



**General Certificate of Education**

**Dance 2230**

**Unit 4 Group Choreography and Solo  
Performance**

**Report on the Examination**

***2010 examination - June series***

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## General Comments

The despatch of practical examination question papers in the autumn term is generated by estimated entries received from Examinations Officers. Centres are therefore advised to ensure that this information is sent to AQA by the October deadline each year.

Examiners arrange visits directly with their allocated centres. The DANC4 examiner will also be the DANC2 moderator for your centre.

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 examiner. Examiners 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 are prompt in their response to the examiner and provide an email address, as this can be a quick and effective means of communication. Once confirmed, the examination date may only be changed in **exceptional** circumstances.

Once the date and number of entries is confirmed with the examiner, he/she draws up a timetable for the DANC4 examination and forwards this to the teacher. If changes are made to the number of entries, centres should notify the visiting examiner so that the examination day timetable can be kept accurate. Centres should also inform their examiner of the practitioner(s) chosen by the candidates for their responses to question 5.

Programme notes are required for both questions on the examination paper and, if possible, they should be printed on either side of one sheet of A4 paper.

### *Video recording*

Centres are reminded that:

- all assessments should be recorded
- the recording should ideally capture the whole of the performance space, **preferably shot from behind** the examiner's table. In centres where the camera is at the side, the choreographic exploration of spatial elements can be distorted. The use of a camera operator proved of great benefit in centres with limited space beyond the performance area
- the examiner will take away all video evidence at the end of examination.

In some centres the rubric of the examination paper was not clearly adhered to and there were incidences of group dances being presented with the incorrect number of dancers and the time requirement ignored on both questions.

**Teachers should refer to the online *Teachers' Notes* for more guidance on the preparation and conduct of the examination.**

## **Section A - Group Choreography**

All questions were devised with a view to developing not only the choreographic skills needed to complete the tasks 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 also underpin the theoretical/written aspect of the course.

The questions were not designed to be a stimulus but, as in the written assessment, an opportunity to focus in on, develop and present coherent ideas around a **specific** topic/theme.

The assessment of the group choreography follows a similar approach to the assessment of DANC2 solo choreography. Mark bands and question-specific mark schemes are used. Specimens and past mark schemes are available on the AQA website.

It was evident that the choreographic work undertaken by some candidates in their first year of study had been extremely useful preparation for this unit in the second year.

All four questions were attempted this year with questions 1 and 4 being the most popular.

### ***Points relating to the choreography for each question***

**Question 1** was an extremely popular question, and one that allowed candidates to explore different approaches to the presentation of the choreographic intention. No image was placed in the question paper as the focus was on the *concepts underlying* the installation rather than just a visual representation of one image of the work. The text was included to help candidates in the development of their ideas.

Successful candidates considered a range of concepts and presented them through original and inventive content and development. The use of dancers was imaginative as was the choice and use of the aural setting to complement the visual presentation. An image of the installation on first viewing could appear positional and 'static'. More able candidates were not only able to embrace the concept of the figures bent at right angles but were able to find appropriate

transitions by careful analysis of the concepts behind Gormley's work, thus creating depth, texture and dynamic interest. At times candidates interjected elements of humour into their choreography, which produced highly engaging presentations.

The less successful dances either focused on the experiential ideas (for example hysteria and the catatonic state), sometimes resulting in over-emotional representations which moved away from the question and which relied heavily on the dramatic skills of the dancers through the use of facial expressions and stereotypical gesture, or seemed content to produce a series of images of dancers bent at right angles with no apparent further investigation into the underlying concepts.

Some candidates were over-reliant on unison as a choreographic device, which did not allow them to fully explore the potential spatial and dynamic qualities inherent in the question.

**Question 2** was a popular question and there was a wide range of achievement. More able candidates were able to recognise and utilise the progression and complex layering within the musical score and find a range of striking relationships between dancers and the aural setting throughout. Occasionally, presentations evoked an atmosphere that was wholly appropriate and powerful and the content was developed in a carefully crafted and sophisticated way.

On the other hand there were some very simplistic responses to the score. The style chosen was not always appropriate or consistent and dancers were used in a way that did not enhance the music. Some candidates focused on the representation of individual musical instruments rather than an exploration of the whole score and the expressive qualities to be found within it. At times the use of narrative also led the candidate away from a full exploration of the musical score.

**Question 3** was the least popular question but when chosen often allowed the candidate to create an imaginative, thoughtful and original response. Research and investigation into an explanation of 'The Golden Section' and how it is evident in the world around us was imperative. The more successful dances demonstrated extremely clear understanding of the topic and material was chosen judiciously. Concentration was on one aspect of the vast subject rather than touching the surface of a range of themes summarising the 'Golden Section'. In dances where many ideas were chosen choreographers struggled to move coherently from one idea to the next, producing outcomes that were not totally unified and were difficult to understand.

A majority of candidates chose music that also followed the principles of the 'Golden Section' which, in some cases, worked extremely effectively; in others the complexity of the music did not always help or complement the choreographic exploration and outcome.

**Question 4** was another popular question providing a wide range of answers. Many candidates produced responses that clearly reflected the research undertaken on the women's suffrage movement in Britain in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These responses also demonstrated sound understanding of the movement within a social and historical context. Some candidates chose a very literal or narrative response, others a more emotional one. Both were appropriate if explored in depth and within context of the question.

Choreographers of the less successful dances chose to present a superficial presentation of the battle between men and women or literal movement and/or gestures abstracted from pictures and images of the time, with no real thought to transitions and development of ideas and themes.

## Section B - Solo Performance

### *Points relating to Question 5*

In some centres outstanding work was presented and teachers are to be congratulated for their part in supporting candidates in preparation for this aspect of the examination. **It was also exciting to see work that had obviously evolved out of an in-depth analysis of the characteristic features of a practitioner's movement style, the performance of this style and the context in which the style is presented.**

The assessment of this question requires a candidate to *apply* specific knowledge and understanding of a practitioner to their practical performance. They are not merely being assessed on their own technical and performance skills as in the DANC2 unit. Candidates have the opportunity to link theory and practice and present work which shows clear insight into the movement style of a specific practitioner. The assessment criteria refer to 'in relation to the specific practitioner chosen' throughout. The emphasis is on the skills and qualities needed to demonstrate understanding of a practitioner's movement style and the performance of that particular style - in terms of movement vocabulary and technical features; spatial and dynamic elements; musicality; the use of the physical setting and focus/projection to communicate the dance idea.

The most popular area of study from which candidates chose practitioners was Modern Dance in Britain 1965 – 1985 but the other two areas of study were also represented.

Practitioners viewed this year which allowed for an appropriate outcome included: Christopher Bruce, Richard Alston, Siobhan Davies, Robert North, Janet Smith, Robert Cohan (Modern Dance in Britain 1965 - 1985); Michel Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, George Balanchine (Diaghilev's Ballets Russes 1909 -



1929) and Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers (Dance in the American Musicals of the 1930s and the 1940s).

An appropriate practitioner to choose is one who was *established* at the time of the area of study and who made a very significant contribution to that particular area of study. For example, Christopher Bruce became both a leading dancer and choreographer working in Britain between 1965 and 1985, contributing significantly to the work of Ballet Rambert.

For this unit it is valid to analyse the chosen practitioner's style over the period of his/her choreographic career, as a more in-depth understanding of a practitioner's style may occur. Teachers and candidates are therefore not required to limit themselves to repertoire within the time frame given in Unit 3.

The form of the solos varied from centre to centre and also within some centres, for example:

- a dance choreographed by the teacher
- a reconstruction of professional repertoire
- an extract from professional repertoire with adaptations
- a dance choreographed by the teacher with some student input
- a phrase learnt from a professional workshop and extended by the teacher and/or student
- a former AQA A Level set dance.

Each of the above ways of creating the solo could lead to successful performances. The degree of success related to the extent to which the movement style of the practitioner was in evidence (and understood by the performer) and also the suitability of the practitioner's style for each candidate. Teacher input is vital to ensure all criteria are met. It is also an opportunity for the teacher to reinforce and expand on theoretical discussion and investigation.

It was apparent that some candidates had spent little time on the preparation of the solo, struggling to sustain a performance over the allocated two to three minutes and with limited consideration and demonstration of the technical aspects of the chosen practitioner. Encapsulating the style of a practitioner requires training and development of bodily skills over a period of time. In some centres it was obvious that preparation for the presentation of this question had started in the first year of study, which is to be congratulated.

It was clear that some candidates had viewed this aspect of the examination as an opportunity to pursue a choreographic task, concentrating on the choreographic style of a practitioner as a stimulus rather than an exploration or analysis of the *movement* style. This often led to work which had a similar theme to a chosen practitioner but which contained no recognisable movement material and expressive qualities of that practitioner.

Choosing a previous A-Level set dance by an appropriate practitioner was a valid way of answering this question. However, some candidates had spent little time on the exploration of the nuances of the chosen practitioner's style.

Teachers can find statistical data and grade boundaries information through the following link: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html>

**DANC4 2011** – from 2011 onwards, the basis of the solo performance task in Unit 4 will be extended to allow candidates greater choice. Section 3.4.2 of the specification will be amended as follows:

*In Unit 4, candidates must study a specific practitioner from **any** of the three areas of study prescribed for Unit 3 or the choreographer of **any** of the three set works. Candidates are not restricted to the area of study or set work which they have chosen to investigate for Unit 3; they may only, however, refer to an area of study or set work prescribed for the year of examination.*