



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 *VCE Dance Study Design* and in the Performance Examination Specifications and Advice on the VCAA website <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au>.

Dress requirements

When presenting the Technique Solo not all students took care with their choice of clothing. It is essential that students wear appropriate dance clothing when presenting the Technique Solo to allow an accurate assessment of physical skills throughout the performance. Key points to consider include:

- the performer's body must be seen clearly by the assessors
- the body line should be clean and not distorted by baggy or overly tight/small garments
- the choice of costume must meet the demands of safe practice; for example, overly long trousers covering the feet do not allow the dancer to 'grip' the floor, restrictive hipster-style pants both prevent the legs from moving freely and can restrain hip flexion and extension to the point where the alignment of the body is poorly placed
- clothing worn for warm-up or general street wear is not considered appropriate for this performance
- undergarments should match the colour of the outerwear and be neatly pinned or secured to avoid unfortunate mishaps
- hair should be secured off the face to enhance the student's projection and use of eye line. All items of jewellery should be removed.

When presenting the Composition Solo, costumes and make-up which supported and clarified the expressive intention of the solo were used appropriately; however, at times students presented in costumes or with properties without thorough rehearsal and consequently impeded their ability to communicate the intent of the dance.

It is recommended that all students rehearse in full costume with properties if appropriate for both solos several times prior to the examination to avoid costume and/or property malfunction.

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. Socks are inappropriate footwear for the examination.

Music

Generally most students used iPods or MP3 players quite successfully; however, some students experienced technical difficulties. To avoid this students should ensure:

- any musical accompaniment is pre-tested the night before to avoid technical difficulties on the day of the performance or music not being recorded at all
- a backup copy of the music (on cassette) is brought along on the day of assessment to allow for any technical difficulties
- the iPod is fully charged
- the music is cut to the appropriate duration to avoid the music continuing after the dance has finished
- if students choose to use a music operator during the exam it is recommended that this person **faces away** from the performer to avoid distraction.

Time Limits

Students should be informed that each solo is timed from the moment the student begins to move, not when the music starts. Some students seemed unaware of the time limits prescribed for each component of the practical examination. Failure to adhere to the minimum time limit may incur a marking penalty as the dance may be too short to be developed and meet the assessment criteria.

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 executed unsafely such as landing from high level elevations onto their knees. Safe dance principles must be applied when performing all movement vocabulary. Teachers can assist by 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, the use of spotting when turning and sequential bending through the body when falling, should be applied in order to meet criterion 1–4 of the Technique Solo successfully.

Other issues

On the day of the examination students should use their rehearsal time in the assessment space efficiently. 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 student forgets either dance or there is a costume or property mishap, the student should be advised to 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

Generally the choice of expressive intention allowed the student to address each of the criteria at the highest level. There are no preferred expressive intentions and students may derive their intention from many sources, including their own choreographic 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 dance style.

Various stylistic techniques were used successfully in 2009 in order to fulfil the requirements of each criterion.

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 various body actions which created too much repetition and therefore impeded demonstration of a broad range of physical skills. 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/or gestural movements. Movement phrases were also repeated a number of times and this impacted on the student's ability to fully present a range of physical skills.

Students should be encouraged to think about the difference between each physical skill and how they can demonstrate competence within each skill. Students can use improvisation as a tool to challenge themselves and explore the full potential of various body actions.

Generally, body alignment was presented with the least competence. Teachers should work with students on the gradual building of core strength to alleviate problems of abdominal control and curvature of the spine. An awareness of plumb line and general alignment throughout dynamic movement should also be promoted.

Criteria 5 to 7 require students to demonstrate skill in the choreographic manipulation of each element of movement, time, space (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 generally were aware of manipulating fast and slow tempos; however, the use of rhythm was often even and predictable, and led by the dominant beats in the music.

Generally space (shape) was handled well, with a good exploration of angular and curved upper and lower body shapes.

The use of energy was handled with the least understanding. While generally the manipulation of free and bound flow was satisfactory, the use of strong and light force was less obvious. Sometimes this was related to a stylistic approach; however, it was often overlooked. Overall, students need to further explore the various **qualities of movement** in order to show more variation in the use of force and flow.

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

This criterion was often overlooked by students. It is important that sufficient time is allocated to developing performance skills and projection during the rehearsal process. It appeared that some students were too nervous to use eye line confidently and at times transitions were nonexistent between movement phrases and created a disjointed appearance to the overall performance. Students should be reminded that their performance should demonstrate use of whole body focus (including eye line) and control in transitions between movement phrases.

Specific Information

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. These students 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 these students 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, which is 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.

Choice of an appropriate expressive intention to generate movement vocabulary

Many students were let down by their selection of an inappropriate or unachievable expressive intention. Students need to spend time working through their ideas, exploring which ideas work/do not work as they visualise how the expressive intention might generate a movement vocabulary and spatial organisation into a unified composition with a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution.

Students who presented better compositions appeared to have spent time researching, crafting and refining their ideas. The movement vocabulary related strongly to the expressive intention rather than being derived solely from a technique base. Many dances showed some good initial movement ideas; however, too many remained simplistic and the movement material was not developed or expanded through the use of choreographic devices, or the movement did not progress to a resolution.

As advised in previous years, the selection of the expressive intention should be derived from the student's personal experiences, 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.

It should be the teacher's role to prepare and guide students prior to their final selection of an expressive intention. In order to do this the following suggestions/tasks may be useful and demonstrate the different forms this guidance and preparation can take:

- the teacher prepares a work plan as an exemplar for students
- the teacher asks students to collectively create a list of the different ideas that inspire them
- the teacher plays a piece of music and asks students to list/storyboard resulting ideas
- the teacher creates a box of stimuli – a conch shell, a myth, a picture, a box, an origami pack, a newspaper headline, etc.

Teachers may also prepare a series of questions to help students assess whether the selected expressive intention offers sufficient scope for development. For example:

- does the idea motivate you?
- does it offer enough variety of movement ideas?
- can you find appropriate accompaniment?
- what exactly do you want to communicate through the sections of your composition?
- have you researched your ideas?

Statement of Expressive Intention

Generally students provided clear and succinct information on the Statement of Expressive Intention. Students should be reminded that the Composition Solo is assessed against the Statement of Expressive Intention.

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

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 with purpose to reflect the written statement of expressive intention. A plan of the dance can be a useful development tool from which teachers and students can evaluate the appropriateness of the spatial organisation when communicating the intention. Further improvisation during the choreographic stage would also help students gain skill in this area.

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.



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.

As in past years, transitions between the sections were sometimes poorly executed or nonexistent. 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.

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 that was 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 gestures then progressed to 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. Other students simply repeated movements throughout the sections.

Consideration of 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.

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

Specific Information

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.