



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Dance

42304

(Specification 4230)

Unit 4: Choreography

Report on Examination

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Unit 4a Solo Composition

General Comments

This task provides a good foundation for Unit 4b Choreography, and the majority of centres recognized this and therefore decided to do this task first, before progressing to the more complex choreography task (4b). Where students demonstrated a sound grasp of motif and development to inform the creative process, there was clear evidence of a more informed progression to Unit 4b with sound outcomes in that task too. Moderators saw a complete range of achievement in this unit, including many outstanding solos which demonstrated complex development, integration and structuring, and some where even the least able candidates had managed to link given motifs into a short composition.

Centres had approached the task in many ways, some simple and others more complex. Examples of different types of approach included:

- all candidates using the same three taught motifs
- each candidate making their own choice of work and then selecting their own three motifs
- a centre choice of work from which five or six motifs were taught and from which the candidates then selected three.

Some centres expected candidates to produce a final composition that echoed the look and style of the original professional work, and some centres only allowed candidates to work with the original accompaniment. These constraints were all perfectly permissible within the task, but many candidates who worked in this way found it difficult to produce a creative and original outcome because they were constrained by the parameters. Where candidates were encouraged to develop the piece beyond these boundaries, moderators reported seeing the most original and exciting work.

All original motifs used must be selected from the prescribed list of professional works and *Rosas Danst Rosas*, *Perfect*, *Dance Tek Warriors* and *Ghost Dances* were the most popular choices. *Birdsong* and *Romeo and Juliet* were less popular this year.

Specific observations related to the criteria for assessment

Imaginative development of original motifs

The most successful developments occurred where candidates chose motifs with some element of contrast (eg gestural, travelling and floor), because they already gave some variety and interest to facilitate the developmental process; and where clear and unequivocal guidance was given as to what made for an appropriate length of motif. There is no defined or prescribed length given for a motif in the specification so as to allow some degree of autonomy, but where candidates had been encouraged or allowed to work with long and complex phrases of movement or, in contrast, with just static positions, candidates struggled to demonstrate developments and so were forced to simply join the phrases together or rely on the addition of random action content to “pad out” the composition.

The work seen was mostly of a good standard, with some candidates achieving high marks for developing motifs in a truly original manner using a wide and varied range of developmental tools. Candidates should be encouraged to think really creatively at this stage and to develop new and exciting content that becomes personal and individual to them.

Successful integration and linking of motifs into composition

Whilst there were many solos that were seamless in the integration of the developed motifs, there were many that did not use all the devices available, such as: transitions, fragmentation, new material, etc and there was often an over-reliance on the use of simple repetition. Higher attaining candidates had clearly been well prepared for this challenge through guided tasks which had allowed them to explore a range of possibilities and then consider how they could be applied to the task.

Structuring and use of choreographic devices

Many candidates demonstrated good understanding of how to use a range of choreographic and structuring devices and it was pleasing to see how many solos had interesting beginnings and considered endings. The use of highlight and climax was often unconsidered except where the aural setting had been well chosen to support the structure and quality of the work produced. Many teachers clearly encouraged candidates to select their own music for this task in preparation for Unit 4b.

Analysis and evaluation to bring about improvement

Most centres had made positive attempts to support candidates in finding ways of evidencing their achievement in this criterion, and almost all centres were able to produce evidence to substantiate the mark awarded when it was requested. Recording of the process covered a variety of formats including:

- candidates' own PowerPoint presentations
- working notebooks
- process diaries
- essays
- recorded vivas or presentations.

Some centres even produced writing frames to guide the candidate in analysing and evaluating their work, and these were generally successful for candidates of all abilities.

Moderators indicate that most teachers were completely fair and accurate in awarding this mark, and that there was almost always broad similarity between the three marks awarded for outcome and the mark awarded for analysis and evaluation. In only a small number of cases was this at variance and in these cases the supporting evidence was able to provide essential justification for the award of a higher mark.

General moderation comments

In order to ascertain candidate response to the task, the viewing of the original motifs at moderation is essential. This could be the candidate performing his/her own motifs, or one dancer performing for everyone. Most centres had understood the importance of, and the need for, providing this key into the work, but where candidates had not recovered the original motifs sufficiently well to permit them to be seen before the final composition, the assessment of the work became very challenging.

Many centres had completed this task early in the course and therefore offered this unit for moderation on film, with each candidate performing the motifs before the solo. This was a very successful and well-favoured approach, with many teachers feeling that it had taken the pressure off their candidates at the end of the course and on moderation day. Some centres had recorded the motifs on film, but the candidates then performed their compositions live, and this approach also worked well. It is of course perfectly permissible to have a mixture of live and recorded work at moderation.

Unit 4b Solo / Group Choreography

General Comments

In a great many cases the work presented for this task was exciting, innovative and a joy to watch. Experienced moderators indicated that the outcomes this year were much improved generally in comparison with the outcomes of the similar task in the previous specification, and it was clear that teachers had used the way the criteria are separated out, to help inform their teaching of choreographic skill. The expanded criteria also allowed for very focused discussion of the award of marks where this differed during moderation.

The provision of starting points in the specification helped the majority of candidates to hone their ideas and be more succinct about the intentions of the choreography, but sometimes this initial choice was not identified sufficiently clearly and this led to some confusion for moderators about exactly how the candidate had used the prescribed list of starting points. Centres should encourage candidates to state very clearly in their supporting notes precisely what the stimulus was, where it came from and, wherever practicable, to include a copy or photograph for information. Centres did not always have copies of pictures or poems that candidates had used, which is critical for the moderator as they need to be clear about the genesis of the piece of work.

Specific observations related to the criteria for assessment

Creative and imaginative response to the selected stimulus/starting point

Categories of starting points provided a useful teaching tool for teachers and encouraged candidates to produce a varied range of responses. Some highly innovative, creative and exciting ideas were used as starting points this year, and in many of the most successful pieces it was clear that candidates had undertaken thorough research or investigation and spent time thinking about how best to communicate the idea through the medium of dance. Weaker examples came from general and unfocused ideas such as love, anger, frustration, etc. These very broad starting points often only allow for a simple and literal response and outcome.

Selection of action content and its application to relationships where appropriate

Many candidates were able to explore movement in a creative and original way, building an appropriate vocabulary of action content and then crafting it to meet the needs of the dance idea. However, it was disappointing to see that some potentially able candidates had not been encouraged to work in this way, and so had no alternative but to rely on a known vocabulary for instance showcasing splits, high kicks, head rolls, cartwheels, split leaps, etc.

Selection of dynamic content

Candidates generally demonstrated good understanding of the importance of rich, dynamic variety but there were a significant number who did not address this criterion fully.

Unfortunately, many less able candidates are not given sufficient guidance to help them understand just how effective changes in dynamic quality can be in significantly developing action; in much the same way as an adjective can change the understanding of a noun.

Selection of spatial content and relationship content where appropriate

This aspect of choreography is understood by the majority of candidates and implemented well. Use of floor pathways and changes in level are favoured by candidates. Less well used are: changing the size of movement, air pathways and variety in use of directions.

Many candidates are able to explore and use a range of relationships in group choreographies and a pleasing number feel confident in using contact, numerical variations,

solo/chorus and accumulation, resulting in work that becomes engaging to watch, ever changing and not predictable. The length of the group dance permits the use of many of these tools.

Overall form and structure

Many candidates produced work which had a clear beginning, middle and end and evidenced in their choreographies an understanding of form and how it gives the work unity. Unfortunately, less able candidates had often not been discouraged from presenting pieces which simply stopped in the middle of a music phrase, or where the accompaniment was manually faded. This prohibited consideration of a fully crafted ending and the opportunity of working within a simple structure.

Use of choreographic devices and principles

There is an over reliance on repetition, especially in the work of weaker candidates, but many choreographies had subtle and interesting transitions and included contrast. Those with a clearly identified climax and use of highlights gained a better mark in this criterion.

Choice of aural setting

It was clear that most candidates had considered a range of contrasting aural settings in their quest to find something appropriate. The best choices emerged where candidates had been encouraged to think about just what the chosen accompaniment was able to offer in supporting the dance idea (eg contrast and variety, suitable mood and atmosphere, appropriate structure, musicality, etc). There were some inspirational and unusual accompaniments chosen, but where candidates resorted to using more predictable popular music choices they lost valuable marks. Lots of candidates had clearly enjoyed cutting and editing their own music, but care should be taken not to use too many unrelated tracks so that the choreography becomes fractured.

Overall communication of meaning, mood or dance idea

Candidates who had a clear understanding of what they were trying to communicate fared well here and the page of supporting notes often helped the moderator to key into this. The choice of a title, whilst not essential, is a good way of confirming the intention, and where the choreography communicated this in a multi-layered and non-literal manner, candidates were able to achieve the highest marks.