



## GENERAL COMMENTS

The VCE VET Dance performance examination assesses students' technical ability and interpretive skills in performance. Students perform two solo dances, of different styles, learnt from the dance repertoire of a choreographer or teacher. Each solo should be presented as a single, live, uninterrupted performance and be between two and five minutes in duration. The dances selected should allow students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge developed in the following units of competency from the Certificate II in Dance.

- VBQU068 Refine basic dance techniques
- VBQU069 Apply basic dance techniques for performances

Further information regarding the current examination specifications is available on the VCAA website on the VCE VET Dance examination page.

While students can select from a wide range of styles, most students this year chose contemporary, various genres of commercial dance, tap and ballet.

The solos presented were generally appropriate in terms of the selection of movement vocabulary and skill level. The movement vocabulary was usually stylistically consistent with the stated dance styles. However, in some instances, students stated particular styles for their performances and then presented a dance that used a movement vocabulary consistent with another dance style. Some students' stated styles were not reflected in the choice of movement vocabulary, dynamic qualities or footwear. In other instances the two solos presented were very similar in their use of dynamic qualities and movement vocabulary, despite the fact that they were assigned to different styles.

There continues to be some stylistic confusion about neoclassical as a genre of contemporary dance. Although there may be some overlap in the movement vocabulary, the range of dynamic qualities and upright body posture associated with neoclassical solos is not consistent with the universally accepted perceptions of contemporary dance's fluid use of the torso, transferences of weight and the use of a wide range of dynamic qualities including, but not limited to, swinging, suspending, sustaining, percussive and collapsing actions.

Students are required to study two dance styles from a prescribed list of styles in VCE VET Dance. This provides students with the opportunity to enhance their employability prospects as it is widely understood within the dance industry that most professional dancers in Australia need to be proficient in more than one dance style to gain sustainable employment. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to avoid the use of 'generic movement vocabulary' and to select solos that are diverse in their use of dynamic qualities. Some overlapping of techniques and the use of some dynamic qualities in some styles may occur, but to maintain the integrity of the study, teachers are encouraged to select solos that are demonstratively different in these aspects.

Teachers generally selected solos with movement vocabulary that was style-specific and appropriate to the students' level of technical expertise. There were, however, examples of students executing movements that were beyond their technical capacity and the performance of these movements was quite unsafe. Examples included, but were not limited to, jumping and landing heavily on the knees, unsupported backbends, turning jumps (both standing and travelling) and acrobatic actions such as 'walkovers'. If including acrobatic movements, teachers should drill students on maintaining body alignment and engaging core stability, safe landings and integrating these movements into the choreography and flow of the dance. Similarly, a series of *fouettes* near the end of a solo can be too challenging for some students and the execution becomes untidy or unsafe.

Some solos did not meet the two-minute minimum time requirement. Teachers should ensure that the solos selected for assessment meet the minimum time. It is not appropriate to select a solo that is less than the required minimum time and extend it with a slow walking entrance (or promenade), posing or an extended bow or reverence. This approach affects the student's ability to demonstrate a range of technical skills and score highly. It is strongly recommended that the repertoire selected for each solo be technically challenging for the student, yet within their technical expertise. All the movement vocabulary selected in both solos should be able to be executed safely by the student.

In terms of the structure of the solos selected, some solos did not have defined endings and often assessors were unsure if a dance had reached its conclusion. Similarly, teachers are reminded that each solo should be presented as an uninterrupted performance and stopping to wait for a change of music and or change of tempo is not appropriate. This was most evident in hip-hop solos that fell within the style of commercial dance. However, the majority of solos were better edited, with less time between tracks, enabling students to better sustain their performance quality.



Generally, students presented for the examination wearing appropriate attire. Teachers should encourage students to rehearse in the clothing and footwear they intend to wear in the examination to ensure they feel comfortable in their clothing and secure in their footwear. Ballet shoes should be worn if presenting a classical ballet solo; jazz shoes are not considered appropriate. Consideration should also be given to the hairstyle selected so as it does not obscure the face or distract the dancer from the performance.

It should be noted that iPod shuffles are not compatible with the sound system currently available. Notebook computers and laptops are also not suitable for playing music in the examination. A small stereo playback unit with 3.5 mm mini-jack input lead will be supplied at examination centres by the VCAA for students using devices such as MP3 players (for connection to headphone output). CDs will not be permitted. It is important that a good-quality sound recording is prepared that is sufficiently clear and audible for both assessors and students. It is recommended that students allow sufficient 'lead-in' time prior to the beginning of the recorded music. Students may also prepare an audio cassette of their recorded music/soundscapes as backup. It is not possible for students to perform to live accompaniment.

## **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

### **Interpretation of Criteria**

For the purpose of the VCE VET Dance performance examination, skill encompasses: the level of ability that a student demonstrates in all criteria, the use of a range of skills in each criterion and the degree of difficulty involved in meeting each criterion. This is the means used to distinguish between levels of performance in the demonstration of various criteria.

Both solos are assessed using the same set of criteria. The published assessment criteria are designed to assess performance skills and a range of technical dance skills specific and consistent with the stated dance styles. Each criterion is weighted equally and is marked on an eight-point scale (0–7). The first seven criteria address students' technique, while the subsequent three criteria address interpretation.

### **Criterion 1: Skill in the expressive use of movement dynamics**

Most students demonstrated a range of movement dynamics appropriate for their selected dance styles. A student performing a contemporary solo that demonstrated a range of dynamic qualities such as, but not limited to, swings, suspends, sustained actions, percussive movements and collapsing would have the potential to score well. A student performing a commercial solo using the movement vocabulary of hip-hop would not score well if the solo contained only movements that used percussive movement dynamics with little variation in the application of force and flow.

### **Criterion 2: Skill in using correct posture and body alignment**

Students were generally able to apply correct posture and body alignment in the execution of their solos. Teachers should encourage students to develop their core strength, engage the abdominal muscles and to open their shoulder girdle. In some instances, students attempted to execute movement vocabulary that was beyond their current skill level and the correct posture and body alignment was not maintained. Some students were obviously affected by nerves; this was evident in tension in the upper body and restricted breathing, which affected their ability to maintain correct posture and body alignment. To address this, teachers may consider reinforcing breathing techniques with students.

### **Criterion 3: Skill in isolating and coordinating the upper and lower body**

Most students were able to isolate and coordinate their upper and lower body parts in a unified and style-specific manner. Continued systematic and regular technique classes in the selected styles will assist students in developing their skill in this criterion. It is suggested that students begin to learn the dances early in the year to allow them time to develop finesse in the execution of their solos.

### **Criterion 4: Skill in the dance principle of balance**

Most students demonstrated and maintained balance within a range of style-specific movement sequences. Students who securely displayed complex sustained balances using a range of body parts as the balance points scored higher than students who executed simple balances on one or two balance points. Encouraging students to engage their core abdominal muscles and develop awareness of their centre of gravity and the manner in which it shifts when moving may assist in their execution of balances.

### **Criterion 5: Skill in the dance principle of flexibility**

The demonstration of flexibility within a range body parts in an integrated manner was generally well done. Teachers should, however, ensure that students are executing movements that adhere to established safe dance practices and are within their anatomical capacity. Flexibility should be shown in a style-specific manner in a range of body parts and not



limited to actions such as leg mounts and splits.

**Criterion 6: Skill in the dance principle of transference of weight and control**

Students generally demonstrated and maintained control in an integrated manner and were able to effectively and safely transfer their weight. Encouraging students to engage their core abdominal muscles and develop awareness of their centre of gravity and the manner in which it shifts when moving may assist in the development of control and transference of weight. Students who did not score well on this criterion often attempted movements that were beyond their technical capacity. Significant consideration should be given to the safe execution of complex transferences of weight in contemporary solos.

**Criterion 7: Skill in the dance principle of stamina**

Generally, students were able to maintain their stamina throughout their performances. However, nerves did affect some students; their breathing was restricted and this affected their ability to maintain their stamina through their solos. Teachers can assist students to develop their stamina by ensuring sufficient rehearsal and performance of their solos under examination conditions in order to build up stamina, including extended sequences in their technique classes to build up cardiovascular capacity. Students who chose solos that were excessively long in duration or continually fast in tempo struggled to maintain their stamina throughout the performance.

**Criterion 8: Skill in the use of individual artistic quality through interpretation and expression**

This criterion requires students to demonstrate a sustained, individual, stylistically appropriate expressive quality in their interpretation. Providing students with sufficient rehearsal time to ensure that they are very secure in the knowledge of their solos and the technical execution will enable them to focus on their individual expressive quality and sensitive interpretation rather than just the technical execution of the solos.

**Criterion 9: Skill in the use of spatial arrangements**

Students generally performed well on this criterion. Students who scored highly in this area skilfully executed a range of spatial arrangements including, but not limited to, diagonal, forward, backward, circular and sideward spatial arrangements using a range of technically complex floor and aerial pathways. There were some instances where students danced quite close to the assessors or danced in just one central area. Teachers should ensure that the dances selected use a range of style-specific floor and aerial pathways. Mapping out the studio floor to the measurements of the performance examination specifications space, which is a non-slip surface of approximately 9 × 14 metres, could assist in ensuring that floor and aerial pathways are evident in the choreography and the student's execution.

**Criterion 10: Skill in the interpretation of music and rhythm**

Most students displayed musical sensitivity and awareness of the expressive relationship between their dances and the accompanying music. Some students did have difficulty in keeping up with music that was consistently allegro or presto in tempo and this may have affected their achievement in other criteria (such as 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8). Accompanying music that was lento in tempo throughout was also challenging for the less skilful students. The most common rhythmic patterns used were 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4, and these were generally handled well.