

2017 VCE VET Dance performance examination report

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 from a list of styles as prescribed in the CUA20113 Certificate II in Dance, with selected units of competency from the CUA30113 in Dance qualification and documented by VCAA. The dances are learnt from the established 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. Each of the solo dances performed must correlate with the elective units of competency the student is enrolled in as part of the Units 3 and 4 sequence of the VCE VET Dance program. Each of the two dances must demonstrate use of a distinctly different style and movement vocabulary as consistent with the student's selected dance styles.

The dances selected should allow students to demonstrate their style-specific technical and expressive skills as developed in the following units of competency from the Certificate II in Dance, with selected units of competency from Certificate III.

- CUADAN305 Increase depth of jazz dance technique
- CUADAN306 Increase depth of ballet dance technique
- CUADAN307 Increase depth of cultural dance technique
- CUADAN308 Increase depth of contemporary dance technique
- CUADAN309 Increase depth of street dance technique
- CUADAN310 Increase depth of social dance technique
- CUADAN311 Increase depth of tap dance technique

The styles most frequently selected for performance were contemporary, jazz and street. Tap, social, cultural and ballet were also selected but not with the same frequency.

Generally solos met the time requirements; however, some ballet repertoire pieces selected did not meet the two-minute minimum requirement, which impacted on students' scores. If these solos are to be selected, the solos should be adapted to meet the minimum time requirement, or alternative solos that meet the minimum required time limit should be selected. While the maximum solo performance time is five minutes, students who performed solos of more than three minutes duration often lost their technical accuracy and artistic expression, and showed signs of physical fatigue that impacted on their achievement in some criteria.

The musical accompaniment for some street dance solos consisted of two or more songs edited together, with pauses between tracks. During these pauses, students often dropped their sense of performance and this impacted on the scoring of Criterion 9 – Memory retention, concentration and focus. Teachers should ensure that the lyrics of the accompanying music are appropriate and use 'clean' versions or covers.

In terms of attire and presentation, most students were dressed appropriately, wearing style-specific attire that allowed the visibility of body lines. There were some issues with appropriate footwear not being worn for some styles. Students selecting ballet should wear ballet shoes, demi

pointe shoes or pointe shoes. Jazz shoes, bare feet and foot thongs are not acceptable footwear for ballet. Ballet shoes, bare feet and foot thongs are not acceptable footwear for social dance.

Protective knee pads were occasionally worn, and in the interests of safe dance practices, this is encouraged to protect students' knees, particularly in contemporary solos with high-impact falling movement in the movement vocabulary.

The movement vocabulary selected was generally style-appropriate; however, the selection of some ballet repertoire, while within the student's technical capability, was extremely difficult and impacted on the student's ability to demonstrate excellence in Criterion 10 – Artistic and interpretive expression and polish. There were also instances when ballet was the selected style but the movement vocabulary did not reflect this. The movement vocabulary selected in all dance styles should reflect the hallmarks of the style. Specifically in ballet, solos should contain hallmarks such as the use of turnout from the hips, stretched feet, upright carriage and curved arm lines. Solos of any style that consist of walking and holding poses are not appropriate as they do not allow students to satisfactorily demonstrate their style-specific technical and expressive skills.

The use of an iPod or iPhone to play music was generally handled well and in accordance with VCE VET Dance performance examination requirements and conditions. Students should be reminded to set the volume appropriately on their devices and set their devices to flight mode prior to their performance. Students should be encouraged to use their rehearsal time in the examination room to check the volume levels of their music before the commencement of their performance. Students are reminded that it is not appropriate to use a laptop to play accompanying music. There were also instances when students had their music on a USB and no other playing device. The requirements and conditions are set out in the VCE VET Dance performance examination specifications.

The Industry Statement

Some Industry Statements were either very brief and did not provide sufficient detail, or did not accurately reflect the performances viewed. There were also statements that referenced multiple styles. Teachers should refer to the VCAA Industry Statement samples (March 2017) on the VCAA website for best-practice examples. If citing specific practitioners or movement practices and principles in the statement, these should be evident in the movement vocabulary and stylistic characteristics in the solos presented. Students should not name their school or teacher in these statements.

In terms of the 'specific style of the performance', students could respond with, 'The style is classical ballet defined by the movement choices and artistic qualities reflecting the hallmarks of ballet, such as the use of pointe work, upright carriage of the body, use of turnout and curved arm lines. The legacy of Petipa's Don Quixote is seen in the Spanish flavour'.

In terms of 'context', it is intended that students respond with comments regarding the appropriate setting or settings for the dance. This may include theatrical proscenium arch, as part of a music video clip, cruise ship entertainment or audition piece. Comments regarding emotion, intention or narrative are not appropriate.

'The appropriate market/audience for this performance' refers to the intended audience for the piece.

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 assess performance skills and a range of technical dance skills specific to and consistent with the stated dance style. Each criterion is weighted equally and is marked on a ten-point scale (0–10).

1. Correct posture and body alignment

Most students demonstrated correct posture and skeletal body alignment throughout their solos; however, in some contemporary and some styles of cultural dance solos there was a lack of style-specific gravity and levity, and connection to the floor was not evident. In the styles of street and jazz, some students needed to hold their weight lower in the body with a greater sense of connection with the floor.

2. Balance

This criterion was generally well executed by students, and performances demonstrated style-specific balances. High-scoring solos used a range of body parts as balance points and stability that was integrated in highly complex movement phrases with sustained balances that were executed with strength and stability.

3. Flexibility

Flexibility should be embedded within the choreography in a style-specific manner, rather than through the inclusion of leg mounts, splits and acrobatic or gymnastic movements that may not reflect the movement vocabulary of the selected dance style. The focus should be on the integration of a range of style-specific movements that demonstrate flexibility in a range of body parts within the selected choreography. High-scoring solos demonstrated flexibility, articulated through highly complex movements using an extensive range of body parts (including joints and spine) in a style-specific arrangement.

4. Stamina

The level of muscular and cardiorespiratory stamina sustained throughout the entire performance was generally good, and most performances were of the appropriate duration to allow students to score highly. However, there were some solos between 3 and 5 minutes, and as these solos progressed students demonstrated increased physical fatigue that compromised their artistic and technical execution.

5. Isolation, coordination, weight transference

High-scoring performances demonstrated the sustained coordination and control of complex style-specific movements with finesse in the isolation and articulation of upper and lower body parts. These students were secure and confident, with weight transferences and movement transitions in a broad range of complex movement sequences.

6. Travelling and spatial awareness

Most students' use of personal and general performance space was good and demonstrated appropriate orientation within the performance space. High-scoring solos contained a wide range of movement vocabulary that allowed students to demonstrate complex and varied patterns, pathways and locomotor techniques. Teachers/choreographers need to be aware of the performance space guidelines to ensure that choreography best utilises the space, as some lower-scoring performances used simple pedestrian actions only or limited travelling actions. Generally the use of personal and general performance space and orientation within the

performance area was good. High-scoring solos used the space in appropriate style-specific ways to create complex patterns and pathways using varied locomotor techniques.

7. Expressive use of movement dynamics

Students who scored highly demonstrated a broad range of style-specific expressive movement dynamics and their variations within their performances. Their release of energy was integrated, coordinated and controlled. In some jazz and contemporary solos there was insufficient range in the movement dynamics to score highly.

8. Musicality, rhythm and timing

Generally students were able to develop and maintain an authentic connection with their accompanying music, maintaining appropriate tempi and phrasing through tempo, movement accents and rhythmic patterns. Students who demonstrated complex variations of tempo, movement accents and rhythmic patterns scored highly. Their performances demonstrated movements that corresponded to and contrasted with the accompanying music in an authentic stylistic manner.

9. Memory retention, concentration and focus

Most students scored highly in this criterion and completed their solos with unwavering concentration, focus and movement memory, indicating that they were well rehearsed and prepared for their performances.

10. Artistic and interpretive expression and polish

High scores in this criterion were not limited to the most skilled students, with some of the most artistic and interpretative performances with stylistic nuance and maintenance of the intention of the Industry Statement coming from students with moderate technical skills. Some students who presented extremely technically difficult solos were not able to maintain their artistic and interpretive expression and polish effectively.