



GENERAL COMMENTS

This report addresses issues that students should consider when preparing 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 on the Dance study page.

Dress requirements

Technique solo

Students should have worn appropriate dance clothing when presenting this solo to allow an accurate assessment of their physical skills throughout the performance. As in previous years, students generally presented well; however, many students who performed with their hair out didn't allow their face to be seen at all times and this affected the criterion relating to projection (criterion 8: skill in communication of the whole body to communicate to the audience).

Teachers and students are advised to use the following list when considering the choice of costume.

- Assessors must be able to see the performer's body clearly.
- The body line should be clean and not distorted by baggy, loose or overly tight/small garments that display the dancer's undergarments.
- 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, and restrictive hipster-style pants 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.
- Kneepads may be worn if appropriate and part of safe dance practice (ensure they do not interfere with the dancer's alignment).
- Undergarments should be neatly pinned or secured to avoid mishaps.
- Hair should be secured off the face to enhance the student's projection and use of eye line – use sufficient hairspray and pins to hold the hair in place throughout the whole performance.
- Appropriate footwear must be worn according to the selection of movement vocabulary as part of safe dance practice (socks are an inappropriate choice and students will be asked to remove them).
- Jewellery should be removed, especially long earrings, to avoid mishaps.

Composition solo

Generally, students selected costumes and make-up that supported the expressive intention of the composition solo appropriately; however, at times students used costumes or properties that had not been integrated into their rehearsal. Consequently, this caused problems when executing the movement vocabulary and impeded their ability to communicate the intention of the dance.

If incorporating properties into the performance it is recommended that students practise sufficiently with the selected props prior to the examination to avoid any malfunctions and to ensure smooth transitions between the sections.

Music

The majority of students used iPods or MP3 players successfully; however, to make the assessment process run smoothly students needed to ensure their music was stored in separate folders clearly labelled 'Technique solo' or 'Composition solo', especially if an assessor was to operate the music.

Some students experienced technical difficulties relating to the use of music playback equipment. To avoid this, students needed to ensure:

- any musical accompaniment was tested on the equipment that was to be used in 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 (on cassette) is brought along on the day of assessment to allow for any technical difficulties
- if using cassettes, that the tape was at the correct starting point before entering the examination room
- if using an iPod, that it was fully charged
- if using an iPhone, that was switched to 'in flight' mode as any interruptions were the student's responsibility
- the music was cut to the appropriate duration to avoid the music continuing after the dance was finished.



If students chose to use a music operator during the examination, this person was required to face away from the performer to avoid distracting the performer or the assessors.

Time limits

Each solo was timed from the moment the student began to move, not when the music started. Some students seemed unaware of the time limits prescribed for each component of the practical examination. Students whose solos were of a shorter duration than the minimum time limit may have incurred a marking penalty. Other students who performed shorter works often failed to achieve high scores as the dance may not have been fully developed and did not meet the assessment criteria at the highest level.

If students performed either of their solos without music, they needed to ensure that the duration of the performance was at least two and a half minutes.

The time prescription for both solos is detailed in the examination specifications and included in the information for students sent to schools in Term 3, with notice of the examination date, time and venue.

Safe dance

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 criteria 1–4 of the Technique solo successfully.

At times, students attempted to include movement vocabulary that was beyond their physical capabilities or they executed movements unsafely. Teachers can assist by advising students to include safe movements that challenge them but that remain within their capabilities.

As in previous years, some students attempted complex and difficult ways of experimenting with the body action of falling or transitioning in and out of the floor. Once again, it is important to emphasise that the movement should not be performed by falling directly onto the knee joint, and students needed to engage their core muscles to avoid unsafe, uncontrolled falls. Where kneepads were worn as part of safe dance practice, students still had to consider the injury risk when executing particular movement vocabulary. Safe dance principles must be applied even if wearing kneepads when performing *all* movement vocabulary.

Other issues

On the day of the examination, students needed to arrive at the examination centre with sufficient time to complete administrative checks, prepare their equipment and complete an adequate warm up. Students should also have ensured they were organised with the correct equipment and paperwork before approaching the assessment area so as not to delay the process.

When in the assessment room, students should have used their rehearsal time efficiently. Students needed to consider the spatial orientation of the dance, the volume of the music and the nuances of the floor surface. They should not have performed the dance ‘flat out’ during this time, as they may not have had enough stamina left to then perform at their highest standard in the assessment.

Each performance needed to be presented as a single uninterrupted performance. If the student either forgot the dance or experienced a costume or property mishap, the student should have continued performing as soon as possible. The music was not to be turned off unless the student clearly indicated to the assessors that he or she did not wish to continue with the performance.

Unit 3 – Technique solo

The technique solo is based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 2 of Unit 3 and is designed to assess students’ ability to demonstrate technical and 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

The choice of expressive intention should have allowed the students to address each of the criteria equally. There were no preferred expressive intentions and students may have derived their intention from many sources, including their own choreographic ideas, emotions, observations or exploration of movement itself. Many students chose to base their expressive intention on aspects of the assessment criteria.



Choice of dance technique

The student needed to base their selected movement vocabulary on a 'personalised' movement selection and therefore they did not need to reflect a particular dance style. However, where a particular style or combination of styles was selected, the student should have been aware of the suitability of their choice to manipulate the time, space (shapes) and energy of the movement vocabulary in order to fulfil the requirements of the criteria.

For example, in this year's exam students used the dance styles of tap, ballroom, belly dancing and hip-hop, among others. Where students approached the solo using a specific style they needed to include:

- travelling or patterns of locomotion using a variety of pathways and different combinations
- a range of different body actions such as falling and transitions into the floor or air and/or turning in various ways on different levels.

Criteria 1 to 4 required students to demonstrate their control of technical and physical skills within a range of safely executed body actions.

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

Low-scoring performances generally lacked a range of body actions and were based on the repetition of similar technical and physical skills. Some students lost the potential to achieve full marks because they presented solos that 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 affected the student's ability to present a range of physical skills fully.

Students should be encouraged to think about the difference between each physical skill and how they can demonstrate competence within each skill. To achieve this, students should have included a range within each different action, for example, a range of different elevations, in order to realise the full potential of various technical and physical skills.

Generally, the students' strength and stamina needed some improvement. Teachers should advise students to work at conditioning their body right up until the day of the exam so they can overcome limitations in these areas.

Strength can be described as the capacity to exert a muscle contraction against a force, such as elevating from the floor. Students could have improved their strength by graduated training: increasing the number of repetitions and the amount of resistance against certain muscles. Stamina can be described as the ability of the body to withstand fatigue. Students could have improved their stamina by working on both muscular and cardiovascular endurance. Teachers should work to increase the length of time, the frequency and the degree of difficulty of aerobic activity included in students' technique classes.

Systematic rehearsal of the work under performance conditions in the months leading up to the examination could also assist in developing these skills.

Criteria 5 to 7 required 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 generally attempted more variations of time, space (shape) and energy in this year's performance exam. Students who selected music with shifts in dynamics or understood how to create contrasts against the music were generally more successful at expressively manipulating time through the phrasing to create expression. Lower-scoring performances usually manipulated fast and slow tempos; however, the use of rhythm was often predictable, dictated by the dominant beats in the music. Students should be encouraged to engage in further improvisational tasks to develop their understanding of time variations.

Students should be mindful that the choice of movement vocabulary does not restrict their manipulations of body shapes. Attention should be paid to the inclusion of both curved and angular upper and lower body shapes throughout the phrasing.

In terms of energy manipulations, the majority of students showed competency in the basic combinations of flow and force; however, the more sophisticated combinations were less obvious. Experimenting with various contrasting qualities of movement would allow students to improve in this area.



Criterion 8 required students to demonstrate skill in projecting the whole body to communicate to the audience. Students often overlooked this criterion. It appeared that some students were too nervous to use eye line confidently and, at times, transitions were lacking between movement phrases, creating a disjointed appearance to the overall performance and lowering the score for this criterion. Students should have remembered that their performance needed to demonstrate use of whole-body focus (including eye line) and control in transitions between movement phrases.

It was important that students allocated sufficient time to developing performance skills and projection during the rehearsal process. Also performing the solo in a variety of settings prior to the examination could have assisted in developing confidence in this area.

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: 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 highly skilled application of endurance to maintain control through a range of safely executed body actions, and displayed complex sequences of movements that showed a high level of muscular strength. 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 number 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 highly skilled manipulation of time to create expression throughout the execution of phrases or sections of the dance. 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 highly skilled manipulation of shape to create expression throughout the execution of phrases or sections of the dance. This involved the dancer using a range of curved and angular movements in both the upper and lower body.

Criterion 7: Skill in the varied use of energy

A high-level performance demonstrated highly skilled manipulation of the dancer's 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, assessed 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

The choice of expressive intention should have facilitated an appropriate selection of spatial organisation and movement vocabulary to reflect the criteria. Students who scored very highly appeared to have spent time researching and refining their ideas.

Lower scoring intentions either did not have the scope to be developed and/or were not suitable to be choreographed as a three-part structure. If the student was not clear about how the intention of the dance would unfold through the sections and resulting movement vocabulary, it was very difficult for the assessors to follow the work clearly.

As in past years, the selection of an expressive intention should be derived from the student's personal experiences, from an idea the student has some empathy with or from an idea that can be researched. Sources of suitable stimuli may include poetry, narratives or plays, myths, legends, paintings, current issues, historical events, technology and nature.

It is advised that teachers create a variety of stimuli or starting points for students to ensure greater success when developing their ideas. It may be useful to 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?
- can you describe key ideas from your research in 10 words or through a visual image?

When developing the solo, tools such as plans, mind maps and storyboards may have been useful for guiding the student in refining and evaluating the progress of the work, and in checking the suitability of the intention.

Statement of Expressive Intention

At times, students presented Statements of Expressive Intention that were too wordy or complex. Teachers should remind students to write and refine these statements over time, so the manipulations of spatial organisation and movement choices reflect the written statement.

Students should avoid writing their Statement of Expressive Intention in the pre-performance preparation time as these often did not contain enough information or were too scant to be relevant, or did not reflect the movement content of the solo.

Students should be reminded that the composition solo is assessed against the Statement of Expressive Intention.

Criteria 1 to 4 required students to demonstrate skill in the varied use of spatial organisation. In high-scoring solos, students seemed to understand the expressive nature of spatial organisation. Low-scoring solos did not use spatial organisation to reflect the written statement of expressive intention and/or the combinations were too simplistic. Students needed to make conscious decisions about how direction, level, dimension and head/eye/body focus would appropriately communicate their idea(s) in the planning stages of their solo. Further exploration of how each of the elements of spatial organisation could have been combined to assist in expressing the intention could also have been useful. The implementation of work plans and improvisation in the choreographic stage would also have helped students gain skill in this area.

Criteria 5 to 7 required 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.

Students who created high-scoring 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. The selection of movement vocabulary related strongly to the selected expressive intention.

Students with low-scoring compositions generally chose simplistic movement combinations that were based on a dance/drama or literal movement response, and the structure lacked reference to a unified composition.

If using mime or gesture, students should have considered incorporating a more varied movement vocabulary throughout the phrases/sections to accompany the gesture and communicate the expressive intention more skilfully. Teachers may offer general guidance as to the suitability of the movement material used by the student.



The communication of the expressive intention was not thought about in terms of an arrangement, using the model of three sections with transitions in between. Students are advised that the movement material they set up in the beginning section should be used in some way to develop further manipulation(s) of the phrasing in order to build on, contrast and establish a thematic relationship between each section and create a unified composition.

As in previous years, when using properties, students must be careful that they do not use the object to replace the communication of their intention through an appropriate movement vocabulary. For example, if a student uses a property to communicate a particular expressive intention, they must be careful not to spend an entire section or sections wielding the property in various configurations and forget to include appropriate movement vocabulary to communicate their idea. Teachers should encourage students to integrate any properties into the movement choices when rehearsing the solo.

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

Generally, students' performance skills were expressive and allowed them to communicate the expressive intention effectively.

It is important that students allocated sufficient time to rehearse their solo. They need opportunities to perform in front of an audience as often as possible to help them improve their overall performance skills and communication of their selected intention.

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 direction throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively. 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 levels throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively.

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 focus throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively. This involved variations of 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 dimension throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively. 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 complement the movement material introduced in the beginning section, and communicating the student's expressive intention.

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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 communicating 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.