrases and sections to express the intention of the student in a unified composition.

Students need to ensure that choreographic devices are used to select and arrange movements to form a unified relationship between the beginning, development(s) and resolution sections, and that they communicate their expressive intention as outlined on the statement presented to the assessors.

The better compositions were well structured, used a variety of choreographic devices and comprised interesting movement material which related strongly to the dancer's expressive intention.

High-scoring students generally took greater creative risks with their selection of movement vocabulary through the use of choreographic devices. Students who developed their material showed evidence of a sense of originality and sophistication in the arrangement of phrasing within sections to communicate their chosen intention.

Low-scoring compositions presented movements which were often exercise-based and lacked artistry. For example, the solo often began with several phrases of gesture, and then lapsed into a series of movement sequences such as splits and shoulder rolls, which clearly did not develop into a structure or relate to the student's chosen intention.

Criterion 8 assesses the use of performance skills in communicating the expressive intention. Performance skills include the maintenance of appropriate levels of energy, the expressive communication of movement to create meaning and appropriate use of facial expression.

Some students lacked the performance skills necessary to effectively communicate the selected expressive intention, often due to the student selecting an expressive intention which was far too complex for their experience and/or dance skills. Teachers should work with students to conceptualise how the selected expressive intention may be communicated in a meaningful way.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to develop their performance skills during the rehearsal process and be given the opportunity to perform in front of an audience as often as possible to improve their overall performance skills.

Specific Information

The criteria assessed students' solo compositional skills through the expressive use of spatial organisation and the development of a unified composition. Each criterion was weighted equally and was marked on an eight-point scale (0–7) that assessed the extent to which the performance demonstrated the following capabilities.

Criterion 1: Skill in the varied use of direction to communicate the choreographer's expressive intention

A high level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of the use of direction throughout the phrases/sections of the dance to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved manipulations of various directions, including circular, diagonal, forward, backward, sideways, upward and downward.

Criterion 2: Skill in the varied use of level to communicate the choreographer's expressive intention

A high level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of the use of level throughout the phrases/sections of the dance to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved manipulations of various levels ranging from high to low.



Criterion 3: Skill in the varied use of eye/body focus to communicate the choreographer's expressive intention

A high level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of the use of focus throughout the phrases/sections of the dance to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved manipulations of various head, eye and body focus.

Criterion 4: Skill in the varied use of dimension to communicate the choreographer's expressive intention

A high level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of the use of dimension throughout the phrases/sections of the dance to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved manipulations of various sizes of movement shapes ranging from small to large.

Criterion 5: Skill in the selection of movement vocabulary and expressive arrangement of movement to form a unified composition with a clear beginning

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in expressively selecting and arranging movement to form a clear beginning section in the dance work. This involved establishing movement material through linking movement into phrases, and using a range of choreographic devices such as manipulation of motif, rearrangement of movement and manipulation involving repetition to effectively introduce and communicate the student's expressive intention.

Criterion 6: Skill in the selection of movement vocabulary and expressive arrangement of movement to form a unified composition with a clear development(s)

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in expressively selecting and arranging movement to form a clear development section in the dance work. This involved developing the movement material through linking movement into phrases, using a range of choreographic devices to effectively contrast or compliment the movement material introduced in the beginning section, and communicate the student's expressive intention.

Criterion 7: Skill in the selection of movement vocabulary and expressive arrangement of movement to form a unified composition with a clear resolution

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in expressively selecting and arranging movement to form a clear resolution section in the dance work. This involved developing the movement material through linking movement into phrases, using a range of choreographic devices to effectively resolve and unify the dance work in relation to the movement material used in the preceding sections, and communicating the student's expressive intention.

Criterion 8: Use of performance skills in communicating the choreographer's expressive intention

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in maintaining performance skills throughout the dance (for example, appropriate levels of energy, expressive projection of movement, use of facial/whole body expression), which led to a clear interpretation of the selected movement vocabulary to communicate the student's expressive intention.