2021 VCE Dance performance external assessment report

General comments

In 2021, the Dance Solo performance examination comprised two components designed to allow students to demonstrate a range of technical and choreographic skills. Component 1 consisted of a skills-based solo and component 2 of a cohesive composition. The criteria for both solos reflected the VCE Dance Study Design *2019–2024*.

Students who scored highly prepared two solo works that reflected the mandated criteria and were well rehearsed. They presented clear movement vocabulary that enabled assessors to understand the intention.

Several students were underprepared or presented solos that were below the prescribed minimum time limit of 2.5 minutes. This affected the students’ ability to fully develop the work and meet the assessment criteria for both solos at the highest possible level.

Specific information

Unit 3 – Skills-based solo

In terms of intention, most students based their solo on an exploration of the criteria.

Criteria 1 to 4 required students to demonstrate control of all eight physical skills within a range of six movement categories.

Performances that scored highly presented a range of actions from the six movement categories to demonstrate outstanding control of all physical skills. Students integrated safe dance practice within their movement selections and executed a high level of body articulation, coordination and complex movements.

In performances that did not score well, students demonstrated less ability to control one or more of the movement categories, which limited the level of physical skill shown. Some students needed to maintain their alignment, especially through the spine (criterion 1); sustain stamina throughout the performance (criterion 2); understand their own physical capabilities in relation to the complexity of the chosen movements to ensure the control of all skills; apply safe dance technique; or avoid the inclusion of acrobatic movements that detracted from the level of technique being demonstrated.

Criteria 5 to 7 required students to demonstrate their skill in the manipulation of each element of movement – time, space (shape) and energy – throughout the phrases and sections of the solo.

Performances that scored highly were defined by a skilled arrangement of the movement phrases through the manipulation of time, shape and energy to structure a beginning, development and resolution. They personalised the movement vocabulary selections through the arrangement of phrases and sections to present an innovative interpretation.

In performances that did not score well, the dynamic range of the music often dictated the student’s selection of time and energy. In some cases, students were heavily influenced by the speed and rhythm of the music, which limited the range of time combinations presented. They also limited the range of energy qualities applied through the movement, which impacted on the resulting force and flow. Generally, the use of shape (criterion 6) was explored to a greater extent than time (criterion 5) or energy (criterion 7).

Criterion 8 required students to demonstrate skill in the projection of the whole body to demonstrate artistry and communicate to the audience.

Performances that scored highly sustained the projection of the whole body throughout the dance. They performed fluid transitions between phrases and sections, and used their eye-line and facial expression effectively to communicate an artistic and expressive performance to an audience.

Performances that did not score well did not consistently apply their performance skills, with one or more parts of the dance being executed with less artistry and/or kinaesthetic awareness.

Unit 4 – Cohesive composition solo

Statement of intention

Students were asked to record the intention communicated throughout the different sections of the dance, identify the formal structure, and briefly comment on the main choreographic devices or motif used to structure the solo. The statement of intention is available as a VASS download.

As the solo is assessed against the statement of intention, students needed to write a clear overview of the purpose of their performance so assessors could see it ‘realised’ throughout the performance.

It is essential that students develop an appropriate and achievable intention and organise the work into a formal structure relevant to the concept. Some students selected intentions that were too complex to be shown within the time frame. Further consideration needed to be given to the selection of an intention that could be realised within the prescribed 2.5–5 minutes.

Students should be reminded to include a brief comment about how selected choreographic device(s) were used to structure and progress the intention. This information is useful to assess the degree to which students integrate and develop various devices throughout the work (criterion 3). This section of the statement must be completed.

Criteria 1 to 3 required students to select and arrange movement vocabulary to create an appropriate formal structure and demonstrate skill in the manipulation of various choreographic devices to help structure the sections and communicate the intention.

Performances that scored highly selected appropriate movement vocabulary to reflect their stated intention and arranged it into clear sections, using choreographic devices effectively to reflect the stated formal structure.

In performances that did not score well, students did not present an intention that matched their movement selections and/or arrangement. Many students relied too heavily on the use of technical movements and/or the use of literal and gestural movements to communicate their intention and didn’t understand the requirement to create clear sections or a formal structure (criterion 2). Some students created a coherent first section but neglected to develop the movement vocabulary to progress the intention and reflect the stated formal structure. Others did not make clear the integration and arrangement of the choreographic devices through the movement vocabulary and/or the sections. The devices needed to be integrated into each section and/or across the different sections to help effectively structure the movement vocabulary and communicate the intention.

Criteria 4 to 7 required students to demonstrate skill in the manipulation of spatial organisation (level, direction, eye/body focus and dimension) to communicate the intention.

Performances that scored highly arranged the movement vocabulary by using all the elements of spatial organisation to clearly construct the sections and communicate the intention.

In performances that did not score well, the selections by students across these four criteria were not purposeful and the arrangement did not consistently create clear sections and/or support the intention. Generally, students demonstrated level and eye/body focus in more relevant ways in relation to both the formal structure and stated intention. However, further attention was needed when arranging direction or the line of travel and personal dimension or size of the body shapes.

Criterion 8 required students to demonstrate skill in the use of performance practices and artistry to communicate the intention to the audience.

Performances that scored highly successfully projected their ideas. There was purpose and commitment in the communication of the intention, and students delivered an artistic interpretation of their ideas.

In performances that did not score well, students were often under-rehearsed and not fully prepared for the assessment. Students are encouraged to prepare for the solo with sufficient time to rehearse and refine their performance skills.