



A-level

DANCE

DANC2 – Choreography and Performance
Report on the Examination

2230
June 2015

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2015 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General

This year saw the introduction of teacher online standardisation alongside the traditional face-to-face meetings. Both teachers and moderators agreed it was an invaluable new resource and one which they could refer back to throughout the practical series.

For most centres the moderation process is a positive one, with insightful discussion and clarification of standards. 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/viewed the online material 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 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.

It is worth noting that all moderators are standardised each year with live responses pertinent to the particular paper 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 candidate'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 candidate, 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 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 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
- candidates 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; however programme notes have to be copied for the solo dances for the moderators.

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 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 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 re 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 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 and progression through to A2 study. 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 centre to centre. It was noted by moderators that occasionally in some centres all candidates 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 candidates to explore a visual source which will be informed by research and analysis, thus allowing for freedom and flexibility in interpretation and how the choreography is ultimately structured.

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 ideas regarding the context of the sculpture, the process used by the sculptor and the form itself. Texture, materials and spatial elements were carefully explored through the selection and manipulation of the constituent features and there were some highly imaginative and extremely thoughtful responses viewed. Some students chose to concentrate purely on the formal elements of the sculpture, others also accessed the more emotional thematic aspects found within the research alongside this investigation. Both ways were equally valid.

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. These tended to reflect a more superficial investigation and analysis of the formal elements of the sculpture re materials, use of space and texture. Some students became sidetracked with the story of Orpheus and his journey into the underworld which resulted in a final presentation which seemed to completely ignore the visual source.

Question 2

This type of question allows candidates 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 candidate to produce a coherent response. At other times however, candidates 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.

The more successful solos clearly explored and examined in detail the structure, phrasing and rhythms of the composition which culminated in articulate attempts at music visualisation. The less successful responses relied heavily on repetition and changes in tempo which were not always in relation to the musical composition.

Question 3

In some centres this was an extremely popular question, providing a wide range of responses and personal interpretation of the three concepts. As it was a dance study the question did not require a narrative though some students did use a 'theme' as a wholly appropriate gateway into the investigation and analysis of 'speed, energy and force'. The more successful dances were clear in this investigation and if any kind of starting theme was used it was only to inform the analysis and understanding of the concepts - not to detract. Some students successfully explored the whole spectrum of dynamic possibilities for example from one extreme to the other, whilst others chose to concentrate on the weaving of the three concepts at any one location within the spectrum. Both responses were equally valid.

The less successful solos either did not fully explore/demonstrate understanding of the three concepts or they concentrated on the theme of speed in a very general way.

This type of question opens up many possibilities in the way the movement components are manipulated and structured and also in the choice of aural setting. Sometimes students were extremely hindered by their choice of music which dictated and limited dynamic and speed variation. Some candidates chose silence which seemed to liberate their ideas and in turn the performance.

Question 4

This question was again another popular choice in some centres. 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 action with spatial/dynamic variation and contrast, often manipulated with imagination and insight. The multi-layered meaning (interpreted by the individual) and often the structure of the poem were clearly in evidence, helping the candidate to present a complex, coherent and eloquent response, which was often accompanied by a highly imaginative and extremely appropriate aural setting.

Less successful solos became preoccupied by very general images associated with pregnancy or they became preoccupied with very specific images for example 'Clownlike' which took up the majority of the dance. Some dances seemed to ignore the meaning inherent in the poem in favour of replicating verbs/adjectives in isolation, thus losing all sense of context and structure.

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.

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 candidate's ability to present the dance idea in an efficient and effective way.

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. As with the solo, the duo/trio offers an 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.

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.

High achievement was gained in centres where individual strengths of candidates 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.**

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](#)