



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

Dance

DANC1

(Specification 2230)

Unit 1: Understanding dance

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on **the Examination** are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2012 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

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.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

General

Section A

The two structured questions in Section A followed the same format as last year. Specific marks are allocated to each part of the question. Knowledge is expressed succinctly and explanations and analysis are focused on a specific area of the specification.

Questions 01 and 02 were linked

Question 01

This was an accessible question. Most students understood the term ‘focus’ and were able to describe where the gaze was directed. However, a significant number of students referred to concentration, for example; ‘focus is used to keep in time with each other’; ‘the dancers are focusing on being strong so the male dancer doesn’t drop the female’.

The majority of students achieved half marks, usually by describing what they saw. Those who achieved the higher marks were also able to comment on the way focus was used to enhance the dance idea or inform the style of dance.

There was parity across the pictures in that no single image was neither more nor less problematic.

Some students spent more time than necessary on this question, which created problems with time management.

Question 02

This question was also accessible with the majority of students gaining 3 marks. Strength, flexibility and balance were the most frequently identified skills. The distinction between strength and balance was not always clear but equally there were some extremely lucid and accurate explanations.

Students who did not gain full marks tended to describe what they saw as opposed to explaining why the skill was important within the duo, or provided explanations that were too general to be relevant to the specific duo. There were some examples of students who did not specify which duo they were discussing and presented vague comments, but these were relatively few.

Question 03, 04 and 05 were linked

These questions required students to present their knowledge and understanding of the use of motif and motif development within their own choreography.

Questions 03 and 04 were highly accessible with many students scoring two marks per question. Question 05 was the most demanding question in Section A.

Question 03

The vast majority of students could describe a motif. Students who gained full marks provided detailed and accurate descriptions of movement. Some students did not understand what was required and provided descriptions that were too vague or unclear, for example, ‘*I turned then ran around the whole space*’; ‘*jumps, getting higher and higher*’; ‘*lots of arm movements and gestures*’. In order to gain full marks the description had to be clear enough for the examiner to visualise or reconstruct the movement. The vast majority of students gained at least one mark.

For many students it was natural to explain the reasoning behind their motif at this stage. Although this response was required in question 05, marks were awarded at this point if the student did not repeat the rationale in their response to question 05.

Question 04

This was the most accessible question in Section A with the majority of students achieving full marks. It was pleasing to see such a wide range of developments covered, suggesting that knowledge of choreography is a strength across the cohort. It was also refreshing to find students writing articulately about their own choreographic process.

There was a huge range of responses from students; some wrote just two words, eg repetition and fragmentation; others wrote lengthy and detailed descriptions, often with additional explanation. As in question 03, marks for rationale were awarded at this point if it was not repeated in the response to question 05.

There was also a full range of types of developments. Some students described two types of the same development, for example, embellishment, and others identified two different developments. Students who were discussing their group pieces often used developments more specific to group works, eg unison and canon, which suggests that many students are reading the question carefully and using their knowledge and experience in the most appropriate way.

Question 05

This was the most challenging question in Section A.

There were some examples of less able students not attempting this question. Lower-level responses offered basic interpretations of the motif and the developments, usually resulting in one mark for each aspect of movement.

However, there were some outstanding examples of high level learners demonstrating a thorough understanding of choreography and its complexities in lucid explanations of the rationale for choreographic choices.

Section B

The two essay style questions were marked according to the banding criteria in the mark scheme.

Last year there was a significant improvement in the quality of language and analytical skills used to structure and present a discursive essay. This year that improvement has continued and the quality of writing and focus of analysis was evident. Many more essays open with an introduction, follow a structured line of thought and end with a conclusion.

It was clear that many students were very well prepared for the demands of the essays and the majority of students understood the requirement to express knowledge clearly within the context of a specific question. However, there are still numerous examples of students submitting pre-prepared responses and this still remains a problem.

Question 06

It was pleasing again this year to see that using accurate citations is becoming a natural part of good practice.

Generally the responses to this question engaged with the focus and issues of the question. Some essays provided insightful comments evaluating the use of environment, and offered clear analysis of the examples they used to support those points. Within the higher achieving group there were pleasing, although rare, examples of students who made reference to the wider context of performance, providing explanations that related to historical and cultural factors.

Some students had only observed dance works in one type of environment. However, the question allowed them to draw on their experience of that environment and to offer a range of different points in their discussion.

Less able students tended to write descriptive answers that fell short of fully evaluating the selection and use of environment to enhance choreographic intention, the dance idea or exemplify/reinforce style.

The majority of students understood and engaged with the issue of the question but those who lost focus fell into an essay that discussed the difference between watching live and recorded works – the essay from the 2010 paper.

The most successful responses shared common traits:

- Demonstrating the ability to discuss
- Essay structures that were driven by an exploration of aspects of performance space rather than each work
- Covering a range of different performance environments
- Making a range of different points, eg practical considerations; impact on style; connection with choreographic intention
- Selecting insightful and varied examples that really shed light on the particular issue of the performance environment
- Providing detailed analysis of the examples.

The less successful responses tended to be characterised thus:

- Limiting discussion to the use of set
- Descriptive rather than discursive
- Loss of focus
- Inaccuracies
- Making very generalised comments - lacking detail in description and explanation/analysis/evaluation
- Not providing examples/evidence to support point
- Lack of analysis of examples

Question 07

The most successful responses were from students who discussed their own practice and experience of working in structured classes and used their knowledge of specific genres to inform their response. This usually resulted in a balanced essay that addressed the whole question, ie, the place of the structured class within training and the particular challenges associated with specific genres/styles.

There were two common approaches that fell short of engaging with the key issues. One was to discuss warm up and cool down, sometimes in great detail, but to ignore the issue of structure and the part of the class that dealt with specific technical aspects of genre/style. The other approach often appeared more promising in the early stages. The pattern was:

- an introduction that acknowledged the importance of structure – often a rewrite of the question
- identification of a particular style or genre
- moving away from the question and listing a number of skills and describing how they would develop them using a range of exercises and training principles.

These responses often made no further reference to the style or genre and focused on generic skills of strength, flexibility and stamina, almost like a pre-prepared answer to a previous question from a previous year.

Students should be more strongly advised to read the question carefully and adapt their response accordingly.

A number of students ran out of time on this question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available at www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html .

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion