



GENERAL COMMENTS

This report addresses a series of issues that should be considered in preparation for the Dance performance examination. Students and teachers should note that a revised Dance study design will be implemented in 2007. The requirements for the examination are unchanged; however, the criteria for assessment have been changed. The examination is described on pages 37–38 of the revised *Dance VCE Study Design* and in the Performance Examination Specifications and Advice on the VCAA website: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au.

Dress requirements

Students need to ensure they wear appropriate attire for both the Unit 3 (Technique) and Unit 4 (Composition) components of the examination.

When presenting the technique solo students should wear plain form-fitting dancewear, that is a leotard, tights or unitard (with transparent skirt or shorts if appropriate) to ensure appropriate assessment of the body's alignment. Jazz pants which are overly long and extend under the foot, other loose-fitting leg wear and long, non-transparent skirts are not suitable due to the risk of injury.

When presenting the Composition Solo, costumes and make-up which reflect and support the expressive intention of the Composition Solo are appropriate; however, students should be mindful of wearing long skirts or costumes they haven't rehearsed in as these may impede the overall performance.

Students are advised not to wear inappropriate jewellery during the performances as these may catch in costumes or fall off and distract the performer.

It is the student's task to choose appropriate footwear for the examination; therefore, they must also accept responsibility for their choice. Several students chose footwear they had not previously rehearsed in and as a result experienced difficulties during the examination. Bare feet or appropriate dance footwear are recommended when performing the solos as part of safe dance practice. Socks are not considered appropriate. It is also advisable for students to familiarise themselves with performing on a tarquette surface as this may influence their selection.

Music preparation

All recorded music accompanying the student's performance should be provided on cassette tape rather than CD; this will prevent problems such as the music jumping while the student is performing or music not playing at all (which may happen with burnt CDs). If students elect to combine different pieces of music they need to ensure that there are appropriate transitions between the pieces. Any cuts in the music need to be clean when combining pieces, as extraneous noise can affect the quality of the overall performance. If there are silences in the music these need to be recorded on the tape to ensure the duration of the dance is appropriate.

It is important that good quality recordings are used to accompany performances, allowing both the students and assessors to hear without distortion. It is recommended that students have their music recorded at the beginning of the tape, which should have sufficient 'lead in' time, as well as have a spare tape that has a second recording of the music. There should be no other music on the tape. It is important that students have their music cued when assessors enter the assessment room to avoid unnecessary waiting.

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.

This information is included in the Information to Students sent to schools in Term 3 with notice of the examination date, time and venue.

Safe Dance

The knowledge and understanding of safe dance principles that students developed in the Dance technique Area of Study should be applied in all areas of dance-making, including performance work.

Other issues

Students should perform both dances at a distance which will enable the assessors to see all aspects of the student's dance movements throughout the performance. Students should be advised to use their practice time in the assessment



space effectively. 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.

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

Any props that are used should be easily positioned in the performance area within the allocated practice time. The use of props is not advised for Unit 3 Technique Solo as these may impede the student's ability to meet the criteria.

Teachers must familiarise themselves with the dance terminology related to this study when interpreting the assessment criteria. It is essential that students are also familiar with these terms and apply them throughout their practical work. Note that the revised Dance study design includes a glossary.

UNIT 3 – TECHNIQUE SOLO

General Comments

The Technique Solo, based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 3 of Unit 3, is designed to assess students' ability to demonstrate a range of physical skills through a range of body actions, a varied use of the elements of movement, and performance skills in solo performance. It is important to note that this dance must be 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. The Technique Solo should be presented as a single uninterrupted performance of between two and a half minutes and five minutes in duration.

Students who presented accomplished performances demonstrated a high standard of technique, displaying excellent control, and safe use of a range of physical skills through various body actions. These students also demonstrated an excellent understanding of the elements of movement through inventive manipulation of time, space and energy combinations through the phrases and sections of the dance, and they maintained excellent skills in projection throughout the performance.

Low scoring performances lacked proficiency when demonstrating body actions. The range was often limited and unsafely executed, which impeded the student's ability to show skill in the control of various physical skills, and the choreography did not manipulate the various elements of movement to create expression within the phrases and sections of the solo. Generally these students lacked projection and overall performance skills.

Criteria 1 to 4 require students to demonstrate control of a variety of physical skills within a range of body actions

In the *Dance VCE Study Design*, body actions include gesture, locomotion, elevation, falling, turning and stillness. Teachers need to help students improve their ability to show variation within each action to allow different physical skills to be shown; for example, repeating an eight count phrase of turns on the diagonal from two feet to two feet does not show different physical skills through the body action of turning. Not showing variation will result in a lower score than might otherwise be achieved. Technique classes should be undertaken on a regular basis to give students the opportunity to learn and experiment with different ways of demonstrating physical skills through various body actions.

Teachers should have an understanding of the safe use of the dancer's body when teaching students to develop their technique. Knowledge developed in Outcome 1 of Unit 1 can be applied in a practical way as students learn to safely execute physical skills through various body actions. Students who enter the study at Unit 3 will need to revise their understanding of safe dance practices.

Criteria 5 to 7 require students to demonstrate skill in the use of the elements of movement; namely time, space and energy.

Exploration of the elements of movement involves the choreographic manipulation of time, space (shape) and energy in relation to the communication of the solo work performed. Students can develop a range of body actions that expressively vary the use of the elements of movement by participating in improvisational activities and viewing works of other choreographers.



Students can develop a range of body actions that vary the use of time, space and energy by participating in set technique classes where they reproduce movement phrases. Experience in using improvisation techniques in a compositional workshop context may assist students to develop their personal movement vocabulary. Both approaches should be incorporated in the practical component of the course.

The exploration and selection of movements are crucial stages of the overall dance-making process. At these stages students should aim to challenge themselves and extend their existing skills and movement vocabulary. 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 should be applied in all practical activities, including performance work.

Criterion 8 requires students to demonstrate skill in the use of projection.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to develop their skills in projection during the rehearsal process. It appeared that some students were not well rehearsed and concentrated too heavily on remembering and/or executing the movement, or lapsed into improvisation. Students are reminded that their performance should demonstrate use of whole body focus and control in transitions between movements.

Developing the solo

Students' learning opportunities can be enhanced by the inclusion of sequential and integrated learning activities across all outcomes. For example, a theoretical understanding of the safe use of physical skills, body actions and the elements of movements can be developed when completing Outcome 1 of Unit 3. This understanding can then be used as a starting point from which to clarify all aspects of the criteria for the technique solo. The learnt group dance work in Unit 3, Outcome 2 should extend and develop students' use of physical skills, body actions and the elements of movement through the accurate reproduction of challenging movement phrases. Activities undertaken in Outcome 3 of Unit 3 should consolidate students' understanding through exploring, learning and refining a wide range of body actions that vary the time, space (shape) and energy.

Expressive Intention

The choice of expressive intention should not impede the student's ability to meet the assessment criteria. Expressive intentions may come from many sources, including the choreographer's ideas, emotions, observations or exploration of movement itself. Teachers should consider using checklists to help students monitor the degree to which they have included all aspects of the examination criteria.

Choice of technique

Various stylistic techniques were used in 2006 in order to fulfil the requirements of each criterion, including modern, modern jazz and classical ballet mixed with some contemporary technique. 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. Reproduction and repetition of movement phrases combined with exploration of movement using improvisation will help students begin to establish their own personal movement vocabulary and preferences.

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 excellent control of body alignment and coordination during the execution of a range of 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 optimum use of stamina and excellent control of muscular strength within a range of 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 balance within a range of body actions

A high level performance demonstrated excellent control in the use of balance within a range of body actions. This involved balances using various body parts as well as appropriate use of balance in turns, falls, transferences of weight and elevated movements.

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

A high level performance demonstrated excellent control in the use of flexibility within a range of body actions. This involved the flexible use of all joints.

Criterion 5: Skill in the varied use of time

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of time. This involved complex use of both tempo and rhythm.

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

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of body shape. 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 excellent skill 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 demonstrated excellent skill in the use of whole body focus, control in transitions between movements and overall degree of performance quality.

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.

Students who crafted outstanding compositions demonstrated a sophisticated use of spatial design to communicate their expressive intention. They also demonstrated an excellent capacity to use phrases to select and arrange movement expressively, forming a unified composition that had a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution.

These students also maintained excellent performance skills throughout the solo performance, which led to a clear interpretation of the expressive intention.

In low-scoring Composition Solos the various aspects of spatial organisation were not manipulated in purposeful ways and consequently did not communicate the expressive intention as outlined on The Statement of Expressive Intention. For example, the solo often began with several phrases of gestural movement, and then lapsed into a series of movement sequences which clearly did not develop or relate to the student's chosen intention. Students need to ensure that choreographic devices are used to select and arrange movements to form a unified relationship between the beginning, development(s) and resolution sections, and that they communicate their expressive intention as outlined on the pro forma presented to the assessors.

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. Teachers should work with students to conceptualise how the selected expressive intention may be communicated in a meaningful way.

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

The *Dance VCE Study Design* defines spatial organisation as including the use of direction, level, eye and/or body focus and dimension. Students should include a range of each of these aspects in their Unit 4 Composition Solo.



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.

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.

An understanding of the expressive use of phrases and sections can be developed in a theoretical way when completing Outcome 1 of Unit 4 and should build on an understanding of the relationship between the elements of dance design (expressive intention, form and movement vocabulary) developed in Outcome 1 of Unit 3.

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.

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 performance quality.

Statement of Expressive Intention

All students completed the 'Statement of Expressive Intention' provided by the VCAA, outlining the expressive intention of their Composition Solo from beginning to resolution. Students must be careful to provide succinct information concerning the expressive intention or ideas being expressed in each section of the solo. It is **not** necessary to describe the use of spatial organisation or the movement vocabulary used. This dance solo is assessed against the student's Statement of Expressive Intention.

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

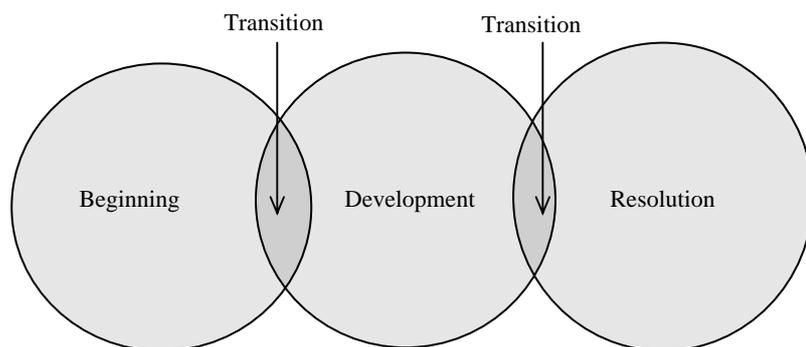
Composition Solos that were awarded low marks generally presented an expressive intention which was either unsuitable for addressing the criteria or appeared to be far too complex for the experience and/or dance skills of the student. In some cases, it seemed evident that the students had not thought about how the selection of their expressive intention could be translated to address the criteria before commencing their dance-making processes. In order to ensure the choice of expressive intention is appropriate, teachers need to work with students as they conceptualise how the expressive intention might translate into movement.

Teachers should ensure that students understand how the selected movements relate to and communicate the expressive intention. This may involve formulating a work plan that maps out the expressive intention in terms of the beginning, development and resolution. Students could brainstorm the different types of movement and movement qualities which reflect the chosen intent. 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).

Structuring the composition

Students need to understand the importance of using sections to develop a unified composition. They should also be given opportunities to experiment with different ways of developing and resolving a work. This would include developing sections using variations of the elements of dance design.

The following graph is a visual representation of how the composition should be structured at its most basic:



Relationship between the music selection and dance form

Following the structure of the music does not create a beginning, development and resolution for a dance work based on an expressive intention; however, the choice of music should enhance the students' ability to find movement solutions that communicate the expressive intention. If students choose to combine more than one piece of music it is important to consider why this is necessary, as the combination of three different pieces of music does not automatically mean that a unified piece of music is formed. If students do combine music, they need to ensure there are appropriate transitions between the pieces and that a clear musical structure is formed. Any cuts in the music need to be clean, as badly cut music will affect the transitions between the sections and the ability to unify the composition.

The Composition Solo should be presented as a single, uninterrupted performance of between two and a half minutes and five minutes duration.

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 demonstrated excellent skill in the expressive use of direction in order to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved movement performed in circular, diagonal, forward, backward, sideways, upward and downward directions.

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

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the expressive use of levels in order to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved movement performed on a range of levels, 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 demonstrated excellent skill in the expressive use of focus to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved varied use 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 demonstrated excellent skill in the expressive use of dimension to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved 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

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into phrases, using a range of choreographic devices to effectively contrast or compliment the movement material introduced in the beginning section, and communicating the 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 communicating the expressive intention.

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

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in maintaining, for example, appropriate levels of energy, expressive projection of movement, and use of facial/whole body expression.