

A-level **DANCE**

DANC2 – Choreography and Performance
Report on the Examination

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General

Now in its sixth 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 centres 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 with 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. **Comments should not be written down whilst viewing the work of the student, as it can provide a distraction to all involved in the process.**
- 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 in order 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 centres had more than ten candidates. 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 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 student has to perform his or her assessment pieces more than once
- students need to be assessed on their **first** performance of a duo/trio regardless of how many times they have to perform it with other people.

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 centres 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 centres 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. The use of SD cards and memory sticks to store presentations will be accepted by the moderator when he/she leaves at the end of the assessment. If required, arrangements for the efficient transfer of material from a hard drive to DVD need to be arranged and negotiated prior to moderation.
- All recordings not taken away should be kept securely within 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 very end of the autumn term and the beginning of the spring term, meeting centres' preferences as far as possible. The moderator will not necessarily have any details of the number of candidates.

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 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 and progression through to A2 study. The questions are not designed to provide stimuli but, as in the written assessment, an opportunity to focus 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 centre to centre. It was noted by moderators that occasionally in some centres all students chose the same question and had, what appeared to be, a formulaic approach to the response. This did not always advantage the cohort.

Question 1

This was a popular question attracting a range of responses. This type of question provides an opportunity for students to explore both a visual and thematic source, allowing for freedom and flexibility in interpretation and structure. The more successful dances demonstrated evidence of clear analysis and understanding of both the process and final outcome of the art work and were able to effectively weave dynamic ideas arising out of the accompanying text. Form, texture, spatial elements and subject content were carefully explored through the selection and manipulation of the constituent features and there were some highly imaginative responses viewed.

The less successful solos tended to concentrate on one aspect of the source which limited the choice and manipulation of the movement components and structure of the dance. Some students chose to use the question as a stimulus to create a response focusing on either the theme of explosion and/or explosive music, with no reference to Arman's art work at all.

Question 2

This type of question allowed 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 therefore, in this instance, as a *stimulus* - to the detriment of any in-depth exploration of structure, rhythm and phrasing.

The question this year allowed some students to present highly sensitive and thoughtful responses to the musical composition. The more successful solos clearly explored the structure, rhythms, phrasing and atmosphere which culminated in articulate attempts at music visualisation. The less successful responses relied heavily on repetition; choosing to ignore the subtle nuances in rhythmical pattern and structure in favour of simply fitting steps to similar types of beats heard throughout.

Question 3

This was an extremely popular choice in some centres producing a variety of responses; some highly imaginative and thought provoking. This question allowed students to explore/interpret a story from Greek mythology without limiting them to the analysis and presentation of one character.

The most successful responses demonstrated clear evidence of understanding of the source (for example, themes, characters, situations, narrative) and the ability to weave the researched findings into a coherent, insightful piece of choreography. Content and context were clearly established, often with a highly appropriate choice and use of aural setting to enhance the dance statement(s) presented. Texture was created by the layering of ideas and the sophisticated utilisation of choreographic devices.

The less successful solos seemed to become pre-occupied with the themes of flying and/or melting. These dances often relied heavily on repetition of gesture and structurally had no real link to the story of Icarus. As with question 1, some students chose to treat the question as a stimulus and present choreography that was tenuously linked to an aspect of the character of Icarus.

Question 4

This question was again another popular choice in some centres. 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, which was often accompanied by highly imaginative and extremely appropriate aural setting.

Following the pattern of question 3 less successful students became preoccupied by very general images associated with water, wandering and monsters, 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, 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.

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 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 considerable amount 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