



## GENERAL COMMENTS

This report addresses a series of issues that should be considered in preparation for the Dance performance examination. The examination is described on pages 37–38 of the revised *VCE Dance Study Design* and in the Performance Examination Specifications and Advice on the VCAA website <[www.vcaa.vic.edu.au](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au)>.

### Dress requirements

When presenting the Technique Solo, generally both female and male students were well groomed and wore plain form-fitting dancewear, such as a leotard, tights, unitard (with transparent skirt/shorts if appropriate) or jazz/dance pants, to ensure appropriate assessment of the body's alignment was possible. However, students need to ensure that all undergarments are neatly pinned or secured to avoid mishaps and that their hair is secured off their face so as not to impede the use of projection.

When presenting the Composition Solo, costumes and make-up which supported and clarified the expressive intention of the solo were used appropriately. However, students should be mindful of costumes and/or properties they have not rehearsed in as these may impede their ability to communicate the intent of the dance. It is highly recommended that all students rehearse in full costume with properties for both solos several times prior to the examination to avoid costume and/or property malfunction.

It is the student's task to choose appropriate footwear for the examination and they must also accept responsibility for their choice. The VCAA advised all teachers and students that the selected venues had a sprung floor with a tarquette surface. Care should be taken to choose a movement vocabulary which can be performed on the prescribed surface. It is advisable for students to familiarise themselves with performing on a tarquette surface as this may influence their selection. Appropriate dance footwear, such as toe thongs, bare feet, ballet shoes or jazz shoes, is recommended when performing the solos as part of safe dance practice.

### Music

It is expected that students will have their music cued and ready to play when indicated by the assessors so as not to delay the assessment process. Some students experienced technical difficulties with finding or starting their music, which caused delays in the process. To avoid this situation students should ensure that:

- any musical accompaniment is tested the night before the examination to avoid technical difficulties on the day of the performance or music not being recorded at all
- a backup copy of the music is brought along on the day of assessment to allow for any technical difficulties which may arise
- only the music required for both solos is recorded to avoid incorrect selections
- they check the *VCE Exams Navigator* and VCAA website for student information.

Students who use a music operator during the exam should refrain from any nonverbal interaction during their performance as loss of projection will impact the overall mark received in criterion 8 for both solos. It is recommended that music operators **face away** from the performer to avoid distraction.

### Time Limits

Some students seemed unaware of the prescribed time limits for each component of the practical examination. Failure to adhere to the minimum time limit may incur a marking penalty as the dance may not be developed enough to meet the assessment criteria. Students should be reminded that both the Technique Solo and the Composition Solo should be presented as a single uninterrupted performance of between two and a half and five minutes in duration.

If students perform either of their solos without music they must ensure that the duration of the performance is at least two and a half minutes. The dance is timed from the moment the student begins to move, not when the music starts.

The time prescription for both solos is also included in the Information to Students sent to schools in Term 3 with notice of the examination date, time and venue.

### Safe Dance

At times students attempted to include movement vocabulary which was beyond their physical capabilities or executed movements unsafely, such as falling heavily through the joints or landing from elevations with flat feet.



Safe dance principles must be understood and practised within the context of the individual dancer. Teachers can assist by monitoring the level of difficulty within the movements and advising students to include safe movements which challenge them but still remain within their capabilities. Knowledge and understanding of safe dance principles developed in the Dance Technique Area of Study, such as safe preparations and landings from elevated positions, use of spotting when turning, and sequential bending through the body when falling, should be applied in order to meet criteria 1–4 of the Technique Solo.

#### **Other issues**

Students should be advised to use their rehearsal time in the assessment space efficiently on the day of the examination. During this time, the student should consider how to orientate the dance in the space, the volume of the music and nuances of the floor surface. They should not perform the dance to full performance level during this time as this may contribute to a loss of stamina during the assessment.

If the performance is interrupted, for example, if the student forgets the dance or there is a costume or property mishap, the student should continue performing as soon as possible. The music will not be turned off unless the student clearly indicates to the assessors that he/she does not wish to continue with his/her performance.

## **UNIT 3 – TECHNIQUE SOLO**

### **General Comments**

The Technique Solo, based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 2 of Unit 3, is designed to assess students' ability to demonstrate technical/physical skills through a range of body actions, skill in the choreographic manipulation of the elements of movement and performance skills in solo performance.

#### **Expressive Intention**

It is important to note that this dance is based on an expressive intention. The choice of expressive intention and/or technique(s) used in the dance should allow the student to address each of the criteria at the highest level. There are no preferred expressive intentions and they may derive from many sources, including the choreographer's ideas, emotions, observations or exploration of movement itself.

#### **Choice of technique**

The student's selected movement vocabulary should be based on a 'personalised' movement selection and therefore does not need to reflect a particular style.

Various stylistic techniques were used in 2008 in order to fulfil the requirements of each criterion.

Students should be encouraged to explore possible movement vocabulary from a technical perspective in the Dance Technique Area of Study in order to meet the requirements of the criteria. For example, applied knowledge of alignment principles will promote a deeper understanding of how to maintain control over balances, falls, turns, elevations, and weight transferences.

Teachers can choose to develop a student's dance technique through one style of dance training, a mixture of various stylistic techniques or through a holistic approach.

**Criteria 1 to 4** require students to demonstrate control of technical/physical skills within a range of safely executed body actions.

High-scoring students presented a personalised movement vocabulary which had been clearly explored through a range of body actions to show a highly skilled application of various physical skills.

Low-scoring performances were characterised by a minimal exploration of movement vocabulary. Some students lost the potential to achieve full marks because they presented solos which relied too heavily on an exploration of locomotion, such as walking and/or running, and overused gestural movements. Movement phrases were also repeated a number of times, which impacted on the student's ability to fully explore a range of movement.

**Criteria 5 to 7** require students to demonstrate skill in the choreographic manipulation of each element of movement – time, space (body shape) and energy – to create expression throughout the solo.



Students who selected music with shifts in dynamics or understood how to create contrasts against the music were generally more successful at expressively demonstrating time variations to create expression. Lower scoring performances used even and predictable movement rhythm and duration, and were led by the dominant beats in the music.

Students should be mindful that the choice of movement vocabulary or style does not impede their ability to work through a variety of body shapes. For example, choosing to work technically within a funk style often favours the use of angular body shapes therefore students need to explore ways of transitioning through more curved upper and lower body shapes.

Generally the use of energy was handled with the least understanding. Students need to explore to a greater extent the various **qualities of movement** in order to show the variations in the force and flow.

**Criterion 8** requires students to demonstrate skill in projecting the whole body to communicate to the audience.

**Projection** refers to the use of whole body focus, including control in the use of transitions between movements, commitment and use of kinaesthetic awareness, which leads to a clear interpretation of the selected movement vocabulary and communication of performance skills to the audience. Use of 'eye line' is also considered in this criterion.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to develop their skills in projection during the rehearsal process and participate in actual performances to develop skills in performing. It appeared that some students were not well rehearsed and concentrated too heavily on remembering and/or executing the movement, lapsed into improvisation, or were distracted by their music operator. Students should be reminded that their performance should demonstrate use of whole body focus (including eye line) and control in transitions between movements.

## Specific Information

The criteria assessed a range of movement skills, the use of the elements of movement and performance skills. Each criterion is weighted equally and is marked on an eight-point scale (0–7) that assesses the extent to which the performance demonstrated the following capabilities.

### **Criterion 1: Control of body alignment and coordination of body parts within a range of body actions**

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled application of the principles of alignment to maintain control through a range of safely executed body actions. This involved maintaining appropriate muscle tone; safe and appropriate alignment of head, shoulder girdle, hip, knee and ankle joints; and complex coordination of body parts.

### **Criterion 2: Maintenance of stamina and control of muscular strength within a range of body actions**

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled application of stamina/endurance to maintain control through a range of safely executed body actions; and performed complex sequences of movements which showed a high level of muscular strength through a range of safely executed body actions. This involved the use of balanced positions; turns; falls and recoveries; elevated movements and landings; and very fast or very slow movements.

### **Criterion 3: Control in the use of transference of weight and balance within a range of body actions**

A high level performance demonstrated subtle adjustments of weight and transitions and maintained a highly skilled awareness of alignment principles and balance when transferring weight through a range of safely executed body actions including turns, falls and elevated movements.

### **Criterion 4: Control in the use of flexibility within a range of body actions**

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled range of motion in a range of joints and maintained consistent control of flexibility through a range of safely executed body actions, including turns, falls and elevated movements.

### **Criterion 5: Skill in the varied use of time**

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled manipulation in the use of time throughout the execution of phrases/sections of the dance to create expression. This involved the variation of duration, tempo, accent and rhythm.



**Criterion 6: Skill in the varied use of space (shape)**

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled manipulation in the use of shape throughout the execution of phrases/sections of the dance to create expression. This involved the use of a range of curved and angular movements in both the upper and lower parts of the body.

**Criterion 7: Skill in the varied use of energy**

A high level performance demonstrated a highly skilled manipulation in the use of energy. This involved exploring a range of movement qualities to show variations in the flow and force of the movement.

**Criterion 8: Skill in projection of the whole body to communicate to the audience**

A high level performance consistently maintained projection of the whole body throughout the dance, which led to a clear interpretation of the selected movement vocabulary and communication of performance skills to the audience.

## UNIT 4 – COMPOSITION SOLO

### General Comments

The Composition Solo, based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 2 of Unit 4, is designed to assess students' ability to demonstrate solo composition skills through the expressive use of spatial organisation and the development of a unified composition. A unified dance composition includes a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution.

**Choice of an appropriate expressive intention to generate movement vocabulary**

Students' choice of an expressive intention on which the Composition Solo is based can be influential in determining their score for this component of the examination. The expressive intention must provide stimulus for the movement vocabulary and spatial organisation to be developed, and enough scope to present a unified composition with a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution.

It is advised that the selection of the expressive intention should be derived from the student's personal experiences, or from an idea the student has some empathy with, or from an idea which can be researched. Sources of suitable stimuli include poetry, narratives or plays, myths, legends, paintings, current issues, historical events, technology, nature, etc.

Many students were let down by the selection of an inappropriate or unachievable intention. Not every idea translates well into movement therefore students need to spend time working through their ideas with their teacher, exploring what works and what does not work as they conceptualise how the expressive intention might translate into at least three different sections. For example, a work plan could be devised that maps out the expressive intention in terms of the beginning, development and resolution, and the transitions between these. Students could brainstorm the different types of movement and movement qualities which reflect the chosen intent of each section. When exploring movement through improvisation, students should refer back to their work plan and the meaning they want to communicate through their movement and movement quality choices before making their final selection(s). This is a crucial step as the selection of a poor idea may set the student up for a disappointing result.

The better compositions appeared to have spent time researching, crafting and refining their ideas. The movement vocabulary which resulted from this process had a personal stamp on it and related strongly to the expressive intention, rather than being derived solely from a technique base. Many dances did show some good initial movement ideas, however too many remained simplistic. Either the movement material was not developed or expanded through the use of choreographic devices, or the movement did not progress to a resolution and simply petered out.

**Statement of Expressive Intention**

The Composition Solo is assessed against the student's Statement of Expressive Intention.

The way students express their expressive intention in written form is crucial to the assessors' understanding of their solo. Students need to understand that they are setting out a formula of what they are going to do and that assessors will measure how they use the criteria against their written outline. Teachers need to build practise time into the course for students to draft and write their ideas succinctly. This was a weakness with many students, even the strong performers.

**Criteria 1 to 4** require students to demonstrate skill in the varied use of spatial organisation.



The *VCE Dance Study Design* defines spatial organisation as including the use of direction, level, eye and/or body focus and dimension. High-scoring students included a range of each of these aspects throughout the phrases/sections of their Unit 4 Composition Solo to communicate the expressive intention.

Students need to make a conscious choice about how direction, level, dimension and focus will further communicate their idea(s). Often spatial organisation was not used meaningfully or with purpose to reflect the written Statement of Expressive Intention.

Students should experiment with using properties such as masks, body bags, scarves and material so that they are able to use their chosen prop as an extension of their body and as an integral part of their body shape. This will enable them to create appropriate variations in eye and/or body focus to communicate the expressive intention.

It is important that students plan and develop their spatial organisation specifically to support their chosen expressive intention. An understanding of spatial organisation can initially be developed in a theoretical way when completing Outcome 1 of Unit 4.

**Criteria 5 to 7** require students to demonstrate skill in the varied arrangement of movement into thematically related phrases and sections to express the intention of the student in a unified composition.

Transitions between the sections were sometimes non-existent or poorly executed. This undermined the fluency of the dance and made it seem disjointed. Students need to understand the importance of using transitions between sections to develop a unified composition. The solo should not be presented as three distinctly different dances.

Some students used three different music segments as a method of forming. The choice of music should enhance the students' ability to find movement solutions that progress the expressive intention and create a unified composition. If students do combine music, they need to ensure there are appropriate transitions between the pieces and that a clear musical structure is formed.

The better compositions understood that the main task of constructing the solo was to devise and manipulate phrases into sections, and to demonstrate transitions between the sections to create a sense of unity relevant to the whole composition. They also took greater creative risks with a selection of movement vocabulary through the use of choreographic devices.

Low-scoring compositions presented movements which were often exercise-based and lacked artistry. For example, the solo often began with several phrases of gestural movement, and then lapsed into a series of movement sequences such as splits and shoulder stands, which clearly did not develop into a structure or relate to the student's chosen intention. Consideration to the overall pace of the work and the progression to and from highlights or climaxes within the structure would enable students to create a more interesting and unified composition.

Criterion 8 assesses the use of performance skills in communicating the expressive intention. Performance skills include the maintenance of appropriate levels of energy, the expressive communication of movement to create meaning and appropriate use of facial expression.

Some students lacked the performance skills necessary to effectively communicate the selected expressive intention, often due to the student selecting an expressive intention which was far too complex for their experience and/or dance skills. For example, students should not choose an intention based on something dark, evil or sad if they do not have the capacity to express it.

Other students spent valuable performance time using, adding or removing parts of their costume and/or properties such as hats, masks, coats, fake knives, etc. which interrupted the consistency of the performance skills communicated.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to develop their performance skills during the rehearsal process and be given the opportunity to perform in front of an audience as often as possible to improve their overall performance skills.



## Specific Information

The criteria assessed students' solo compositional skills through the expressive use of spatial organisation and the development of a unified composition. Each criterion was weighted equally and was marked on an eight-point scale (0–7) that assessed the extent to which the performance demonstrated the following capabilities.

### **Criterion 1: Skill in the varied use of direction to communicate the choreographer's expressive intention**

A high level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of the use of direction throughout the phrases/sections of the dance to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved manipulations of various directions, including circular, diagonal, forward, backward, sideways, upward and downward.

### **Criterion 2: Skill in the varied use of level to communicate the choreographer's expressive intention**

A high level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of the use of level throughout the phrases/sections of the dance to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved manipulations of various levels ranging from high to low.

### **Criterion 3: Skill in the varied use of eye/body focus to communicate the choreographer's expressive intention**

A high level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of the use of focus throughout the phrases/sections of the dance to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved manipulations of various head, eye and body focus.

### **Criterion 4: Skill in the varied use of dimension to communicate the choreographer's expressive intention**

A high level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of the use of dimension throughout the phrases/sections of the dance to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved manipulations of various sizes of movement shapes ranging from small to large.

### **Criterion 5: Skill in the selection of movement vocabulary and expressive arrangement of movement to form a unified composition with a clear beginning**

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in expressively selecting and arranging movement to form a clear beginning section in the dance work. This involved establishing movement material through linking movement into phrases, and using a range of choreographic devices such as manipulation of motif, rearrangement of movement, and manipulation involving repetition to effectively introduce and communicate the student's expressive intention.

### **Criterion 6: Skill in the selection of movement vocabulary and expressive arrangement of movement to form a unified composition with a clear development(s)**

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in expressively selecting and arranging movement to form a clear development section in the dance work. This involved developing the movement material through linking movement into phrases, using a range of choreographic devices to effectively contrast or compliment the movement material introduced in the beginning section, and communicate the student's expressive intention.

### **Criterion 7: Skill in the selection of movement vocabulary and expressive arrangement of movement to form a unified composition with a clear resolution**

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in expressively selecting and arranging movement to form a clear resolution section in the dance work. This involved developing the movement material through linking movement into phrases, using a range of choreographic devices to effectively resolve and unify the dance work in relation to the movement material used in the preceding sections, and communicate the student's expressive intention.

### **Criterion 8: Use of performance skills in communicating the choreographer's expressive intention**

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in maintaining performance skills throughout the dance (for example, appropriate levels of energy, expressive projection of movement, use of facial/whole body expression) which led to a clear interpretation of the selected movement vocabulary to communicate the student's expressive intention.