

A-level **DANCE**

DANC1 - Understanding Dance
Report on the Examination

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General

The assessment objectives for this unit are:

AO3

Communicate clearly through writing the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to dance study.

AO4i

Show detailed knowledge and understanding, in written form, of choreographic and performance processes either in own work and/or professional repertoire.

AO5i

Show detailed knowledge and understanding, in written form, of the significance of dance, either in own work and/or professional repertoire.

The focus on communicating clearly in written form is stated and reinforced in the specification.

Quality of written work

In A-level specifications which require students to produce written material 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.

The structure of the paper remains the same.

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

Time management remains a challenge for some students. Section A questions are designed to generate succinct responses in order to allow sufficient time for the longer essay questions. Some students presented lengthy responses in Section A which reduces the amount of time available to answer Section B essays. The recommended times are 30 minutes for Section A and one hour for the two essays questions.

This year there was a marked imbalance between length of the two essays with some students spending considerably more time on question 7 and leaving very little time for question 8 responses.

There was a noticeable and worrying increase this year in number of scripts that were affected by poor spelling/grammar and illegible writing. It is of concern that there were so many instances of writing that did not make sense and it was impossible for examiners to award marks when the meaning was not clear. This was evident in both Section A and B. Teachers are advised to reinforce the importance of clear writing that communicates meaning clearly.

Students should also be reminded that all rough work should be crossed out. It is good practice for students to make an essay plan but there needs to be clarity of when the plan ends and the essay begins.

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 A continues to differentiate effectively. The more able students demonstrate the ability to apply their knowledge and understanding to the context of the question and respond directly to the command word. The students who perform less well often have the relevant knowledge but do not apply it to the question. This is particularly evident in questions requiring 'explanation'.

Section B

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

It is pleasing to see that the trend towards improved quality in the essay form continues. Students are more familiar and better prepared to present appropriate responses in Section B.

Section A

Questions 01, 02, 03 and 04 are linked.

Question 01

This was an accessible question and many students achieved full marks. It was pleasing to see examples of accurate and precise descriptions that used specialist vocabulary effectively. However, there were also examples of students who presented more than one exercise. Marks were awarded for the exercise that was explained in question 2 but this was not always clear.

The most common faults were:

- describing/identifying a number of different exercises
- describing general activities, for example, trampolining, going cycling
- descriptions that were unclear and unrelated to strength.

Question 02

This question was more challenging and required specific explanation that related to the exercise, the picture and the use of strength. The less successful responses tended to offer the words of the question as the explanation, simply stating that 'strength helps the dancer to achieve and hold the position in the air' and did not refer specifically to any aspect of the dancer's position. Overall, there were relatively few responses that referred to the strength required and used in the arms.

Marks were awarded for explanations of how strength was developed during the exercise, most often through references to the progressive overload principle. Marks were also awarded for explanations that connected the use of strength in the exercise to a specific use of strength by the dancer, for example to achieve height, control/twist/contract the torso, bring the knees up, achieve the tuck position, hold the arms out to the side.

Question 03

This question was also accessible. There were very few examples of students who did not present an appropriate exercise and the vast majority presented a different exercise to that described in question 1, as directed. Again the majority of students achieved full marks and there were many examples of accurate use of specialist vocabulary to provide detailed descriptions.

Some students described an exercise that had two parts to it, for example pliés into sautés, rises into small jumps. These were marked as a single exercise as they were clearly linked and accurately described an exercise that a dancer would use. Students who described two or more distinctly different exercises were awarded marks for the one that was explained in question 4.

Question 04

This question was the most challenging of this group of questions and it was common to see a loss of focus on the aspect of safe take-off and landing. Many students made accurate statements but did not connect a particular skill with the safe take-off/landing. Again, marks were awarded for how the skill was developed in the exercise as well as explanations of how the skill was used to ensure safety.

It was evident that some students reflected on their choice of exercise when they read question 3 and decided to swap the question 1 and question 3 exercises on their paper. It was often clear to follow their logic of using the question 3 exercise to develop strength but in so doing, the students did not then re-focus their response to question 4 to address the issue of safety.

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'.

It is also important to reinforce the need to read each question carefully.

Questions 05 and 06 are linked.

Question 05

This question generated mixed responses. Many students demonstrated accurate knowledge of direct correlation and call and response. With regard to direct correlation, students who were less secure in their knowledge were unclear about the difference between direct correlation and other relationships, in particular, music visualisation. With regard to call and response, many students performed well. The main misunderstanding was when students described the relationship between dancer and dancer rather than between the aural setting and the dancer(s).

Question 06

This was the most challenging question in Section A and there was a wide range of responses. Few students achieved full marks and the majority gained mid-level marks.

Very few students misunderstood the subject knowledge required in this question. However there were a handful of students who discussed the use of physical setting and also some who discussed a professional work. These students gained no marks.

The students who gained the highest marks provided clear explanations that moved beyond detailed description. In these responses the dance idea was clearly presented and the part played by the aural setting was explained. Students wrote with confidence of the decisions they made as choreographers. The reasoning was clear and there was a genuine sense of ownership of their creative process.

The less effective responses were descriptive in style and appeared less genuine. There was a tendency to list a number of different relationships between the aural setting and movement and then provide examples of how each one was used in one piece of choreography. These responses appeared unconvincing and the link between the aural setting and the dance idea remained vague. A much overused comment was that the aural setting in question 'provided structure' without further explanation of how this might be the case. This comment remained a statement rather than an explanation.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that the marks available in Section A are very specifically allocated. The knowledge that is required in any question will be credited when it is applied to the specific question. In question 6 there were no marks available for having knowledge of different relationships between aural setting and movement. That knowledge was tested in question 5 with specific reference to direct correlation and call and response. The marks available for question 6 were specifically for demonstrating how the student made decisions as a choreographer about how the choice and use of aural setting could support their dance idea.

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.

It is pleasing to see that there were fewer examples this year of students submitting pre-prepared answers.

Question 07

Accurate citations continue to be good practice.

It was encouraging to see that 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 vast majority of students were confident and well prepared to present a discussion about the use of physical setting. There were very few examples of students who misunderstood the question. Unfortunately, many students engaged so positively with this question that they left insufficient time to respond to question 8 with the same level of commitment.

Generally the key points that differentiated the responses were:

- the range of examples used
- the balance between description and analysis
- the depth of knowledge and understanding of the choreographic idea.

As in previous years, the appreciation of the question often determines the quality of the outcome. In this case the focus of the discussion was about how the physical setting supported the choreographic ideas and it was this issue of 'support' that successful students embraced.

The less successful responses were identified by the lack of analysis much more than the lack of knowledge of physical setting. There was a tendency to provide description, at times very detailed, but then to make a very basic point, for example, 'helped to tell the narrative', 'tells us where the dance is taking place', 'shows the time of day'. These comments were often very brief and at times not connected to the example. The reader was expected to make a leap in understanding when the link between the example and the point was tenuous. For example the claim that 'fur projected on the backdrop' in the Texan Kangaroo Rat section of *Still Life at the Penguin Café* tells the audience about the 'geographical location' is unconvincing. These types of statements fall short of analysis and do not clarify how the physical setting is supporting the choreographic idea.

The most successful responses shared common traits:

- discussing how the physical setting supported the choreographic ideas
- selecting a range of different types of physical setting and professional works
- sustained focus on the question
- using written communication clearly.

Question 08

Some students struggled with the subject knowledge being assessed in this question and many students ran out of time.

It was important for students to make a distinction between choreographic devices and movement in order to focus their essays on explaining how devices are used to develop movement. Responses that reflected lack of subject knowledge included reference to improvisation, aural setting, developing strength and flexibility, keeping a choreographic journal, improving performance skills.

Those students who were insecure with knowledge of choreographic devices tended to move away from the question by focusing on movement components rather than devices or to present a very limited response that included motif and motif developments. There was a lack of confidence evident in the way that knowledge was presented in a rather implicit manner. For example the use of contrast was implied through the description of different dynamics but contrast as a device was not explicitly discussed or explained.

There is a close connection between the use of choreographic devices and the structure of a piece and many students were credited for their knowledge and understanding in this regard. However, there was a clear difference between those students who explained this relationship accurately and in detail and those students who cited 'provides structure' as the explanation for every device mentioned.

The main body of this essay was made up of a combination of three elements; theory of choreographic devices, examples from their own work and examples from professional works. There was no correlation between the quality of the response and the references to professional works and the student's own work. Some students took a completely theoretical approach but most combined theory with examples. Most students chose to include their own choreography and

professional works in their response and were equally comfortable talking about both. These essays shifted from one context to the other seamlessly. Some students chose to stick to either their own work or to professional work(s). Both approaches generated the same range in terms of quality of response.

For those students who remained focused the responses tended to be competent and there were examples of highly proficient explanations.

These were characterised in the following ways:

- sufficient time to engage with the question
- knowledge and explanation of a range of devices, eg unison, canon, theme and variation; motif and motif development, repetition, embellishment, highlights, climax; contrast
- explanations that covered a range of points, eg the choreographic idea; theme; structure; style/genre of the choreographer and/or the movement.

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