

# A-Level

# Dance

Unit 2 – DANC2 – Choreography and Performance  
Report on the Examination

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## General

Now in its fifth year, the moderation process and internal assessment of a practical unit seemed once again to provide an excellent means of facilitating student achievement and allowing teachers to feel involved in the assessment process. The developing knowledge and understanding of the mark scheme by teachers and the rigour of assessment employed by both teacher and moderator support this.

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. However in some schools teachers still have difficulty in the ability to separate out prior personal experience of the work viewed from an objective consideration of the presentation on the day of assessment.

In general, teachers who had attended a standardisation meeting and had contacted their controlled assessment 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 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 still appears to be a high 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 the work created by their students 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 the teacher standardisation materials. They are therefore instructed to refer to the information gained from *all* 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.
- Cross-checks using the above four stages should now happen to finalise a mark.
- The mark is then discussed to arrive at an agreed final mark.
- If at the end of the process there is still disagreement, the teacher via their examinations officer, can request a re-moderation. This must be implemented as soon as possible after the visit.

As in previous years, there was slight confusion at times when schools had more than ten students. The procedure in these cases is as follows:

- 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.

### **Recording of assessed work**

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

Moderators arrange visits directly with their allocated schools. It is essential that the Dance teacher liaise with school 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 schools' 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 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***

As in previous years, all four questions were attempted and popularity of individual questions varied from school to school.

#### **Question 1**

This was an extremely popular question that attracted a range of responses. The quotation was included to guide students into a consideration of the concept of colour being used to *express*

mood, feeling and emotion. Occasionally students lost sight of this and became sidetracked with a narrative linked to the quotation. Choice of colour was varied and wide-ranging – from an in-depth exploration of one colour to myriad different colours, including black and white.

The more successful solos concentrated on the *link* between colour and the expression of mood/feeling/emotion, with a clear contrast in the selection and manipulation of the movement components. The less successful solos tended to concentrate on an exploration of emotion regardless of choice of colour, thus losing sight of the question.

Due to the nature of the exploration sometimes the choice and use of aural setting hindered students. The choice of different colours often attracted different pieces of music edited together. The extent to which this enhanced the choreography and performance varied.

### **Question 2**

This question did not appear to be as popular as the others in this section but when attempted, allowed some students to present highly original and thoughtful responses to the musical composition. The more successful solos clearly explored the structure, atmosphere and percussive development of the aural setting, which culminated in music visualisation at its most potent. The less successful responses relied heavily on repetition; they chose to ignore the choreographic potential of the use of silence and often a sense of progression regarding structure and dance idea(s) was unclear.

This type of question allows students to fully concentrate on a musical score as *the source* for development and structuring of material. A narrative is not necessary but sometimes can aid a student to produce a coherent response. At other times however, students can seem to focus purely on a narrative inspired by the score, used then therefore in this instance as a *stimulus* - to the detriment of any in-depth exploration of structure, rhythm and phrasing.

### **Question 3**

This question allowed students to analyse a stock character from the Commedia dell'arte. The choice of character was not prescribed and for the most part students were able to select appropriately – often linked to their own performance skills and abilities.

The most successful responses concentrated on the analysis of a character within the context of the theatrical form, rather than focusing on storytelling vaguely involving a character. Through analysis the subsequent selection/manipulation of the movement components in these responses was insightful and acute in observation. The aural setting had also been chosen to suit the character and the scenario he/she was placed in. At times, however, the use of the chosen aural setting was not fully utilised within the choreographic response. Sometimes the rhythmical complexity of the chosen accompaniment hindered the student in the presentation of ideas.

### **Question 4**

This was an extremely popular choice in some schools, producing a variety of responses, some highly imaginative and thought provoking. As stated in previous years, students 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 spatial/dynamic variation and contrast, often manipulated with imagination and insight.

The meaning (interpreted by the individual) and often the structure of the poem were clearly in evidence, helping the student to present a complex, coherent and eloquent response.

Less successful students became preoccupied by very general images of kites, freedom and restriction, often 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, 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.

Occasionally, when costume was used, insufficient rehearsal in the costume meant that students became nervous about the security of what they were wearing, which in turn affected their concentration and flow of movement.

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

This 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 school.

High achievement was gained in schools 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 skill of an individual is not part of the performance assessment, it is always encouraging to witness some students accessing 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.

### **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)