



# A-level **Dance**

7237/X Performance and Choreography

Report on the Examination

7237  
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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. 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.

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 in relation to the exploration and translation of the composition of another art form. When the formal qualities of the chosen sculpture had evidently been analysed in detail (backed up by the programme note), these responses tended to be the most successful and exceptional work was presented in some centres. Taking some/all of the formal qualities as the starting point for the choreography informed both the selection, development and structuring of ideas. This was then often layered with themes re the context of the sculpture (for example, the artist’s process, the origins of the materials) and supplemented with a considered choice of aural and physical settings and the choice of number and use of the dancers.

When students decided to totally focus on their own emotive interpretation of the source, they seemed to completely ignore the composition and form of the sculpture, thus making the response more difficult to assess.

#### **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 an understanding of the concept of dichotomy. However, a number of responses did stray too far from the task in order to concentrate on an exploration of personal/emotive issues or by making tenuous links to an array of subject matter not necessarily linked to the concept of dichotomy at all.

When there was a clear and well-informed understanding of the concept, considered and interesting responses were viewed linked to for example literature, psychology, philosophy or even simply a direct transposition of the definition. These responses had also successfully considered how to structure the

researched ideas to present choreography which had its key focus as the exploration of the concept and not merely providing a juxtaposition of, for example, two opposites.

The less successful responses lost sight of the task and veered into a presentation with too much focus on presenting a narrative (from literature or original), which detracted from the exploration of the actual concept. Sometimes, for example, contrast/division/contradiction/opposition were not explored in any great depth in relation to the selection, manipulation and structuring of the movement material, relying heavily on costume to guide the examiner as to the choreographic intention linked to the task.

### **Question 03**

This task provided a flexible approach to the response, allowing students to explore the game of chess in a variety of ways ranging from strategy, tactics, playmaking, the pieces themselves, origins of the game and the visual aspect of the chess board and the rules of the game (for example, literal moves, who starts, who controls, who is playing).

The more sophisticated responses seemed to be able to weave and layer a number of themes into the response in an imaginative, balanced and coherent way. This then led to an appropriate structure and the choreographic intention was easy to absorb.

Some students became sidetracked with the theme of battle/competition or solely concentrated on the spatial elements rather than consider all three movement components and their manipulation equally throughout the response. This therefore did not allow them to explore the task in full or to fully utilise all of the constituent features.

## **Section B – Performance**

### **Points relating to Question 04 A01: 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. 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.

This year, more than in any other, it was exciting to view work which accessed the full range of practitioners linked to Component 1. 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 all 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.

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 needs 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
- 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.