



General Certificate of Education

Dance 2230

Unit 2 Choreography and Performance

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

General Comments

Many thanks to all teachers and moderators for their continued commitment to the new moderation process and internal assessment of a practical unit, which in its second year, seemed once again to provide an excellent means of allowing teachers to feel involved in the assessment process, supported by their knowledge and understanding of the mark scheme.

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 had received on moderation day.

In general, teachers who had been to a standardisation meeting and contacted their Coursework Advisor with any queries seemed to have a clearer insight into the process and a more realistic grasp of the standard. They understood the relationship between mark bands, the impression mark and a question-specific mark scheme and the assessments ran smoothly.

However, there were problems when some teachers had not been to standardisation and were unaware of how to use the mark bands and question-specific mark schemes. They often had an unrealistic view of the standard of their candidates' work and therefore required extra support from the moderator at this stage. It is worth noting that all moderators are standardised each year as well as studying teacher standardisation materials.

To clarify:

- **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, write your impression mark**
- **make written comments at this point, to justify marks**
- **revisit mark bands to match the impression mark to a band**

- **consider the question-specific criteria and allocate marks in each category**
- **make a cross-check using the above four stages, to finalise your mark**
- **discuss this mark with the moderator to arrive at an agreed final mark.**

As in 2009, there was slight confusion at times when centres had more than ten candidates. The procedure in these cases is:

- 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 must assess **all non-sample candidates** as well as sample candidates in the duos/trios, even if the moderator is looking at only 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.

You do not need to photocopy mark sheets for moderators as they will bring their own.

Video recording

Centres are reminded that:

- 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 greatly benefited centres with limited space beyond the performance area
- the moderator may ask to take the recording of the sample away at the end of moderation
- all recordings not taken away should be kept securely in 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 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 respond promptly to the moderator, providing an email address as a quick and effective means of communication.

Teachers should refer to the online *Teachers' Notes* for more guidance on the moderation process and relevant paperwork.

Section A - Solo Choreography and Performance

It was pleasing to note that all four questions were attempted this year and candidates seemed to enjoy exploring the range of questions offered to them. Also, more candidates chose a question that allowed them to use all their skills effectively.

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.

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 or theme.

Points relating to the choreography for each question

Question 1, though not as popular as some of the other questions, provided the opportunity for research and investigation within a social and artistic context. Some candidates were able to produce highly imaginative and interesting responses as a result of thorough investigation into the artist, the work and the social climate of the time. These candidates had used both illustration *and* text to inform their response, which allowed the opportunity for a pertinent, easily accessible outcome.

Examiners noted that responses to this question were varied and candidates used a number of different approaches to present their answers.

The less successful dances showed minimal and superficial understanding of the sources of the question and were more inclined to focus solely on one theme, e.g. beauty versus ugly or a specific object seen within the installation (hand, wheel). At times no apparent consideration of the spatial and dynamic elements in relation to the sources was in evidence.

The choice of aural setting for this question was wide-ranging and on occasion highly pertinent and inspired in enhancing the communication of the response. Explorations included for example, relevant music of the time (1981), juxtaposition of beauty with distortion and music that enhanced the mood/atmosphere.

Question 2 was an extremely popular question this year and produced a range of responses and achievement. As with the 2009 music question, there were many well crafted pieces of choreography with sound interpretations of the musical structure. These successfully captured the rhythm and phrasing of the music through careful selection of appropriate action, dynamic and spatial content. These candidates were also able to establish and sustain an appropriate and consistent style throughout.

Many candidates chose a theme to explore and on the whole, this did not distract them from the task in hand, in some cases even helping the candidate to present a logical and coherent structure and exploration of ideas. At times this approach also helped candidates who had limited technical skills to establish an appropriate style that they were able to sustain throughout. In a few cases, however, a focus on a theme or narrative distracted the candidate from the assessment task in hand, resulting in limited exploration and embodiment of musical structure, rhythm and phrasing.

As in the past, some candidates seemed to pick this question, thinking it would be the easier option as there was no need to find music. On the whole it was these candidates who struggled to achieve, not fully realising what was involved in exploring and presenting dance choreography in direct response to a specific piece of music. They ignored, within this particular piece of choreography, the progression of musical ideas culminating in a very significant concluding musical section.

Question 3 was another popular question that produced a range of responses and achievement. As stated last year, a question based on a piece of poetry allows candidates to explore and develop choreographic ideas in relation to the themes, the establishment of mood and atmosphere *and* also in relation to the images contained within the poem.

The question was carefully worded this year to direct candidates to the 'themes inherent in the poem' and not to just a consideration of the characters involved or the whole narrative. However, it was still important for candidates to explore the themes *within the context of the whole poem* as opposed to abstracting them and presenting a dance based solely on the theme of 'isolation', for example.

The more successful candidates demonstrated the ability to select and establish key themes and images that were then manipulated and developed in a variety of ways to allow for a sense of progression in the structure and the unfolding of the theme(s) in relation to the text.

Less successful candidates relied heavily on either one or two images or one theme, which was then abstracted and repeated throughout, but with no reference or link to the context of the whole poem. A wide selection of appropriate music was chosen but at times was not fully *utilised* within the choreographic response.

Question 4 allowed candidates to observe, research and investigate animal behaviour which then allowed for physical exploration within the candidate's own body in the dance studio. With a dance study the emphasis is on the appropriate selection and manipulation of the three movement components in relation to the given theme and there is therefore no need to produce and present a narrative or a 'character' as such.

Some very effective dance studies showed acute observation, imaginative content and clear demonstration of animal behaviour (either concentrating on one animal or a family of animals), carefully crafted into a coherent whole. These candidates were able to select and manipulate **all three** movement components to their advantage.

Less successful studies relied heavily on a superficial understanding of an animal and its 'character' or had attempted to explore too many different animals within the time allocation, which did not allow for the necessary in-depth exploration of *behaviour*.

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 standard required at AS level. It was obvious that time had been allocated to develop these skills alongside the choreographic process.

More careful consideration seemed to have been given this year to the choice of question and the performance skills needed for each particular question. However, some candidates appeared to have concentrated purely on the choreographic task, leaving the rehearsal of their work very much to the last minute with no real opportunity to develop the necessary performance skills to communicate with an audience. The development of focus, projection, musicality and dynamic emphasis should be an important aspect of any practical assessment preparation.

The less efficient performances also 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.

Section B – Performance in a duo/trio

This continues to be an exciting development in the new specification, 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 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 last year, there were many different approaches to the creation of the duos/trios:

- links to professional work being studied and A2 areas of study or set works
- dance material which had emerged from a workshop environment and been 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 candidates 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 skills were not part of the performance assessment, it was encouraging that some students with less technical skill were able to access marks in the higher bands due to their commitment to rehearsing the dance and their confidence and rapport with their fellow dancers. On some occasions, it was very much an appropriate and exciting way to end the assessment day for all involved.

There were dances, however, which limited candidates' ability to reveal their strengths - being either too complex or simple, or an inappropriate genre, style or theme for that particular duo/trio. At times the work was insufficiently rehearsed and the performance lacked commitment and focus. An over-reliance on unison and a lack of variation with spatial pattern and relationship with other dancers did not support candidates in achieving marks in the higher bands.

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