

2015 VCE Dance performance examination report

General comments

This report addresses issues that students should consider when preparing for the VCE Dance performance examination. The examination is described on pages 35 and 36 of the *VCE Dance Study Design 2014–2018* and in the performance examination specifications and advice on the VCAA website.

Specific information

Examination day

On the day of the examination, students should 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.

When in the examination room, students should use their rehearsal time efficiently. Some students did not use this time to orientate themselves in the space adequately. This impacted on the spatial design of the choreography as students were often not performing at an appropriate distance from the assessors, which made it difficult for them to view the spatial organisation of the dance clearly.

Each solo dance needed 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 will not be turned off unless the student clearly indicates to the assessors that they do not wish to continue.

Safe dance practice

Knowledge and understanding of the safe dance principles developed in the dance technique Area of Study should be applied in order to meet criteria 1 to 4 of the technique solo successfully.

Generally, students followed safe dance practice guidelines and for the most part attempted movements within their physical capabilities and range.

Where students engage in risky choreography they should be mindful to implement safe dance procedures. This year, students seemed to restrict knee drops to one knee, which facilitated a safer execution of these movements. In some cases, movements such as splits and backwards walkovers were executed with a lack of control and safe technique. Students should be advised not to perform these movements if they have not been trained in the correct technique to avoid potential injury. Students should avoid potentially unsafe and uncontrolled executions of movement vocabulary, including unsupported backbends and recoveries, and the execution of inverted positions where the head, neck and shoulders are compromised.

Time limits

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.

Generally students performed works that reflected the prescribed time limit of between 2.5 and 5 minutes. Some students' performances were just short of the minimum time requirement. Students who performed shorter works often failed to achieve very high scores as the dance was not fully developed and did not meet the examination criteria at the highest possible level. No student continued over 5 minutes; however, when students choreographed longer dances it was evident that their stamina started to fade and the choreography became repetitive.

Students should be advised to ensure that the duration of both solos is appropriate to the examination specifications as well as the student's level of fitness.

Dress requirements – Technique solo

In general, students were well groomed and chose appropriate dance clothing to effectively showcase a range of physical skills. As in previous years, most students wore dark leotards or singlets, with tights, a skirt or shorts. Appropriate footwear was selected, and reflected the choice of movement vocabulary and requirements of safe dance practice. Some female students chose to wear long skirts that impeded their ability to demonstrate various skills and hampered safe dance practice, especially floor work. Students should be reminded not to wear leotards that are too small and/or have thin shoulder straps so that the performance is not interrupted by them continually adjusting the top of the costume. This distracted some students and prevented them from performing to their best possible standard. The hairstyle of most female students was neat, often worn in a bun or braid. Students need to ensure that the choice of hairstyle does not interfere with the use of projection and eyeline, and detract from the overall projection of performance skills. When choosing a ponytail, students should ensure that it is tied securely to avoid any mishaps.

Dress requirements – Composition solo

In general, students selected costumes and small props that supported and enhanced the expressive intention they had chosen for their dance. As in previous years, some students relied too heavily on the choice of costume and make-up to communicate their expressive intention. Teachers and students should be advised to focus on the selection of movement vocabulary to facilitate the communication of the intention and not rely solely on the costume or use of properties. It is recommended that students rehearse in the costume prior to the examination in case any aspect of it hinders their ability to execute movement vocabulary.

Music

Generally students selected appropriate music to accompany both solos. While there were many creative and interesting sound choices, a number of students used regular, beat-driven music for their technique solo, which limited the expressive manipulation of time and energy qualities. Where music with lyrics was selected, students at times choreographed to the words rather than interpreting the examination criteria. This limited the ability of some students to demonstrate skill in relation to the criteria, especially in the composition solo, as the result was a reliance on literal gestures or dance drama to develop the dance, rather than a skilful selection of movement vocabulary.

The majority of students used MP3 players successfully; however, if using a smart phone, students should ensure it is switched to 'flight' or 'aeroplane' mode, as interruptions such as text messaging affected the audibility and quality of the music. It is also advised that students remove the phone

cover to avoid interruptions to the connection and allow the sound quality to be maintained throughout the whole performance.

Where students choose to use a music operator during the examination, this person is required to face away from the performer to avoid distracting them. Once the music has commenced, the music operator should be advised not to turn off the MP3 player until the performance has been completed. Some students chose to leave a 10-second space at the start of their music, which allowed them enough time to settle into their starting position.

Students should also be encouraged to bring a backup copy of the music (on another MP3 player or cassette) on the day of the examination to allow for any technical difficulties that may arise.

Unit 3 – Technique solo

The technique solo is based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Unit 3, Outcome 2. This task assesses students' ability to demonstrate physical skills through a range of body actions, skill in the choreographic manipulation of the elements of movement, skill in the projection of the whole body to demonstrate artistry and to communicate to the audience.

Expressive intention

The choice of expressive intention should allow students to address each of the criteria equally. Many students chose to base their expressive intention on an exploration of the examination criteria. Where a specific expressive intention or storyline is selected, students should be advised to ensure all points in each criterion have been addressed.

Movement vocabulary

Generally, students based their choice of movement vocabulary on a personalised movement selection. Where a particular style(s) was selected, students should have been aware of how their choice of movement vocabulary would allow them to fulfil the requirements of the examination and to demonstrate skill in relation to the criteria at the highest level. It is important that students are advised that the selection of a movement vocabulary should facilitate the opportunity to demonstrate a range of skills, including floor, aerial, and locomotor and non-locomotor movements. A lack of range in the use of body actions and physical skills impedes the student's ability to demonstrate the requirements of the criteria.

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

In high-scoring performances, students demonstrated a personalised movement vocabulary that was safely executed and addressed the criteria. These students explored an extensive range of body actions to illustrate a skilful application of various physical skills. Their performance also demonstrated control of these skills through complex movement choices.

In lower-scoring performances, students demonstrated a limited range of body actions and physical skills. Generally they struggled with alignment and muscular strength. This was apparent when they performed more complex or challenging skills such as elevations and turning sequences. Students either lost control by pushing beyond their physical limits or opted for more simplistic or repetitive movement choices.

Students are encouraged to include movements that they are capable of executing with skill and artistry, experiment with personalised ways to display physical skills, choose music that supports the selection of a range of actions and skills, and refine their skills in an appropriate performance space in the lead-up to the examination.

Students should be provided with opportunities to explore original ways of showing a range of physical skills, engage in regular dance classes to strengthen their skills and have opportunities to rehearse their skills leading up to the examination day.

Criteria 5 to 7 required students to demonstrate skill in the varied use of each element of movement – time, space (shape) and energy – to create expression throughout the solo.

Students who gave high-scoring performances generally demonstrated a skilled and creative interpretation of the dance by manipulating combinations of time, shapes and energy in a variety of ways. These students used accents and tempo changes that allowed the choreography to develop. They made full use of curved and angular shapes in complex combinations using the entire body. There was variation in the use of energy qualities, resulting in skilful arrangements of force and flow throughout a range of body actions and physical skills.

Students who gave lower-scoring performances struggled to manipulate these elements or their manipulations were minimal. Some students included simplistic movement phrases that matched the rhythm/tempo of the music and demonstrated repetition within the arrangement of the phrases and sections. There was little attempt to change the energy qualities or body shape, and the solo progressed without any variation.

Students should be advised to select appropriate music that facilitates a skilful manipulation of time, shape and energy. Students should be directed to experiment with combinations of the elements of movement and make purposeful decisions about how to use choreographic devices to develop the phrases and sections of the work. They are encouraged to work with and against the different accents and tempo changes of the music; and to give consideration to using shapes that involve the whole body rather than just the arms. Engaging in various improvisations to generate new ideas will promote further understanding of movement possibilities.

Criterion 8 required students to demonstrate skill in the projection of the whole body, including transitions between the phrases and sections, and use of eyeline to communicate an artistic and expressive execution of movement.

Students who gave high-scoring performances generally projected confidently to the audience using smooth transitions between phrases and sections to communicate the expressive intention. Every movement was given the appropriate amount of attention and was effectively projected using eye/body focus to engage the audience, establish a mood throughout the dance, and communicate the choreography artistically and with expression.

Students who gave lower-scoring performances lacked the confidence to establish eye contact and project to their audience. At times they seemed underprepared and unsure of where to look. They often appeared focused on trying to remember the choreography and appeared to perform the dance without expression or appropriate transitions.

Students are encouraged to regularly rehearse the movement in a range of settings to develop movement memory and confidence. In addition, thinking about the use of eyeline and facial expression will enhance communication of the expressive intention that the choreography is intending to portray.

Students should be allowed to regularly rehearse the finished solo to develop confidence and artistry.

Specific information

Each criterion was weighted equally and was marked on a ten-point scale (0–10) 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 the 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 or rotations, falls and recoveries, elevated movements and landings, and execution of movements at a wide range of tempi (fast/slow).

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. They also maintained a highly skilled awareness of alignment principles and balance when transferring weight through a range of safely executed body actions, including turns and rotations, 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 range of safely executed body actions, including turns or rotations, 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 and 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 combining 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 demonstrate artistry and communicate to the audience

A high-level performance consistently demonstrated skill in the projection of the whole body, including transitions between the phrases and sections, and use of eyeline to communicate an artistic and expressive execution of movement to the audience.

Unit 4 – Composition solo

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 formal structure of the composition.

The study design requires the composition to be structured using a clear formal structure such as narrative, binary, ternary, rondo, theme and variation or episodic, or as a unified composition with a clear beginning, middle/development and resolution.

Selection of an expressive intention

In general students chose an expressive intention that allowed them to choreograph a dance work, which allowed them to use a range of technical and expressive skills in their performance.

Students are reminded that the choice of expressive intention is an important step when choreographing this solo as the intention will inform the number of sections or formal structure, the selection of movement vocabulary, and the arrangement of movement vocabulary in terms of spatial organisation (level, direction, eye/body focus and dimension) and choreographic devices decided upon.

At times, students' choice of expressive intention was not specific enough to facilitate a skilful approach to the criteria and often consisted of a broad overview, back story or synopsis of an idea, which made it difficult for the assessors to follow in terms of the meaning of the movement selections.

Other students tackled ideas that were well beyond what could be expressed within the time limit.

Statement of expressive intention

The form used for the written Statement of Intention was updated in 2015 to assist students to provide relevant information about their solo. On this form, students were asked to record the expressive intention communicated throughout the different sections of the dance, the number of sections and formal structure used, and briefly comment on the main choreographic devices used to structure the dance.

Outline of the expressive intention: students were required to include a comment of approximately 80–100 words to describe their expressive intention in terms of the various sections presented such as beginning, middle/development and resolution. The area designated for this information is presented as a single box. This is to allow students the option to include as many sections as they need to. In some cases, students did not record their intention in separate sections, preferring to give a general statement that made it difficult for the assessors to follow in terms of the selection and arrangement of movement to communicate the expressive intention throughout the structure of the work. Others created wordy responses that were also difficult to follow. Assessors were able to access the criteria more readily when the statement clearly outlined the intention in **each** section of the dance.

Some students wrote at least two sections in a similar way, which compromised the clarity of the choreographic idea(s) and how they were developed throughout the formal structure. Clearly written comments using the section number as a subheading allows assessors to follow the progression of the work.

Formal structure of the dance: generally students noted down the number of sections clearly and a formal structure was indicated, with many students choosing either a narrative or ternary structure. Students should be encouraged to record the formal structure. Work completed in Unit 3, Outcome 1 could be revisited and students' understanding of different formal structures could be revised so that they can make informed choices about which structure would best facilitate their selected expressive intention.

Choreographic device(s): comments about the use of choreographic device(s) throughout the work provided assessors with insight into the student's choreographic process. Only brief descriptions were required. Some students wrote in too much detail and/or gave descriptions of the manipulation of movement vocabulary, which was unnecessary, as the examination assessed the choreographic devices the student demonstrated within the context of the performed choreography, not the written comments.

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

High-scoring performances demonstrated an expressive arrangement of spatial organisation to communicate the expressive intention of the solo throughout each section. It was evident that students had thought about the manipulation of these elements and how they could progress the choreographic ideas in a sophisticated way.

Students who gave lower-scoring performances struggled to manipulate these elements in a purposeful way as the combinations were either too simplistic or did not reflect the written Statement of Intention. If established, manipulations were often repeated throughout the progression of the solo and were not relevant to the communication of the stated intention.

Students are encouraged to think about how the elements of spatial organisation would appropriately communicate their idea(s) in the planning stages of their solo.

Teachers could facilitate this process by supporting students in developing and refining the spatial organisation of the dance through the use of work plans and improvisations. Consideration should be given to understanding how using different combinations of spatial organisation will enhance or alter the meaning of the selected movement vocabulary.

Criteria 5 to 7 required students, throughout the sections of the composition with a formal structure, to demonstrate skill in:

- the selection of expressive movement vocabulary
- the arrangement of movement into related phrases and sections to create an appropriate formal structure
- the expressive manipulation of a range of choreographic devices
- expressing the intention of the choreographer.

Selection of movement vocabulary: The movement vocabulary used in high-scoring performances had been selected to reflect the ideas in the expressive intention. The selections were inventive and personalised, as well as being relevant to the intention.

Students who gave lower-scoring performances either chose basic movement combinations that relied too heavily on the use of gestures and were based on a dance/drama, or were literal movement responses that did not reflect the ideas in the stated expressive intention. Others based their selections on technical skills in response to the lyrics of the music or were not related in any way to the Statement of Intention.

Students are encouraged to read the criteria carefully and use improvisation to generate purposeful and inventive movements that adequately progress the stated expressive intention. The choice of movement vocabulary should be edited and evolved throughout the creative process. If using mime or gesture, students should consider how they can use the choreographic device of abstraction to expand these to develop a more expressive movement vocabulary throughout the phrases/sections in order to communicate the expressive intention in a more sophisticated way. Use of a choreographic plan that maps out the sections, movement ideas and corresponding spatial changes may also help facilitate this.

Teachers could support this process by providing the opportunity for students to receive feedback and to collaborate with students to help select meaningful movement choices.

Arrangement of movement vocabulary to create a formal structure: students who gave high-scoring performances presented work where the selected movement was arranged into related phrases and sections, demonstrating skilful and logical sequencing that created a coherent formal structure and communicated their stated intention. This was achieved through the use of transitions, contrasts, highlights, etc. to demonstrate a sense of clarity and unity relevant to the whole composition. In general, the composition solo was presented as three or four sections to create a narrative or ternary formal structure.

Students who gave lower-scoring performances often chose to structure their dance using a number of sections; however, the arrangement of phrases and sections often did not reflect their choice and/or the arrangement of phrases/sections lacked clarity and unity. Some students relied too heavily on music to create the sections without paying any attention to the arrangement of related phrases into sections to create a clear choreographic form. Others presented sections that were underdeveloped and not linked through the use of transitions. This affected the clarity of the structure.

The communication of the expressive intention should be thought about in terms of the formal structure; for example, using the model of a narrative formal structure of three or four sections with transitions in between. Students are encouraged to build their knowledge of formal structures and reflect critically on the most appropriate structure to use in order to effectively communicate their ideas.

Students should be advised that the movement material set up in the initial 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 an identifiable structure.

Expressive manipulation of choreographic devices: students who presented high-scoring performances manipulated choreographic devices to structure the dance and communicate the expressive intention, thus successfully integrating, developing and linking various devices skilfully throughout the composition. Some examples of the devices used were motif, repetition, addition of new material, fragmentation, retrograde and augmentation.

Students who gave lower-scoring performances generally did not integrate or develop the choreographic devices to adequately structure the composition and communicate the expressive intention. They did not demonstrate any complexity or sophistication in their application of the devices and lacked an understanding of how these can be used to form and develop a composition solo; for example, a motif or movement phrases may have been established in the beginning section but not developed to form links between the sections.

The list of choreographic devices is extensive. Students are encouraged to think more about how the application of different choreographic devices can be used to communicate different aspects of their expressive intention and successfully organise the dance.

An understanding of the choreographic devices can be facilitated through both theoretical and practical work in the classroom. Students should be directed to think about how a particular choreographic device can be manipulated by giving consideration to aspects of time, space and/or energy in order to create expression, and structure the sections of the dance.

Criterion 8 assessed the use of performance processes, practices and artistry in communicating the choreographer's expressive intention.

Generally, students' performance processes were expressive and allowed an effective communication of the stated expressive intention.

Students who gave high-scoring performances demonstrated outstanding performance processes, practices and artistry using facial and body expression effectively to communicate the expressive intention throughout the whole dance. Students executed movement to its full capacity, established

a mood relevant to the intention and performed with confidence. However, where these skills were not rehearsed, students had a tendency to just go through the motions and internalise their performance without really understanding how to project out to an audience.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to rehearse their solo. They need opportunities to perform in front of an audience as often as possible to improve their overall performance artistry and gain the confidence to maintain their projection.

Specific information

Each criterion was weighted equally and was marked on a ten-point scale (0–10) that assessed the extent to which the performance communicated the choreographer's expressive intention and demonstrated the following capabilities.

Criterion 1: Skill in the varied use of level

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 2: Skill in the varied use of direction

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, such as circular, diagonal, forwards, backwards, sideways, upwards and downwards.

Criterion 3: Skill in the varied use of eye/body focus

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; for example, through variations of head, eye and body focus.

Criterion 4: Skill in the varied use of dimension

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 expressive movement vocabulary

A high-level performance demonstrated excellent skill in expressively selecting movement vocabulary throughout the number of sections referred to in the Statement of Intention to communicate the student's expressive intention.

Criterion 6: Skill in the expressive arrangement of movement vocabulary to create an appropriate formal structure

A high-level performance demonstrated excellent skill in expressively arranging movement vocabulary to create a clear formal structure. This involved arranging the selected movement vocabulary into related phrases and sections in order to clearly establish the formal structure identified in the Statement of Intention and communicate the student's expressive intention.

Criterion 7: Skill in the expressive manipulation of choreographic devices

A high-level performance demonstrated excellent skill in expressively integrating and developing movement vocabulary through the use of a range of choreographic devices to effectively structure the dance work and communicate the student's expressive intention.

Criterion 8: Skill in the use of performance processes, practices and artistry to communicate the expressive intention to the audience

A high-level performance demonstrated excellent skill in maintaining performance processes, practices and artistry throughout the dance (for example, appropriate levels of energy, expressive projection of movement, use of facial/whole body expression), which led to a clear communication of the student's expressive intention.