



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Dance

DANC2

(Specification 2230)

Unit 2: Choreography and Performance

Report on Examination

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General comments

Many thanks to all teachers and moderators for their continued commitment to the moderation process and internal assessment of a practical unit which, in its third year, seemed once again to provide an excellent means of allowing teachers to feel involved in the assessment process, supported by their knowledge and understanding of the mark scheme.

Moderation discussion enabled the teacher to feel empowered in the process while supported by the moderator's experience and knowledge of the standards set for this year's questions. Many teachers commented on the invaluable staff development they felt they had received on moderation day.

In general, teachers who had attended a standardisation meeting and had contacted their coursework advisor with any queries seemed to have a much clearer insight into the process and a more realistic grasp of the standard. They understood the relationship between mark bands, the impression mark and a question-specific mark scheme and the assessment ran smoothly.

However, there is now a higher number of teachers who have not attended standardisation for two years. Sometimes, these teachers found it difficult to maintain the standard set in previous years and occasionally this resulted in confrontation and dispute. There were also instances where new or inexperienced teachers had not been to standardisation and were unaware of how to use the mark bands, impression mark and question-specific mark scheme. They often had an unrealistic view of the standard of their candidates' work and therefore required extra support by the moderator at this stage.

It is worth noting that all moderators are standardised each year, as well as having access to teacher standardisation materials, and are encouraged to refer to the information gained from these experiences during moderation.

Clarification of the moderation process:

- before assessment, all teachers and moderators should be familiar with the wording of questions, mark bands and question-specific mark schemes
- after viewing the candidate's work an impression mark is written down
- written comments can be made at this point to help justify any marks awarded
- mark bands are then revisited to match impression mark with a band
- question-specific criteria are then considered and marks allocated in each category
- a cross-check using the above four stages should now happen to finalise a mark
- the mark is then discussed to arrive at an agreed final mark.

As in 2009 and 2010, there was slight confusion at times when centres had more than ten candidates. The procedure in these cases is:

- ten solos and ten candidates performing in duos/trios need to be assessed during moderation. **They do not need to be the same candidates for both tasks.**

- the teacher needs to assess **all non-sample candidates as well as sample candidates** in the duos/trios, even if the moderator is only looking at one out of the two or three in a dance. In this way, no candidate has to perform his or her assessment pieces more than once.

There is no need to photocopy mark sheets for moderators, as they will bring their own.

Video recording

Centres are reminded that:

- all assessments are to be recorded
- the recording should try to capture the whole of the performance space, **preferably shot from behind** the moderator's/teacher's table(s). In centres where the camera is at the side, the choreographic exploration of spatial elements can be distorted. The use of a camera operator benefited centres with limited space beyond the performance area
- the moderator may request to take the recording of the sample away at the end of moderation
- all recordings not taken away should be kept securely with the examinations office.

Moderators arrange visits directly with their allocated centres. It is essential that the Dance teacher liaise with colleagues within the centre, including the Examinations Officer, to identify several convenient dates when space will be available, before agreeing an assessment date with the moderator. Moderators arrange their schedules at the end of the autumn term and the beginning of the spring term, meeting centres' preferences as far as possible.

It is extremely helpful when teachers respond promptly to the moderator, providing an email address as a quick and effective means of communication.

Teachers should refer to the *Teachers' Notes* and the online *Practical Units – Examination Arrangements* for more guidance on the moderation process and relevant paperwork.

Section A - Solo Choreography and Performance

Every year all questions are devised with a view to developing not only the choreographic and performance skills needed to complete the task but also skills such as independent research, investigation, contextual understanding and the ability to make links to the theoretical content of the course. Careful preparation is vital and can underpin the theoretical/written aspect of the course. The questions are not designed to provide stimuli but, as in the written assessment, an opportunity to focus in on, develop and present coherent ideas around a **specific** topic/theme.

Points relating to the choreography for each question

Question 1 proved to be extremely popular in some centres, being the only question addressed by the whole cohort.

In general, the question provided a range of responses. The more successful dances showed a consideration of **all aspects** of the painting, demonstrated through imaginative selection and manipulation of action content, dynamic variation and thoughtful spatial design. Aural accompaniment had been chosen carefully to enhance the impact of the presentation, often clearly linked to research and the development of ideas.

The less successful dances seemed to focus solely on the central character of the fiddler, choosing to ignore the context in which he was placed within the painting. This usually resulted in only limited exploration and development of his pose and the violin action. A wide selection of appropriate music was chosen but at times was not fully **utilised** within the choreographic response. Sometimes the rhythmical complexity of the chosen accompaniment hindered the candidate in the presentation of ideas.

Question 2 was not as popular as previous music questions, but did provide some candidates with the opportunity to work in a style that suited their wider knowledge of dance, and in some centres provided an interesting link to their proposed area of study next year. There were some extremely sophisticated, well-crafted and entertaining responses to the score, reflecting the rhythm and phrasing and using wholly appropriate dynamics. A style, which was not necessarily always the expected one, was clearly established and maintained throughout.

Less successful dances often failed to highlight the rhythmical pattern and the structural variation and repeats within the score and often seemed to struggle to sustain an appropriate and consistent style in relation to the music.

As in the past, some candidates seemed to pick this question considering it to be the easier option as there was no need to find music. On the whole it was these candidates who struggled to achieve, not fully realising what was involved in exploring and presenting dance choreography in direct response to a specific piece of music.

Question 3 was by far the most popular question this year and produced a range of responses and achievement. This type of question allows candidates to perhaps present a more individual and unique response, choosing their own source for inspiration and development. However, the question did still require the candidate to explore the **'use of body language as a means of communication'** rather than just a simple representation and display of a chosen 'story' through gesture or a codified system, for example sign language.

Successful dances showed a consideration and exploration of several aspects of body language and were able to assimilate them into a coherent dance structure with imaginative content, clear development and effective transitions. Some dances linked the body language to a particular theme or narrative; others were more abstract in their intention – both approaches were valid, especially when the candidate clearly

understood and embraced the question.

Less successful dances either relied heavily on repetition of a limited range of body language or became overly preoccupied with the presentation of feelings and emotions.

The accompanying text was presented on the paper to underpin the meaning of the question and to inspire and guide the candidate into further research and investigation.

Question 4 produced a variety of responses: some candidates fully exploring the poem; others choosing to use it merely as a stimulus to create a dance based on the topic of 'time'. As stated in previous years, candidates should be encouraged to analyse the **whole** poem, which would aid them in their interpretation and understanding of the text. This then allows for a more in-depth and informed exploration of ideas within an appropriate context.

The content of successful dances clearly reflected the imagery in the poem and the use of appropriate dynamic variation and contrast, often manipulated with imagination and insight. The meaning and often the structure of the poem were clearly in evidence, helping the candidate to present a coherent and fluid response.

Less successful candidates became distracted by very general images of time and rushing, repeating motifs associated with these images throughout with little reference or link to the context of the whole poem and any other imagery.

Points relating to the performance of the solo

As in previous years, in a number of centres there were some outstanding performances of the chosen solo, with candidates demonstrating a high level of technical skill, bodily control and interpretative skills, often far exceeding the level required at AS level. It was obvious that time had been allocated to develop these skills alongside the choreographic process.

In general, the less efficient performances revealed insufficient technical training to achieve an appropriate standard at AS level. These candidates appeared at ease with more static and gestural work but found precision and control of bodily skill when travelling and getting to and from the floor difficult. Spatial and dynamic control was in evidence at times but **eloquence** in the execution of these movement components was missing.

This year, some candidates seemed to struggle with the performance of question 2, raising doubt over its suitability for those particular individuals. In some performances seen, weak technical skills and insufficient sensitivity to correlate with the rhythm, phrasing and dynamic accents in the music hindered or masked the choreographic presentation. Often it was these candidates who were unable to maintain their energy and projection for the duration of the dance.

The development of focus, projection, musicality and dynamic emphasis should be an important aspect of any practical assessment preparation and should have equal importance alongside the development of the choreography.

Section B – Performance in a duo/trio

This continues to provide an exciting and interesting end to the moderation for all involved, allowing candidates to produce a varied and fascinating range of performances. This aspect of assessment also allows an opportunity for candidates to be rewarded for performance skills in relation to other people, for the development of invaluable transferable skills and the opportunity to make clear links to the theoretical aspects of the course. It can also be used as an effective introduction into **both** A2 units of study.

As in previous years, there were many different approaches to the creation of the duos/trios:

- links to professional work being studied and A2 areas of study/set works
- dance material used which had emerged from a workshop environment and developed by the teacher, students or both
- original work by the student(s) in any genre/style
- original work created by the teacher specifically for the cohort
- the whole of the cohort performing the same dance (which allowed for interchangeable roles)
- the whole of the cohort performing the same dance with individual variation for each duo/trio
- every duo/trio completely different within the centre.

High achievement was gained in centres where individual strengths of candidates had been considered and where a lot of time had been given to the rehearsal process and the understanding of the assessment criteria. As bodily skills were not part of the performance assessment, it was encouraging that some students with less technical skill were still able to access marks in the higher bands due to their commitment to rehearsing the dance and their confidence and rapport with their fellow dancers.

It is still the case that students achieving lower marks usually showed some or all of the following:

- a lack of confidence
- insufficient rehearsal
- content which revealed their weaknesses rather than their strengths
- choreography which did not allow them to respond fully to the criteria.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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