



A-Level Dance

7237/X

Report on the examination

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Visits for examining this component

Examiners arrange visits directly with their allocated centres via the Examinations Officer. It is essential that the Dance teacher liaises with centre colleagues and their Examinations Officer to identify several convenient dates when space will be available before an assessment date is agreed with the AQA examiner. Examiners can only arrange their schedules in the spring term after examiner standardisation has taken place, meeting centres' preferences as far as possible. The examiner will not necessarily have any details regarding the number of students. 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. Examinations Officers must be included in all correspondence. Once confirmed, the examination date may only be changed in **exceptional** circumstances.

Once the date and number of entries are confirmed with the examiner, he/she draws up a timetable for the 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.

When completing the timetable, the examiner will request the assessment of all solo performance tasks to take place first, followed by performances in a quartet and then finally all group choreographic responses. Breaks will be factored in, as necessary. The timetable should be strictly adhered to and wherever possible the order of the students for all three elements of the assessment should remain the same. Quartets will only be viewed once by the examiner. If students are required to perform more than once with different partners, they will be assessed on the first viewing of the quartet they are performing in.

Recording of assessed work

All student work must be recorded and given to the examiner at the end of the examination. It is advised that centres retain a back-up copy of the work, to be stored with their Examinations office.

Section A – Choreography AO2: 40 marks

Every year, all questions are devised with a view to developing not only the choreographic skills needed to complete the tasks, but also 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 in relation to research, translation, experimentation, and development of ideas. At each of these stages appropriate tutoring and guidance should be given by the teacher re the clarity of connection to the task set and links to the assessment criteria. The three tasks, which change every year, are **not designed to be stimuli** but, as in the written examination, an opportunity to focus on, develop and present coherent ideas around a specific topic/theme/source. Examiners this year were still viewing responses which had not explored and developed ideas from **the chosen task**. Some students appeared to have decided on their own theme(s), seeming to completely ignore the source. This makes assessing the work extremely difficult.

Each question is designed to allow students to thoughtfully consider the: selection of movement components; manipulation and structuring of material; use of the aural setting (and physical setting where appropriate) and use of dancers – all in relation to both the craft of choreography and the specific task set. In some centres it was clear that tutoring had taken place in order to keep the students on task. The role of the **NEA advisers** (one is allocated to each centre) is to help guide and reassure tutors re the different tasks each year. They can be contacted via e-mail if there are any queries as to the content of the three tasks.

The length of the programme note for the choreography has a maximum word limit of 300 words. This should allow students the opportunity to explain their own individual interpretation and approach to the task, clarifying how they have translated their research and subsequent understanding of the chosen task and its focus into the final dance idea(s). It is therefore not necessary for students to describe the choreographed dance they are about to present or identify all choreographic or structuring devices used. Having a word limit encourages students to develop a succinct writing style and therefore should not be disregarded. **Overly long programme notes beyond the word limit can delay or even confuse the examiner.**

The importance of the choice and use of the ‘other constituent features’ continues to develop and improve in centres and it was once again this year pleasing to see students carefully consider aural setting, physical setting and dancers in relation to the chosen task and not as an afterthought to the creative process. Mood/atmosphere, geographical/historical context, structure, build-up of tension, narrative, direct correlation with the chosen task are all ways some students utilised their choices in relation to all three tasks. This is to be congratulated. The consideration and utilisation of **all** the constituent features also links to a student’s theoretical analysis of the complete choreography of professional works being studied.

All three questions were attempted this year with question 3 being the most popular. Popularity of individual questions varied in individual centres. Occasionally a formulaic approach was adopted by the whole centre, which at times limited creative opportunities for some students.

Points relating to the choreography for each question

Question 01

This task required an exploration of **both** themes and imagery inherent within the **whole** poem. Themes presented were wide-ranging, eg water, sea swimming, societal pressure, and the ensuing journey to a mindful rebirth. Exploration of imagery was related to either the theme(s) identified and used or was a direct correlation to specific words/phrases contained within the poem. The visual layout on the page and the structure of the poem also lent themselves to exploration and choreographic investigation.

When an in-depth analysis of the whole poem had taken place, the responses were very clearly and richly layered/textured, coherent, and well structured, revealing the ability to select and manipulate all the constituent features in an extremely focused, detailed, and efficient way.

At times, students decided to take one theme and use it as a stimulus, thus making it more challenging to assess in relation to the criteria and impeding full access to all the source was offering.

Question 02

This task allowed for a flexible approach to the exploration of a source. Fuji's artistic approach and process with links to culture and society, the development of the content of the exhibition and the visual final artistic outcome itself could all be accessed by the student. When detailed research had taken place and there had been a careful selection and coherent translation of ideas from this research, responses viewed became highly original, thoughtful, and visually and aurally stimulating.

The less successful responses appeared to lose sight of the task and seemed to become preoccupied/sidetracked with one small aspect of the source, therefore limiting their selection, manipulation, and structuring of movement material.

Question 03

This was by far the most popular of the three choreographic tasks and a wide range of responses were viewed in all three of the categories (history, nature, science). The most successful responses were those that did not deviate from the task, ie a very clear, detailed, and sophisticated consideration of a **cause and effect relationship** within a specific context.

Some responses became too preoccupied with conveying a narrative which meant the 'relationship' between a cause and its effect(s) was lost/hidden/difficult to discern. Other responses identified the cause in the programme note but then concentrated on the effects within the choreography rather than the relationship between the two. The coherent structure of responses was sometimes affected by the imbalance between the choice/consideration of a cause and its effect(s).

Some students completely deviated from the task/source and presented a response which focused on an emotional outpouring in relation to an incident linked tenuously to a historical context, thus making it more challenging to assess in relation to the criteria.

At times for all three choreographic tasks, a further consideration of transitional phrases to inform coherence, and the choice/use of choreographic devices to reinforce the choreographic intention, was needed.

Section B – Performance

Points relating to Question 04 AO1: 20 marks

As stated in previous years, in some centres outstanding work was presented and teachers are to be congratulated for their part in supporting students in preparation for this aspect of the examination. There seems to be a growing confidence in how to prepare for this task and it was pleasing to see the majority of the named practitioners/set work choreographers from

Component 2 chosen and presented in the examination. It was also exciting to see work which 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 was presented. This necessary preparation could be teacher-led in the studio, developed through theoretical investigation in the classroom based on Component 2 delivery/learning or project-based to suit individual students and their interests/strengths. All these approaches are appropriate, and it was clear to see when the development of the finished outcome had been clearly embedded within a two-year linear scheme of work.

Having the choice of practitioners across five areas of study seems to have provided a breadth of choice for both female and male students. It was also particularly pleasing to note that more centres and their students were not necessarily concentrating on the same practitioner style for the whole cohort but investigating practitioners and styles that they were interested in/would suit their own particular attributes. However, teacher input is vital to ensure all criteria are met and that students are not left to veer towards their own vocabulary/way of dancing when generating movement material or present a misinterpretation of the practitioner's style. The degree of success relates 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 student.

The assessment of this question requires a student 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. The levels of response assessment criteria refer to 'in relation to a specified practitioner' 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 physical/technical skills; spatial elements; dynamic elements and interpretative/performance skills.

In most centres, the appropriateness of the choreographic content of the solo allowed students the opportunity to display necessary skills and understanding linked to the assessment criteria. However, in some centres it was still apparent that some students had viewed this aspect of the examination as an opportunity to concentrate solely on the **choreographic style** of a practitioner alongside their own movement style rather than an exploration or analysis of the practitioner's **movement style**. This often led to work which had a similar theme to a chosen practitioner, but which contained little recognisable movement material and expressive qualities of that practitioner. This then became more difficult to assess.

The less effective performances were able to present relevant movement vocabulary, but with limited reflection of the practitioner's use of dynamics and space and relationship to the aural setting. Often focus and projection/expression were not fully consistent throughout or did not link to the chosen style. Sometimes the choice of aural accompaniment was inappropriate and did not enhance the performance. Occasionally some students presented work linked to a specific dance style/genre, for example tap, ballet, possibly due to familiarity with the style/genre; however, these presentations lacked understanding and exploration of the specified practitioner's actual movement style. At times it appeared students had selected three or four main phrases from a variety of repertoire and pieced them together with little understanding of their context and links to the practitioner's style.

For clarification, the selection of the practitioner from the compulsory area of study needs to relate to the movement style of the practitioner as demonstrated in his/her work for the company. For example, if the practitioner Siobhan Davies is chosen for the solo performance, the features of her movement style must reflect the features of her style as shown in the works created and performed by Rambert Dance company (formerly Ballet Rambert) 1966 – 2002 and not focus on stylistic features of her work with other companies.

A programme note is required for all students in the cohort in order for the examiner to attach it to the individual mark sheet and Candidate Record Form. This can be personalised for the individual student or be generic for the whole group. The compiling of the programme note can be an effective classroom task in preparation for the Component 2 written examination. It should be noted that the word limit for this performance task (150 words) is different to the group choreography tasks in section A.

Points relating to Question 05 AO1: 20 marks

The response to question 05 is an opportunity for students to be assessed in a different way to that of the solo performance. The emphasis of the assessment is linked to a genre (as defined in the specification). This can be as broad as 'contemporary,' 'jazz,' 'ballet' or have more of a focus on a specific style, for example 'Alston,' 'Fosse,' 'Romantic.' **If a specific style is chosen, it must be a different one to that performed for question 04.**

Sometimes when a specific style within a genre was chosen, students found it difficult to succeed, as they were faced with complex, ambitious technical/choreographic challenges which may not necessarily suit their own style and/or the development of a dance in which all of the dancers could fully contribute to the final overall performance.

The more successful performances were created to enhance the individual skills of the student(s) and were well-rehearsed and polished in performance. They fully addressed the assessment criteria of physical/technical skills; spatial awareness (including sensitivity to other dancers); timing and musicality; focus, projection, emphasis, and expression - all within the context of a quartet and in relation to style/genre.

In the less successful performances timing had been considered but there was little evidence of musicality, and the communication of the dance idea(s) was not fully clear in the presentation from the performer(s). In some responses there was no **consistency** in relation to focus, projection, emphasis and expression, and accuracy, precision, and control of the selected movement vocabulary.

This task does not need a theme but, in some cases, this really helped students to fully utilise their interpretative/performance skills. There is also no prescriptive list of choreographic devices (for example contact work) set which need to be included in the final performance. Sometimes ambitious/complex contact work interfered with the students' consistent demonstration of their interpretative/performance skills. As with the solo performance task, the development of this aspect of assessment can commence in year one and can be used by teachers to aid them in the demonstration of the process of choreography and to develop the students' genuine understanding of group choreographic skills.

A programme note is required for all students in the cohort in order for the examiner to attach it to the individual mark sheet and Candidate Record Form. This can be personalised for the individual response or be generic for the whole group (if the same dance is being performed). The compiling of the programme note can be an effective classroom task in preparation for the Component 2 written examination. It should be noted that the word limit for this performance task (150 words) is different to the group choreography tasks in section A. The programme note should focus on the analysis of the style/genre chosen and being presented. There is no need for lengthy explanations of the choreographic intention.

It is important that programme notes for **all three tasks** have the following information included at the top of the sheet:

- Centre number
- Candidate name
- Candidate number
- Question number
- Duration of dance
- Title of the aural setting
- Composer of the aural setting
- Titles are required for questions 1 – 3
- Names/number of dancers are required for questions 1 – 3.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.