



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 criteria, which can be found on the VCAA website on the Dance study page.

Dress requirements

Technique solo

In general, students wore appropriate dance clothing when presenting this solo to enable an accurate assessment of their physical skills throughout the performance. They were also well groomed, with hair secured off their face to facilitate the use of eye line and eye focus (criterion 8).

As in previous years, teachers and students are advised to use the following list when considering the choice of costume.

- Assessors must be able to see the dancer's body shape 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 may be selected to reflect the choice of movement vocabulary. However, the 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 compromised.
- Knee pads may be worn if appropriate and part of safe dance practice (ensure that 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 dancer's projection and use of eye line (use sufficient hairspray and pins, if necessary, 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). High-top sneakers or runners, if appropriate for the selection of movement vocabulary, are also acceptable.
- Footwear must be well secured to avoid any mishaps.
- Jewellery should be removed, especially long earrings, to avoid mishaps.

Composition solo

In general, students selected costumes and make-up that supported the expressive intention of the composition solo appropriately. The trend of using smaller props to enhance the expressive intention was effective and beneficial to students' overall performance. If incorporating props into the composition solo, it is recommended that students practise sufficiently with the selected prop(s) prior to the examination to avoid any malfunctions and to ensure smooth transitions between the sections.

Music

The majority of students used MP3 players successfully. To ensure that their assessment time runs smoothly, students need to ensure that

- any musical accompaniment is tested on the equipment that is to be used in the examination in order to avoid technical difficulties on the day of the performance or music not being recorded at all
- a backup copy of the music (on another MP3 player or cassette) is brought along on the day of the examination to allow for any technical difficulties; and if using cassettes, the tape is at the correct starting point before entering the examination room
- if using an MP3 player, it is fully charged
- if using a smartphone, it is switched to 'flight' or 'airplane' mode, as any interruptions are the student's responsibility
- the music is cut to the appropriate duration so it does not continue after the performance has ended
- music for both solos are stored in separate folders and clearly labelled 'technique solo' or 'composition solo', in case an assessor operates the music.



It is important that during the allocated 'marking through' time that students check the volume of the music and adjust it accordingly to maintain an appropriate sound level during the examination.

If students choose to use a music operator during the examination, this person is required to face away from the performer to avoid distracting the performer or assessors. The MP3 player is to be placed next to the amplifier and not held in the lap of the music operator to avoid any mishaps, and once the music commenced, it is not to be turned off until the performance has been completed.

Time limits

Each solo is timed from the moment the student begins to move, not when the music starts. Some students seemed unaware of the time limits prescribed for each component of the practical examination. If the solo dance is not of the required duration a penalty should be applied for equity. 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 perform either of their solos without music, they need to ensure that the duration of the performance is at least two and a half minutes.

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

Safe dance practice

Knowledge and understanding of the safe dance principles that were 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.

In general, there was an increase in the number of safe dance issues seen in the presentation of the technique solo. These included a number of inverted positions with forced weight placed on the head, neck and shoulders; falls directly onto the knee joint, often from elevated positions; over-forced toe plantar flexion; and gymnastic skills that lacked control through the core muscles.

Teachers should advise students to develop their fitness and to engage their core muscles in order to avoid unsafe, uncontrolled and risky executions of movement vocabulary. Control of various physical skills is necessary in order to demonstrate safe dance practice.

When knee pads are worn, students need to consider the injury risk involved in executing particular movement vocabulary, especially falls from an elevated position that land directly on the knee joint. Students must show correct falling techniques, and use their quadricep and core muscles to control the fall onto the shin bones. Practice at the barre will facilitate this technique.

Headstands and inverted balance moves that rest on neck flexion were popular with students. While the execution of a headstand fulfils the criteria in terms of the physical skills shown, students are advised to perform the movement safely, paying attention to the cervical area of the spine (neck) when releasing from the movement.

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

Other issues

On the day of the examination, students need 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 ensure that they have the correct equipment and paperwork before approaching the examination area so as not to delay the process.

When in the examination room, students should use their rehearsal time efficiently. Students need to consider the pathway of the dance, the volume of the music and the nuances of the floor surface. They should not perform the dance 'flat out' during this time, as they may not have enough stamina left to then perform at their highest standard during the examination.



Each performance needs to be presented as a single, uninterrupted performance. If the student either forgets the dance or experiences a costume/prop mishap, they should continue performing as soon as possible. The music is not to be turned off unless the student clearly indicates to assessors that they do 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 an exploration of the assessment criteria.

Choice of dance 'style'

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

For example, in this year's exam students used the dance styles of tap, contemporary, ballet, jazz-fusion 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
- variation of the arrangement of phrasing
- variation of shapes made with the body.

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

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

Lower-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 actions, such as walking and/or running and/or simple shapes. Often, the combinations involving the feet, legs and arms did not show a range of coordination skills, and the movement phrases were also repeated a number of times, which affected students' ability to present a range of skills.

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

The skill level of students varied. Generally, students' use of control needed further improvement. In low-scoring performances, inconsistency in the control of movement transitions was evident, especially when moving from locomotor to non-locomotor movement and when manipulating movements in and out of the floor. These students need to develop the capacity to control their core muscles and present a range of skills, including weight shifts, aerial work and control of floor skills to ensure more consistent control of dance movement vocabulary.

Teachers should advise students to work at conditioning their body right up until the day of the examination. Stamina (the ability of the body to withstand fatigue) needs to be further improved. Students could have improved this skill by working on both muscular and cardiovascular endurance. Teachers should increase the length of time, the frequency and the degree of difficulty of the aerobic activity that is 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 this skill.



Criteria 5–7 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.

High-scoring performances generally attempted a diverse range of time, space (shape) and energy manipulations throughout the arrangement of movement phrases. Students who selected music with shifts in dynamics or understood how to create contrasts against the music were generally more successful at expressively manipulating these elements to create an expressive interpretation of their dance.

Lower-scoring performances usually varied the use of tempo, demonstrating manipulations of fast and slow speeds. However, the use of rhythm was often predictable, dictated by the dominant beats in the music. Often, the choice of movement vocabulary restricted students' manipulations of body shapes within the choreography as both curved and angular body shapes were not included throughout the phrasing. In terms of energy manipulations, the majority of students showed competency in the basic application of the qualities of movement and resulting combinations of flow and force. However, the more sophisticated explorations were less obvious and variations of force were often a weakness.

Students are encouraged to engage in further improvisational tasks in order to develop their application of the elements of movement and watch past performances, such as 'Top Acts', to further understand these concepts.

Criterion 8 required students to demonstrate skill in projecting the whole body to communicate to the audience. Students need to demonstrate use of whole-body focus (including eye line) and control in transitions between movement phrases. Generally, students projected effectively to the audience. However, some students overlooked this criterion. At times, it appeared that some students were too nervous to use eye line confidently and, at times, transitions were lacking between movement phrases, giving a disjointed appearance to the overall performance.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to developing performance skills and projection during the rehearsal process. 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 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, and 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, assesses students' ability to demonstrate solo composition skills through the expressive use of spatial organisation and the development of a unified composition.

Expressive intention

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 to create a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution, which served as a springboard to structure a unified composition.

Lower-scoring intentions did not have the scope to support the required level of development and/or were not suitable to be choreographed into a unified composition. 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 assessors to follow the progression of the work.

In general, sources of suitable stimuli may include poetry, narratives or plays, myths, legends, paintings, current issues, historical events, technology and nature.

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

Students should avoid writing their Statement of Expressive Intention in the pre-performance preparation time. Statements written during this time are very unlikely to contain enough information, will be too scant to be relevant or will not reflect the movement content of the solo. Students are reminded that the composition solo is assessed against the Statement of Expressive Intention.

Choice of dance 'style'

Students need to focus on the ability to choreograph movement that is organised into related phrases and sections as the solo's purpose is to communicate a dance to the audience that relates meaning, ideas and emotions. It is not to be seen simply as an exercise in the manipulation of movement vocabulary or a particular style. As the expressive intention is pivotal in this process, it is important that the assessors can clearly identify students' ideas throughout the movement selection. As such, an exploration of suitable personalised movement is necessary. If choosing to draw movement from a particular style, students need to consider the appropriateness of their selection in communicating their intention.

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

High-scoring performances illustrated a comprehensive understanding of the expressive arrangement of spatial organisation. They were able to demonstrate a link between the intention and the choreographic manipulation of direction, level, eye/body focus and dimension of the movement. The application of various elements of spatial organisation was consistently developed throughout the solo.



Lower-scoring performances did not develop manipulations of spatial organisation in a purposeful way and, often, the combinations were too simplistic and/or ignored the written Statement of Expressive Intention.

Students need to make conscious decisions about how various elements of spatial organisation would appropriately communicate their idea(s) in the planning stages of their solo. Further exploration in this area could be implemented through the use of work plans and improvisation to assist students with improving their skills.

Criteria 5–7 required students to demonstrate skill in the varied arrangement of movement into related phrases and sections to express the intention of the student in a unified composition.

Students with high-scoring performances 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 that was relevant to the whole composition. The selection of movement vocabulary related strongly to the selected expressive intention in each section of the dance.

Lower-scoring performances generally displayed basic 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 more varied movement vocabulary throughout the phrases/sections to accompany the gesture and communicate the expressive intention more skilfully.

Often, these compositions did not realise the intent through the movement choices. Movement choices were seen as favourite shapes to which a meaning was attached and then repeated, with very little development to assist in communicating the idea. Personalisation of the movement was sometimes attempted but not explored to a point where it assisted with the realisation of the idea. As a result, phrase development relied on repetition of movement or became a sequence of unrelated movement material that often affected the structuring and clarity of sections.

The communication of the expressive intention was not thought about in terms of a structure, 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 props, students must be careful that they do not use the object to replace the communication of their intention through an appropriate movement vocabulary. Teachers should encourage students to integrate any props into the movement choices when rehearsing the solo.

Criterion 8 assessed the use of performance skills in communicating the expressive intention.

Performance skills include 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 allocate sufficient time to rehearse their solo. They need 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 that was introduced in the beginning section, and communicating the student's 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 that was 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.