



GENERAL COMMENTS

This report addresses a series of issues that should be considered in preparing for the Dance performance examination. The requirements for this examination are described on page 31 of the *Dance VCE Study Design* and the assessment criteria as published. These documents can be downloaded from the VCAA website: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au.

Venue/performance issues

Students need to ensure they wear appropriate attire for both the Unit 3 (Technique) and Unit 4 (Composition) components of the examination. Students should wear plain form-fitting dance wear for the technique component to ensure that assessors are able to appropriately assess alignment. Jazz pants which are overly long and extend under the foot are not suitable because of the risk of injury. Costumes that reflect the expressive intention of the composition solo are appropriate; however, students should be mindful of using long skirts or costumes that they haven't rehearsed in as these may impede the overall performance.

It is the students' task to choose appropriate footwear for the examination; therefore they must also accept responsibility for their choice. Several students chose footwear they had not previously rehearsed in and as a result experienced difficulties during the examination. Bare feet or appropriate dance footwear are recommended when performing the solos as part of safe dance practice. Socks or ordinary shoes are not considered appropriate. It is also advisable for students to familiarise themselves with performing on a tarquette surface as this may influence their selection.

Students should be advised to use their practise time in the performance 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.

Students should perform at a reasonable distance from the assessors. This distance should enable the assessors to see all aspects of the student's dance movements throughout the performance.

If the performance is interrupted, for example 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.

It is important that good quality recordings are used to accompany performances, allowing both the students and assessors to hear without distortion. Students should record their music at the beginning of a new cassette tape with sufficient 'lead in' time, and should also have a spare cassette tape that has a second recording of the music. It is important that students have their music cued when assessors enter the assessment room to avoid unnecessary waiting. All recorded music accompanying the student's 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). This information is included in the letter which accompanies the Statement of Intention form sent to schools in Term 3.

Teachers must familiarise themselves with the dance terminology related to this study when interpreting the assessment criteria. Definitions of the terms used in the assessment criteria and the Study Design are published on pages 19–21 of 'The Arts; VCE Dance Implementation Resource Kit' April 2001. This kit can be downloaded from the VCAA website. It is essential that students are familiar with all these terms and apply them throughout their practical work.

TECHNIQUE SOLO

General Comments

The Technique Solo, based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 3 of Unit 3, is designed to assess students' ability to demonstrate a range of physical skills through a range of body actions, a varied use of the elements of movement, and skills in solo performance. It is important to note that this dance must be 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.

Students who presented accomplished performances demonstrated a high standard of technique, displaying excellent control of a range of physical skills through various body actions. These students also demonstrated an excellent



understanding of the elements of movement by presenting a range of variations in time, space and energy combinations, and they maintained excellent projection skills throughout the performance.

Criteria 1 to 4 require students to demonstrate control of a variety of physical skills within a range of body actions.

In the *Dance VCE Study Design*, body actions include gesture, locomotion, elevation, falling, turning and stillness. Teachers need to help students improve their ability to show variation within each action to allow different physical skills to be shown; for example, repeating an eight count phrase of turns on the diagonal from two feet to two feet does not show different physical skills through the body action of turning. Not showing variation will result in a lower score than might otherwise be achieved. Technique classes should be undertaken on a regular basis to give students the opportunity to learn and experiment with different ways of demonstrating physical skills through various body actions.

Teachers should have an understanding of the safe use of the dancer's body when teaching students to develop their technique. Knowledge developed in Outcome 1 of Unit 1 can be applied in a practical way as students learn to safely execute physical skills through various body actions. Students who enter the study at Unit 3 will need to revise their understanding of safe dance practices.

Criteria 5 to 7 require students to demonstrate skill in the use of the elements of movement; namely time, space and energy.

When teaching composition, teachers should include workshops on the various ways of manipulating the elements of movement to create expression. This will help students to develop an understanding of the elements of movement and develop an increased awareness of how these elements can be combined effectively when choreographing the solo. It should be noted that only 'body shape' is considered when assessing the space element of the dance, as aspects of space are assessed in more detail in the composition solo.

Criterion 8 requires students to demonstrate skill in the use of projection.

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

Other issues

Teachers should consider using checklists to help students monitor the degree to which they have included all aspects of the examination criteria.

Students' learning opportunities can be enhanced by the inclusion of sequential and integrated learning activities across all outcomes. For example, a theoretical understanding of the safe use of physical skills, body actions and the elements of movements can be developed when completing Outcome 1 of Unit 3. This understanding can then be used as a starting point from which to clarify all aspects of the criteria for the technique solo. The learnt group dance work selected for Outcome 2 of Unit 3 should extend and develop students' use of physical skills, body actions and the elements of movement through the accurate reproduction of challenging movement phrases. Activities undertaken in Outcome 3 of Unit 3 should then consolidate students' understanding through exploring, learning and refining a wide range of body actions that vary the time, space and energy.

Students can develop a range of body actions that vary the use of time, space and energy by participating in set technique classes where they reproduce movement phrases. Experience in using improvisation techniques in a compositional workshop context may assist students in developing their personal movement vocabulary. Both approaches should be incorporated into the practical component of the course.

The exploration and selection of movements are crucial stages in the overall dance-making process. At these stages students should aim to challenge themselves and extend their existing skills and movement vocabulary. 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 should be applied in all practical activities, including performance work.



The Technique Solo should be presented as a single uninterrupted performance of between two and a half minutes and five minutes in duration.

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 excellent control of body alignment and coordination during the execution of a range of body actions. This involved maintaining appropriate muscle tone; safe and appropriate alignment of the 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 optimum use of stamina and excellent control of muscular strength within a range of 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 balance within a range of body actions

A high level performance demonstrated excellent control in the use of balance within a range of body actions. This involved balances using various body parts as well as the appropriate use of balance in turns, falls and elevated movements.

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

A high level performance demonstrated excellent control in the use of flexibility within a range of body actions. This involved the flexible use of all joints.

Criterion 5: Skill in the varied use of time

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of time. This involved the complex use of both tempo and rhythm.

Criterion 6: Skill in the varied use of space

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of body shape. 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 excellent skill in the use of energy. This involved using a range of movement qualities that showed variations in the flow and force of the movement.

Criterion 8: Skill in projection

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of whole body focus, control in transitions between movements and an overall degree of performance quality.

COMPOSITION SOLO

General Comments

The Composition Solo, based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 2 of Unit 4, is designed to assess students' ability to demonstrate solo compositional 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.

Students who crafted outstanding compositions demonstrated a sophisticated use of spatial design to communicate their expressive intention. They also demonstrated an excellent capacity to use phrases to select and arrange movement expressively, forming a unified composition that had a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution.

These students also maintained excellent performance skills throughout the solo performance.

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. Students should include a range of each of these aspects in their Composition Solo.

It is important that students select 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.

Students should experiment with using 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.

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.

An understanding of the expressive use of phrases and sections can be developed in a theoretical way when completing Outcome 1 of Unit 4 and should build on an understanding of the relationship between the elements of dance design (expressive intention, form and movement vocabulary) developed in Outcome 1 of Unit 3.

Criterion 8 assesses the use of performance skills in communicating the expressive intention.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to develop their performance skills during the rehearsal process.

Other issues

All students completed the 'Statement of Expressive Intention' provided by the VCAA, outlining the expressive intention of their Composition Solo from beginning to resolution. Students must be careful to provide succinct information concerning the expressive intention or 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. Teachers should guide students in the writing of this statement as the solo is marked against this outline.

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 students with enough scope to develop and present a unified composition with a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution. The expressive intention should also provide stimulus for the movement vocabulary and spatial organisation to be developed.

Composition Solos that were awarded low marks generally presented an expressive intention that was either unsuitable for addressing the criteria or appeared to be far too complex for the experience and/or dance skills of the student. In some cases, it seemed evident that students had not given thought to how their expressive intention could be translated to address the criteria before commencing their dance-making processes. In order to ensure that the expressive intention is appropriate, teachers need to work with students as they conceptualise how the expressive intention might translate into movement.

Teachers should ensure that students understand how the selected movements relate to and communicate the expressive intention. This may involve formulating a work plan 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 that reflect the chosen intention. 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 before making their final selection(s).

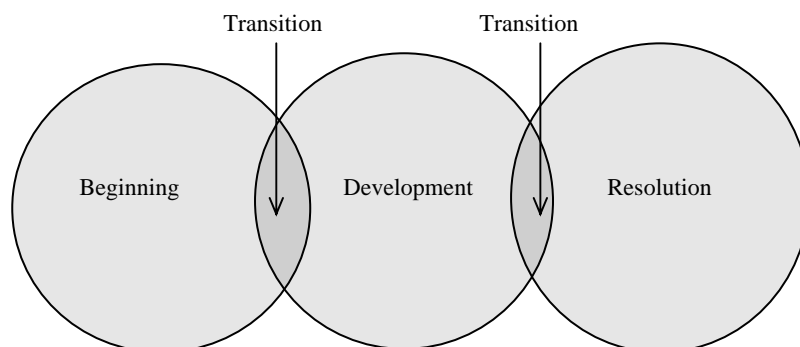
In low-scoring Composition Solos where the selection of movement did not reflect the chosen expressive intention, the dance often began with several phrases of gestural movement, then lapsed into a series of movement sequences which clearly did not develop or relate to the student's chosen intention. 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, and that they communicate their expressive intention as outlined on the pro forma presented to the assessors.

In 2005, general categories selected as an expressive intention included characters from literature, issues from current affairs, various life cycles (such as the butterfly), interpretations of visual art (such as Monet), stress-related issues (such as work or Year 12), dreams and nightmares.



Students need to understand the importance of using sections to develop a unified composition. They should also be given opportunities to experiment with different ways of developing and resolving a work. This would include developing sections using variations of the elements of dance design.

The following graph is a visual representation of how the composition should be structured at its most basic:



Following the structure of the music does not create a beginning, development and resolution for a dance work based on an expressive intention; however, the choice of music should enhance the student's ability to find movement solutions in communicating the expressive intention. If students choose to combine more than one piece of music it is important that they consider why this is necessary, as the combination of three different pieces of music does not automatically mean that a unified piece of music is formed. 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 knowledge and understanding of safe dance principles that students developed in the Dance Technique Area of Study should be applied in all areas of dance-making, including performance work.

The Composition Solo should be presented as a single, uninterrupted performance of between two and a half minutes and five minutes duration.

Specific Information

The criteria assessed performance skills and a range of composition skills. 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 dancemaker's expressive intention

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the expressive use of direction in order to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved movement performed in circular, diagonal, forward, backward, sideward, upward and downward directions.

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

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the expressive use of levels in order to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved movement performed on a range of levels, from high to low.

Criterion 3: Skill in the varied use of focus to communicate the student's expressive intention

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the expressive use of focus to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved varied use of head, eye and body focus.

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

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the expressive use of dimension to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved 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 by 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 by linking movement into phrases, using a range of choreographic devices to effectively contrast or complement the movement material introduced in the beginning section, and communicating the 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 by 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 expressive intention.

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

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in maintaining, for example, appropriate levels of energy, expressive use of movement and use of facial expression.