



A-LEVEL DANCE

7237/X Performance and Choreography
Report on the Examination

7237/X
June 2023

Version: 1.0

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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. This order 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 have to perform more than once with different partners they will be assessed on the **first** viewing of the quartet.

Recording of assessed work

All student work must be recorded and given to examiners 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 can sometimes 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 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.

All three questions were attempted this year with question 2 being the most popular. Questions 1 and 3 had a similar number of student responses. 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 had a visual starting point. There was therefore scope for content (a detailed exploration of the visual aspects of the painting, for example form, colour, shape, line, space) and context (for example inspiration for the painting, when it was painted, where it was painted and potential links to musical styles). With this type of task, the balance of the ideas presented is key, and especially in the duration of the time allocated. When students decided to totally focus on the 'context' they tended to veer towards their own tenuous interpretations and not fully explore the source as a whole, seeming to completely ignore the composition of the painting. The more sophisticated responses either attempted to weave both content and context into the final presentation thus creating a clear and appropriate choreographic texture to the outcome or took one/two simple ideas from the painting and fully explored these through the comprehensive manipulation and structuring of the appropriate movement components selected.

The choice of aural setting was on the whole appropriate and imaginative; however, in some cases its use was limited and limiting – especially when attempting to refer to the musical style attached to both the era and title of the painting.

Question 02

This was the most popular of the three choreographic tasks and by its very nature had the most wide-ranging responses re choice and approach linked to the chosen idiom/proverb. However, a

number of responses did stray too far from the task in order to concentrate on an exploration of personal issues or by making tenuous links to an array of subject matter not necessarily linked to the chosen idiom/proverb.

The chosen idiom/proverb was explored in a variety of ways: literal, symbolic/metaphorical, narrative, thematic (either one way or a combination of ways). The more successful responses maintained clarity throughout in relation to how the presentation linked to the idiom/proverb(s) chosen regardless of approach. When choosing more than one approach, they were also able to weave, for example the literal imagery and the meaning/origins/cultural context in a thoughtful and considered way.

The less successful responses lost sight of the task and veered into a presentation exploring emotion and feelings in a very personal way. Sometimes these responses were linked to a tenuous narrative which detracted from the exploration of the actual idiom/proverb chosen.

When choosing more than one idiom/proverb, care was needed re the balance, structure and coherence of the response in relation to the number of chosen idiom/proverbs. Some students chose too many to explore effectively with sufficient depth within the 3 – 4 minutes timeframe.

Question 03

This task demanded clear, in-depth research of specific developments in technology in the 21st Century. When this occurred, the resulting responses evolved into extremely thoughtful, inventive and textured pieces of composition, revealing thorough understanding of the chosen technology and its development within this current century. Topics chosen ranged from developments in technology linked to the environment, societal behaviour and scientific discovery (for example, 3D printing, drones, VR, Bluetooth, robots, AI, smart phones, organ replacements, facial recognition).

In some of the more successful responses not only the technology was explored but its consequences and the repercussions it had on society, often in a thought-provoking and knowledgeable way.

Some students abstracted their research to such an extent that the outcomes became purely about technology and the emotions/feelings felt when using/experiencing it, seeing it as an opportunity to link their response to a real-life or personally experienced narrative. This approach invariably led to outcomes which veered from the exploration of the specific task to emotional storytelling with only limited links to the question.

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. 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 was presented.

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. Students have the opportunity to link theory and practice, and present work which demonstrates clear insight into the movement style of a specified practitioner. 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.

As was the case in previous series, it is exciting to note that examiners viewed a range of performances taken from all the areas of study. Having a list of named practitioners alongside the set work choreographers across five areas of study seems to have provided a breadth of choice for both female and male students - allowing the practical exploration of the theoretical content of the course to take place in a meaningful way. It was 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. It is also an opportunity for the teacher to reinforce and expand on theoretical discussion and investigation. 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. 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.

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. 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.

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.

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
- Student name
- Student 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.