

# A-level **DANCE**

Unit 1 – DANC1 Understanding Dance  
Report on the Examination

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## **General**

### **Quality of written work**

In A-level specifications which require material to be produced in English, students must:

- Ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear
- Select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and to complex subject matter
- Organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.

It is pleasing to see that generally the quality of essay writing in Section B continues to improve. However, Section A remains challenging, specifically in understanding and responding to the command words.

The structure of the paper remains the same.

### **Section A**

The two structured questions in Section A followed the same format as last year. Specific marks are allocated to each part of the question. Knowledge needs to be expressed succinctly. Explanations and analysis are focused on a specific area of the specification.

### **Section B**

The two essay style questions were marked according to the banding criteria in the mark scheme.

## **Section A**

### **Questions 01 02 and 03 are linked**

#### **Question 01 and 02**

These were very accessible questions and most students achieved full marks. Responses covered a wide range of aspects of personal appearance and safe dance space. However, whilst the majority of students achieved very high marks there was a general tendency to do more than 'describe', which is what the question required.

It is important for students to use their time efficiently in this unit and, to that end, it is important to understand and respond to the command word of each question in order to provide the answer to the question that is being asked; no more and no less. Students need to be succinct whenever possible and do not need to provide explanations when they are not asked for in the question.

#### **Question 03**

This question was challenging. The key issue in students' responses was not the knowledge of alignment, warm-up and cool down but the response to the command word, 'explain' within the context of the question, 'protecting the dancer against injury'.

There were many examples of very detailed and accurate knowledge, sometimes pages of description, but fewer explanations of how the dancer would be protected against injury. It was clear that many students lost sight of the question as they became involved in their descriptions

and it was common to see the explanation related to improvement of flexibility or strength rather than protection against injury.

The pattern of the many less successful responses was;

- detailed descriptions of alignment, warm-up and cool down with no explanations
- explanations that referred to improvements in flexibility or strength
- lengthy descriptions of exercises used during warm-ups, which were not necessary in this question.

There were some examples of vague, confused and inaccurate knowledge of alignment, warm-up and cool down but all students attempted this question.

The most successful responses were characterised thus;

- succinct response
- accurate knowledge
- clear reasoning that was relevant to protection against injury e.g. 'The warm up increases temperature and this makes the synovial fluid less viscous. It can flow more freely around the joint providing lubrication and preventing friction and wear on the bones.'

It is important to clarify that within the context of this examination 'describe' means 'give a detailed account of and 'explain' means 'clarify something by providing more detail and the relevant reasoning'.

#### **Question 04 and 05 are linked**

These two questions followed the same pattern as questions 01, 02 and 03, with an accessible opening and a more challenging question to follow up.

#### **Question 04**

Most students could identify four factors that a choreographer would consider. Responses covered a wide range of considerations and included skills, appearance, training and attitudes. It was pleasing to see some students drawing on their own experience as choreographer.

Again there was a tendency to provide more than 'identification' and there were many examples of students going into detailed descriptions and explanations that were not required in this question. This used up valuable time. Marks for 05 were awarded in the 04 response only when the student did not repeat themselves in the 05 response – which was generally the case.

#### **Question 05**

This question generated mixed responses. When students understood what was required they were able to link the choice of dancer to the work and role effectively and some students provided insightful explanations and gained full marks. The most successful responses were specific in terms of the factor that the choreographer considered and the demands of the professional work.

However there were many vague and generic comments that could be applied to any and all dance works; needed strong dancers to do lots of lifts; needed stamina because they were on stage for the whole dance; needed to be flexible to perform the choreography. The question asked students to explain how the choice of dancers was significant in the two dance works they had studied so the explanations needed to be specific to the dance works discussed rather than generic. At times a generic comment became valid when supported by a specific movement example but many students did not go that far.

There were some examples of students making points about the physical stature/shape of dancers that had an impact on the appreciation of the dance work. For example, ‘the dancer who played the part of Matron in *Nutcracker!* was tall and this helped to reinforce her authority’ and ‘the guards in *Swan Song* were taller and of a bigger build than the prisoner which helped to make them more powerful’. Examiners awarded marks for these explanations as it may indeed have been the case in a particular live performance that the student had seen.

Overall the main issue in Section A is that, although students are preparing well for the examination by learning the appropriate knowledge they are less well practiced in applying that knowledge to:

- a) the different command words
- b) the context of the question

Students are advised to read each question carefully. Section A is balanced between shorter and extended questions. Students will be able to manage their time effectively by responding directly to the command words.

### **Section B**

Again, students appear to be preparing for the challenges of essay writing effectively. The quality of language and analytical skills required to structure and present a discursive essay was evident in many responses. There is a continued general improvement with more essays following a structured line of thought.

However, there were still numerous examples of students submitting pre-prepared answers and this still remains a problem.

### **Question 06**

Accurate citations continue to be good practice.

It was pleasing to see the range and variety of works that students are studying across the country is increasing. It is also encouraging to see students including live performances they have seen in their discussions.

The most and least successful responses to this question were differentiated by the depth and complexity of the analysis of the movement components.

Very few students scored in the lowest band and the Band 1 responses were fluent and demonstrated comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the works studied.

The more basic responses read like a list. A brief/vague description of a movement component followed by a brief interpretation with limited, if any, analysis. There were also examples of significant inaccuracies in the less successful responses.

The more successful responses were from students who unpicked the detail of the movement and suggested how the dance ideas were communicated by analysing every aspect of the example. They used movement examples in different ways, selecting them carefully. At times using an example holistically to make points about how the action space and dynamics worked together to communicate a dance idea and at other times making a single clear point about one example.

Some students referred to other constituent features with varying degrees of success. Where the student was focused on the question the references to other constituent features added depth and complexity to their analysis. However there were also examples of students who lost sight of the question and the essay became a record of everything they knew about the work with no real sense of focus or shape.

The most successful responses shared common traits:

- Focus on the question
- Demonstrating the ability to discuss
- Clear connections between the dance idea and the movement example(s)
- Selecting a range of different types of examples

The less successful responses tended to be characterised thus:

- Lack of focus on the question
- Basic description
- Giving a basic interpretation without any analysis to back it up
- Inaccuracies
- Lack of examples/evidence to support points

### **Question 07**

Unfortunately there were many examples of students who began with a cursory reference to the word 'rehearsal' and then embarked on a rewrite of a previous essay about how to improve flexibility and strength.

There were also many examples of students who described the choreographic process. In some case this was a valid approach to the question when the focus remained on developing skills needed for performance and some of the most successful responses used this approach. However, more often this resulted in a loss of focus on the question.

The most successful responses were from students who described their own practice and experience of using different strategies and activities during rehearsals with clear explanations of how their skills had improved. These essays were presented confidently as genuine records of their journey. The explanations were often multi layered and linked the skill and the strategy within the context of a particular performance.

Less successful responses read more like a list of skills matched against a strategy and the links between them were less well explained. They tended to become repetitive with use of mirrors, video recording and feedback used to improve every skill identified.

There were many approaches to this essay. Some students structured their essay around the skills and others used the strategies. Some students covered a range of types of skills and others kept more focused within performance skills or physical skills. All approaches were valid and all approaches covered the full range of marks.

Some students ran out of time on this question.

The instance of students not attempting any question on this year's paper was very rare.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

## **Converting Marks into UMS marks**

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

**UMS conversion calculator** [www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion)