



2010

Dance GA 2: Performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

This report addresses issues that students should consider when preparing for the Dance performance examination. The examination is described on pages 37–38 of the *VCE Dance Study Design* and in the Performance Examination Specifications and Advice on the VCAA website on the Dance study page.

Dress requirements

It is essential that students wear appropriate dance clothing when presenting the technique solo to allow an accurate assessment of their physical skills throughout the performance. Generally, students presented well; however, all students need to be advised of the following when considering their choice of costume.

- The assessors must be able to see the performer's body clearly.
- The body line should be clean and not distorted by baggy or overly tight/small garments that display the dancer's undergarments.
- The choice of costume must meet the demands of safe practice; for example, overly long trousers covering the feet do not allow the dancer to 'grip' the floor, and restrictive hipster-style pants prevent the legs from moving freely and can restrain hip flexion and extension to the point where the alignment of the body is poorly placed.
- Kneepads may be worn if appropriate and part of safe dance practice (ensure they do not interfere with the dancer's alignment).
- Undergarments should match the colour of the outerwear and be neatly pinned or secured to avoid mishaps.
- Hair should be secured off the face to enhance the student's projection and use of eye line – use sufficient hair spray and pins to hold the hair in place throughout the whole performance.
- Appropriate footwear must be worn according to the selection of movement vocabulary as part of safe dance practice (socks are an inappropriate choice).
- Jewellery should be removed, especially long earrings, to avoid mishaps.

Costumes and make-up that supported and clarified the expressive intention of the Composition Solo were used appropriately; however, at times students used costumes or properties that they had not rehearsed with thoroughly. Consequently, this impeded their ability to communicate the intent of the dance.

If incorporating properties into the performance it is recommended that students practice sufficiently with the selected props prior to the examination to avoid any malfunctions and to ensure smooth transitions between the sections.

Music

Generally most students used iPods or MP3 players successfully; however, to make the assessment process run smoothly students should ensure their music is stored in separate folders clearly labelled 'Technique Solo' or 'Composition Solo', especially if an assessor is to operate the music.

When selecting music, students should keep in mind that music that includes offensive language is not considered suitable accompaniment for this examination and should either be avoided or have the inappropriate language edited out.

Some students experienced technical difficulties relating to the use of music playback equipment. To avoid this, students should ensure:

- any musical accompaniment is tested on the equipment that will be used in the examination to avoid technical difficulties on the day of the performance or music **not** being recorded at all
- a backup copy of the music (on cassette) is brought along on the day of assessment to allow for any technical difficulties
- if using cassettes, ensure that the tape is at the correct starting point before entering the examination room
- if using an iPod, that it is fully charged
- the music is cut to the appropriate duration to avoid the music continuing after the dance has finished.

If students choose to use a music operator during the examination, this person must **face away** from the performer to avoid distraction. Some music operators made inappropriate 'encouraging' gestures throughout the performance that were distracting to the assessors and performers.



Time Limits

Each solo is timed from the moment the student begins to move, not when the music starts. Some students seemed unaware of the time limits prescribed for each component of the practical examination. Failing to adhere to the minimum time limit may incur a marking penalty, as the dance may not be fully developed and therefore, may not meet the assessment criteria.

The time prescription for both solos is provided in the examination specifications and also included in the information for students sent to schools in Term 3, with notice of the examination date, time and venue.

Safe dance

Knowledge and understanding of safe dance principles developed in the Dance Technique Area of Study – such as safe preparations and landings from elevated positions, the use of spotting when turning and sequential bending through the body when falling should be applied in order to meet criterion 1–4 of the Technique Solo successfully.

Some students appear to be attempting more complex and difficult ways of transitioning in and out of the floor. Although it is good to see a greater range of fall and recovery movement vocabulary, students should be mindful not to fall directly on to the knees and to engage their core muscles to avoid unsafe, uncontrolled falls. Where kneepads are worn as part of safe dance practice, students must still consider the injury risk when executing particular movement vocabulary. Safe dance principles must be applied even if wearing kneepads when performing **all** movement vocabulary. Teachers can assist by advising students to include safe movements that challenge them but remain within their capabilities.

Other issues

On the day of the examination, students should arrive at the examination centre with sufficient time to complete administrative checks, prepare their equipment and complete an adequate warm up.

They should also use their rehearsal time in the assessment space efficiently. During this time, the student should consider how to orientate the dance in the space, how loud to play the music and they should check the nuances of the floor surface. They should not perform the dance ‘flat out’ during this time, as they may not have enough stamina to then perform at their highest standard in the assessment.

Each performance must be presented as a single uninterrupted performance. If the student forgets either dance or there is a costume or property mishap, the student should continue performing as soon as possible. The music will **not** be turned off unless the student clearly indicates to the assessors that he or she does not wish to continue with the performance.

UNIT 3 – TECHNIQUE SOLO

General Comments

The Technique Solo, based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 2 of Unit 3, is designed to assess students’ ability to demonstrate technical and physical skills through a range of body actions, skill in the choreographic manipulation of the elements of movement and performance skills in solo performance.

Expressive intention

Generally, the choice of expressive intention allowed the student to address each of the criteria at the highest level. There are no preferred expressive intentions and students may derive their intention from many sources, including their own choreographic ideas, emotions, observations or exploration of movement itself. Many students chose to base their expressive intention on the set criteria.

Choice of dance technique

The student should base their selected movement vocabulary on a ‘personalised’ movement selection and therefore, they do not need to reflect a particular dance style. However, where a particular style is selected, the student should be aware of the suitability of their choice to fulfil the requirements of the criteria. For example, ballroom is typically performed standing using highly complex footwork; therefore, the student should be encouraged to manipulate the movement vocabulary to meet all aspects of the criteria. The vocabulary could be manipulated by including actions such as falling into the floor and elevations through the footwork in order to show a greater range of body actions.



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

High-scoring students presented a personalised movement vocabulary, which had been clearly explored through a range of combined body actions to show a highly skilled application of various physical skills.

Low-scoring performances were characterised by a minimal exploration of various body actions, which created too much repetition and therefore impeded demonstration of a broad range of physical skills. Some students lost the potential to achieve full marks because they presented solos that relied too heavily on an exploration of locomotion such as walking and/or running and/or gestural movements. Movement phrases were also repeated a number of times and this affected the student's ability to fully present a range of physical skills.

Students should be encouraged to think about the difference between each physical skill and then consider how they can demonstrate competence within each skill. Students can use improvisation as a tool to challenge themselves and explore the full potential of various body actions.

Generally, control was an area that needed improving, particularly in the control of flexibility. Maintaining appropriate control over joints, particularly in back bends where students need to support the lower back through an engaged core, needs to be reinforced during technique classes. Students should build their core strength gradually, which will alleviate problems of abdominal control. An awareness of plumb line and general alignment throughout dynamic movement will also help students develop control.

Students could also improve their stamina. Some students did not demonstrate an adequate level of fitness to maintain their stamina throughout the whole performance and their fitness waned towards the resolution. Systematic rehearsal of the work under performance conditions in the months leading up to the examination could assist in developing this skill.

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

Students who selected music with shifts in dynamics or understood how to create contrasts against the music were generally more successful at expressively demonstrating time variations to create expression. Lower-scoring performances generally were aware of manipulating fast and slow tempos; however, the use of rhythm was often even and predictable, and led by the dominant beats in the music. Students should be encouraged to manipulate tempo, duration, accent and rhythm within the phrasing so more variation is presented.

Generally, space (shape) was handled well by the majority of students, with a good exploration of angular and curved upper and lower body shapes.

The use of energy was handled with the least understanding. There was competency in the basic combinations of flow and force; however, the more sophisticated combinations were less obvious. Addressing a diverse range of contrasting **qualities of movement** would allow students to improve in this area. They should also be mindful not to lock themselves into a stylistic approach to energy, which narrows the exploration and combinations used.

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

This criterion was often overlooked by students. It appeared that some students were too nervous to use eye line confidently and, at times, transitions were nonexistent between movement phrases, which created a disjointed appearance to the overall performance. Students should remember that their performance needs to demonstrate use of whole body focus (including eye line) and control in transitions between movement phrases.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to developing performance skills and projection during the rehearsal process. Also performing the solo in a variety of settings prior to the examination could assist in developing confidence in this area.

Specific Information

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: 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 endurance to maintain control through a range of safely executed body actions, and displayed complex sequences of movements that showed a high level of muscular strength. 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 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 number 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 highly skilled manipulation of time to create expression throughout the execution of phrases or sections of the dance. 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 highly skilled manipulation of shape to create expression throughout the execution of phrases or sections of the dance. This involved the dancer using a range of curved and angular movements in both the upper and lower body.

Criterion 7: Skill in the varied use of energy

A high-level performance demonstrated highly skilled manipulation of the dancer's 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.

UNIT 4 – COMPOSITION SOLO

General Comments

The Composition Solo, based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 2 of Unit 4, assesses students' ability to demonstrate solo composition skills through the expressive use of spatial organisation and the development of a unified composition.

Choice of an appropriate expressive intention to generate movement vocabulary

Students who scored very highly appeared to have spent time researching, crafting and refining their ideas. The movement vocabulary related strongly to the expressive intention rather than being derived solely from a technique base. Many dances showed some good initial movement ideas; however, too many remained simplistic and the movement material was either not expanded into a development section by using choreographic devices or did not progress to a satisfactory resolution.

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



Teachers should prepare and guide students before they make their final selection of their expressive intention. It may be useful to prepare a series of questions to help students assess whether the selected expressive intention offers sufficient scope for development. For example:

- does the idea motivate you?
- does it offer enough variety of movement ideas?
- can you find appropriate accompaniment?
- what exactly do you want to communicate through the sections of your composition?
- can you describe key ideas from your research in 10 words or through a visual image?

Statement of Expressive Intention

Generally, students provided clear and succinct information on the Statement of Expressive Intention and it was helpful to have information concerning the transitions between sections clearly outlined. Students should be reminded that the Composition Solo is assessed against the Statement of Expressive Intention.

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

In general, students seemed to lack an understanding of the expressive nature of spatial organisation. Often, students did not use spatial organisation to reflect the written statement of expressive intention. Students need to make conscious decisions about how direction, level, dimension and head/eye/body focus will appropriately communicate their idea(s). Further exploration of how each of the elements of spatial organisation can combine to assist in expressing the intention could be useful. The implementation of work plans and improvisation in the choreographic stage would also help students gain skill in this area.

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.

Criteria 5 to 7 proved the more challenging area for students. Students who created higher-scoring compositions 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. These students also took greater creative risks with their selection of movement vocabulary using choreographic devices.

Students with lower-scoring compositions generally presented a movement vocabulary that was often exercise based, and the structure lacked reference to a unified composition. The communication of the expressive intention was not thought about in terms of an arrangement, using the model of three sections with transitions in between. Students are advised that the movement material they set up in the beginning section should be used in some way to develop further manipulation(s) of the phrasing in order to build on, contrast and establish a thematic relationship between each section and create a unified composition.

Students should consider the overall pace of the work and the progression to and from highlights or climaxes within the structure, which would also allow them to create a more interesting and unified composition.

When using properties, students must be careful that they do not use the object to replace the communication of their idea through an appropriate movement vocabulary. For example, the student who uses a frame to communicate 'a memory' may spend the entire section sitting and standing holding the frame. In this example, what is lacking is an appropriate movement vocabulary. Teachers should encourage students to integrate any properties into the movement choices by allowing students to develop their solo with the object(s) before taking it away, in order to gauge how effective the communication of the movement is without the object.

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.

Generally, students' performance skills were good and allowed them to communicate the expressive intention effectively.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to rehearse their solo. They need opportunities to perform in front of an audience as often as possible to help them improve their overall performance skills.



Specific Information

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 direction throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively. 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 levels throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively. .

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 focus throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively. This involved variations of 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 dimension throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively. 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 complement 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.