



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 noticeably stated and reinforced in the specification;

Quality of written work

In GCE specifications which require candidates to produce written material in English, candidates 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.

For the most part students attempted all questions.

Students appear to be managing their time more efficiently and there were fewer examples of students spending too much time on Section A. Responses here tended to be succinct and focused allowing sufficient time for the longer essays. The recommended times are 30 minutes for Section A and one hour for the two essay questions. Both questions within Section B were accessible and the full range of marks was awarded. There were some cases of students running out of time for question 09.

The instance of poor spelling and grammar and illegible writing continues to be an issue. There were many examples of sentences 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 legible writing that communicates meaning clearly.

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’. It is also important to reinforce the importance of accuracy and precision in description.

Section B

The two essay style questions were marked according to the banding criteria in the mark scheme. The trend towards improved quality in the essay form continues. However, there is still evidence of pre-prepared essay. The questions are unique to each paper and therefore students will not perform well if they present a response from a question set in a previous year. The guidance for Section B remains consistent:

- read the whole question carefully
- respond to the command word
- select the most appropriate examples in order to apply relevant knowledge
- maintain focus on the command word and context of the question.

Section A

Questions 01, 02, 03 and 04 are linked.

Question 01

This was an accessible question and timing and spatial awareness were popular responses. Students who identified skills that were ambiguous were awarded marks when they provided additional information that clarified how the skill was used to achieve unison.

It is important to note that ‘identify requires the student to give the briefest possible information which clearly separates the idea or element from all other ideas or elements and a single word response may be ambiguous.

Most students were mindful of time management and wrote short answers although some students chose to write more lengthy definitions of unison.

Question 02

This question was also accessible with strength and balance being the popular responses. Many students identified flexibility but did not always link it to achieving the supported position and shifted the focus to aesthetics. Many students struggled to link focus and alignment to achieving the supported position.

Again the vast majority of students presented the responses in a succinct manner.

Question 03

Responses to this question were the most accurate of the picture questions with many students achieving full marks. Focus, facial expressions and projection were the most popular. Students were awarded marks where they described an appropriate skill without actually using the common term. For example, some students wrote clear and succinct descriptions of the skill of characterisation without actually writing the word 'characterisation'. A number of students did not understand performance skills and offered other skills. There were also some references to costume and makeup.

Question 04

This was the most challenging part of this group of linked questions and few students achieved full marks. Students who performed well clearly explained how the performance skills they had used enabled them to communicate their dance idea. In these cases, both the dance idea and the rationale were clear and linked. Explanations of the use of focus and facial expressions were the most successful. Explanations of the use of projection and musicality were more challenging. There was a tendency to shift the focus of the response away from performance skills and onto rationale for choreographic decisions. Students who performed less well in this question often did not provide any information about the dance idea or make any connections between the dance idea and the use of the performance skill. Some students did not address the question and provided generic definitions of performance skills.

Questions 05, 06 and 07 are linked.

Question 05

The vast majority of students achieved one mark and many achieved full marks for describing a motif. However, there were many examples of inaccurate or fictitious motifs. At times the description was too vague to be recognisable. Some students described a motif they had created rather than a motif from a professional work. Some made it very hard for themselves by offering complex and sometimes lengthy motifs that were problematic when developments were required in 06. The most successful responses were from those who had clearly learnt a short motif that was significant to the dance idea/subject matter/style. It seems likely that these students had read and appreciated the way questions 05, 06 and 07 developed and selected a motif that was clear, significant and had a number of developments.

Question 06

While the majority of students achieved two or three marks, very few achieved full marks for this question. Students who did well described clear developments of movement that were directly linked to the motif described in 05. Those students who did less well provided descriptions that were vague and at times fictitious. Again, the main stumbling block was the lack of precision and accuracy in the description.

Some students described developments that were not connected to the motif described in 05 and there were some examples of students who described more than two developments.

Question 07

This question was generally well answered. In spite of the fact that students did not provide accurate descriptions in 05 and 06, many were still able to achieve full marks in 07. A wide range of responses explained the significance of both the motif and its developments in relation to structure, character, theme and subject matter. Most candidates focused on both the motif and developments in their explanations. The most successful answers included those that linked clearly back to the movement material and were succinct in their explanations. The less successful responses offered brief, vague and tenuous reasoning that, at times, did not link to the motif and/or the developments.

Section B

Again, candidates appear to be preparing for the challenges of essay writing effectively. High quality of analytical skills was evident in many responses. The ability to select appropriate examples often enables students to maintain focus on the question. There is a continued general improvement with more essays following a structured line of thought.

The A2 set works and areas of study appear to be influencing the repertoire being studied at AS and it is pleasing to see that the range of professional works continues to increase. Works by Robbins, Balanchine, Cherkaoui, McGregor, Vardimon, Collins and Dove (to name a few) are regularly featuring alongside Bourne, Bruce, Ailey, Khan and Ashton. It is also pleasing to see live performances being included in discussions.

Accurate citations continue to be good practice.

Pre-prepared answers are still in evidence.

Question 08

There were a range of different approaches to this question. The vast majority of students were able to analyse the constituent features of two works but the comparative aspect of the question was less evident.

The selection of works and examples had a significant impact on performance in this essay. Those students who had carefully considered which works would offer them the best opportunity to make clear comparative points fared better than those who did not have the comparative aspect of the question as their focus.

The least successful responses were produced by students who became absorbed in writing everything they knew about two works. These responses tended to be descriptive and did not demonstrate the ability to analyse. Some students used the constituent features provided in the question as a list of things they needed to include. This was not necessary if there was not a salient point to be made.

Students at this level also made vague and general comments regarding constituent features. It was common to see an introduction such as, 'Many choreographers use constituent features in their work' or 'One way that constituent features are used is movement'.

Many students began their essays with definitions of each constituent feature which is time consuming and not necessary within the context of this question.

Responses that fell into the mid-range of marks often demonstrated more analytical ability but produced an essay of two unrelated halves joined by 'in contrast' or 'similarly'. Another approach was to write two separate commentaries and then try to extract some points of comparison in the conclusion. Often these were not related to the body of the essay.

Those students who did focus on comparing the constituent features covered the complete range of ability. Those who performed less well made very basic points of comparison and provided limited examples to support their points. However, there were many examples of students who engaged with the question and used carefully selected examples to make a number of sharp and insightful points.

The most successful responses shared common traits:

- carefully selected works and examples
- sharp comparative points covering a range of constituent features
- competent or proficient analysis of relevant examples
- sustained focus on the comparative element of the question
- using written communication clearly.

Question 09

Lack of time affected the performance on this question but when students had managed their time effectively it was well answered.

There was a range of approaches. Some students referred to many different styles/genres and specific skills associated with each. Others focused on one style/genre and gave a more detailed response. Ballet was described most frequently with references to turnout, posture and alignment made most often.

The sharpest difference between the most and least successful responses was in the quality of the explanation and the connections between the training and the skill. Those students who chose to discuss rather than explain tended to make general and vague observations regarding training in contrast to those who really engaged with the explanations of how training is effective.

Less able students tended to acknowledge the fact that training was valuable and necessary but did not develop this into an explanation of how a dancer develops ability through training. There was also a tendency to shift away from the question and many included references to diet, safe practice and injury prevention. These may all be valid aspects of training but need to be described and explained in the context of developing ability within a style/genre.

There was also a marked difference in the balance between physical and technical skills. In the less successful responses, there were few references to genre specific challenges or techniques. In the most successful responses students demonstrated detailed and comprehensive knowledge of physical and technical skills and presented the explanations within the context of a specific style/genre. Descriptions and explanations were detailed and usually covered a wide range of aspects of training. These included specific exercises, progressive overload, repetition and class structure. There were also clear distinctions between physical and technical skills. The use of diagrams was often helpful in demonstrating knowledge and an effective use of time.

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](#)