



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
June 2012**

**Dance**

**DANC2**

**(Specification 2230)**

**Unit 2: Choreography and performance**

***Report on the Examination***

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## General

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 fourth 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 adviser with any queries seemed to have a much clearer insight into the process and a more realistic grasp of the standard. They understood the principles and rationale of the mark scheme, the relationship between mark bands, the impression mark and a question-specific mark scheme and, because of this, the assessment ran much more smoothly.**

However, there appears to be a higher number of teachers who have not attended standardisation since the inception of the unit. 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/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 students' 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 student'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 previous years, there was slight confusion at times when centres had more than ten students. The procedure in these cases is:

- ten solos and ten students performing in duos/trios need to be assessed during moderation. **They do not need to be the same students for both tasks.**
- the teacher needs to assess **all non-sample students as well as sample students** 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 student 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 centre colleagues and 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 performances 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.

All four questions were attempted and popularity of individual questions varied from centre to centre.

### ***Question 1***

Allowed for and attracted a variety of responses - for example, the sculptor's approach and creative process, the interest of the spectators, the moving, building and accumulation of the stones themselves, the meditative process.

The mark scheme highlighted the relevance of the *dynamic* content and it was this aspect that often differentiated between the higher achieving and less successful solos.

The more successful dances revealed an in-depth understanding of the researched topic, through the consideration of the movement components in relation to the chosen theme and a choice of aural setting which created a relevant mood/atmosphere.

The less successful dances appeared to concentrate on the static image of the stones themselves and the performance became a presentation of 'balanced' images linked together with simple transitions. The choice of emotive/narrative songs as aural setting often detracted from the focus of the question.

### ***Question 2***

Proved to be a popular choice by students and evidence of a considerable amount of research into the composer and song was often revealed and reflected in the choreography. Translation of the words did seem to assist students in the development of relevant and original movement material and thus in turn provided a coherent structure.

Exciting and innovative dances were produced in some centres, with students embodying the musical structure in a sophisticated way whilst at the same time revealing an ability to evoke an engaging and wholly appropriate atmosphere in relation to the aural source.

The less successful dances often failed to recognise the rhythmical pattern, the nuances of the repeats and the inherent complexities of the score. These dances tended to be a simplistic response, matching the sound heard with action, with no real thought to development of ideas and consistency of

style.

### **Question 3**

Produced a wide range of responses. The question allowed for an imaginative and open choice of theme in relation to an umbrella but students often failed to recognise the importance of the **use** of the prop as integral to the response.

The more successful dances displayed an imaginative and thoughtful approach to choice (narrative or abstract) and manipulation of the umbrella, usually accompanied by a considered choice of aural setting. It was evident in some dances that movement material had been clearly developed out of the process of improvisation and exploration of ways to use the umbrella. This then allowed for unique and extremely interesting visual imagery, which was structured in an articulate way in relation to the chosen theme.

The less successful dances demonstrated limited exploration of the prop and its potential for generating dance ideas. It was often only used as either a shelter, or held in one hand throughout or instantly put down and ignored for large amounts of the dance. Some students chose to place more than one umbrella within the performance space, and though visually appealing as physical setting, this often resulted in the student not fully embracing the question.

### **Question 4**

Produced a variety of responses - some students fully exploring **all four** pictures, others choosing to use them merely as a stimulus to create a dance based on the topic of teenage relationships.

The more successful dances were able to show a clear reference throughout to the photographs in either a narrative or an abstract way, establishing character, theme, or a visual exposition of the form of the photographs. These ideas were expanded through a sophisticated use of choreographic and structuring devices and the aural setting often enhanced mood, theme or the exploration of the dynamic element.

The less successful dances often relied on exact repetition of literal gesture with limited motif development or thought to transition of ideas. Some students chose to concentrate on only one photograph, which also limited the generation of movement material. Some students were imaginative in the choice of aural setting (eg sound scores, music of the period) but found it difficult to utilise the selection efficiently in the presentation to enhance the overall dance idea.

## **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 students 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 students 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.

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.

It is worth noting that careful consideration and choice of question at times had a direct impact on, and correlated to the student's ability to present the dance idea in an efficient and effective way.

## **Section B – Performance in a duo/trio**

This section continues to provide an exciting and interesting end to the moderation for all involved, allowing students to produce a varied and fascinating range of performances. This aspect of assessment also allows an opportunity for students 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 students 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 at [www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html](http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html) .

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