

2019 VCE Dance written examination report

General comments

A new study design was implemented in 2019. The examination questions were based on the key knowledge and key skills that underpin the outcomes in Units 3 and 4. Students were required to demonstrate their understanding of choreographic principles and the prescribed works studied throughout both units.

The examination consisted of seven questions and all questions were compulsory. Questions 1–3b. related to students' solo dances, learnt works and physical skills. Questions 4–7 related to dance works selected from the prescribed list of dance works published annually in the *VCAA Bulletin*. It is important to carefully check the list at the start of each year before deciding on the selection of works to be studied. Responses indicated that students had studied appropriate works from the current prescribed list.

High-scoring responses were comprehensive and demonstrated consistent use of accurate and appropriate terminology, as well as detailed knowledge and understanding of the key knowledge and skills relevant to each question.

Lower-scoring responses displayed a limited understanding of the key concept(s) involved and/or showed limited knowledge of appropriate dance terminology.

The study design contains information concerning the concepts and associated terms used in the study. It is essential that students become familiar with using the appropriate terminology in all written tasks, including the written examination.

Students are reminded to read each question carefully to ensure that they understand what is being asked. They should use their reading time to identify the key terms and concepts the question is focusing on. They should also ensure that they address all aspects of the question in their response. Diagrams were awarded marks only if they provided information in addition to written responses.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers, or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	13	9	20	15	43	2.7

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 4, Outcome 2, 'Choreography, performance and dance-making analysis'. Specifically, it related to artistry in performance.

High-scoring responses contained descriptions of the element of artistry, and how it was enhanced to help communicate the intention of the cohesive composition solo. These elements of artistry included, but were not limited to, descriptions of the use of eye and body focus, facial expression, embodying the character and using accurate timing to have a strong emotional impact on the audience. Examples needed to relate to performance, not to other processes such as composition or rehearsal.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Artistry was enhanced throughout the performance of my cohesive composition solo through the correct execution of the movement vocabulary. Maintaining clear lines and sharp angles, as well as varying the dynamics, enabled me to clearly communicate the intention of my solo to the audience, and so develop my artistry.

Furthermore, I maintained appropriate facial expressions throughout the performance. This allowed me to connect with the intention of the solo, thus, I had the ability to communicate the desired emotions in the audience to elicit appropriate feelings.

Lower-scoring responses:

- incorrectly identified elements of artistry
- referred to processes other than performance
- described elements of artistry but did not describe how they communicated the intention of the cohesive composition solo.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	10	26	60	2.4

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 3, Outcome 2, 'Choreography, performance and analysis of a skills-based solo dance work'. Specifically, it related to approaches to researching, planning, selecting and developing an intention.

High-scoring responses described at least one way that the student planned and/or researched to develop an intention for their skills-based solo. Intentions were often related to the criteria, but could have been anything the student chose, including a story.

The following is an excerpt from an example of a high-scoring response.

I first read the VCE Dance Study Design and looked at the Key Knowledge and Skills dot points. I made a list of all the requirements for skills I needed to demonstrate, such as physical skills, movement categories, and elements of movement, and then brainstormed all the movements I knew that demonstrated each criteria, creating mindmaps in my visual diary. I watched dance works on YouTube for further movement inspiration, helping to widen my movement vocabulary.

Lower-scoring responses:

- referred to developing an intention for the cohesive composition solo instead of the skills-based solo
- described choreographic or rehearsal processes rather than planning
- described the intention without links to the planning and/or research used to develop that intention.

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Average
%	7	2	1	2	3	7	10	11	12	14	16	22	7.2

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 3, Outcome 3, 'Dance technique, performance and analysis of a learnt dance work'. Specifically, it related to physical skills required to safely execute the movement vocabulary of the work as a member of a duo or group.

High-scoring responses gave a clear and detailed description of a movement phrase from their learnt dance work. They then identified two correct physical skills and outlined how those physical skills assisted them to safely execute a movement from the phrase described. Examples included, but were not limited to, an explanation of an injury that may occur if correct alignment is not used in a turn and the dancer falls out of the turn, an explanation of how strength assists a dancer to hold a balance to avoid falling over and colliding with other dancers, or an explanation of why flexibility is important to ensure a dancer does not pull a muscle while executing a high kick.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Phrase of movement vocabulary

The dancers commence a phrase sitting on the ground with their knees bent and their arms by their sides. They swing their left leg around to the right and twist the torso to the right to transition into a deep lunge with the left leg in front. They then bend their right knee and lift their right foot off the floor while reaching their right arm forward and slowly extending their left knee. They bring their arm and leg into their torso once their leg is fully extended, standing facing the corner to then kick their right leg forward as high as possible.

Physical Skill 1: BALANCE

Balance is required as the dancer stands on their left leg only while their right arm and leg were extended away from their centre. This keeps the dancer stable and prevents them from becoming wobbly and unstable which may cause them to fall over and injure themselves, or stumble into another dancer and injure them. This involves distributing weight evenly through the soles of the foot and engaging the core so that the dancer is stable on one leg. When a body is balanced, their bones should be properly aligned, preventing undue strain from being placed on body parts.

Physical Skill 2: FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility of the hip joints and hamstrings is necessary to perform the high kick at the end of the phrase. Without it, the dancer will be unable to elevate their leg very high, and may tear or strain a muscle when attempting to do so because it is beyond their body's capabilities. Flexibility helps the dancer to perform the high release of the leg without hurting themselves, and enables the choreography to be accurately executed. Flexibility allows ease of movement so that the muscles and ligaments smoothly execute the movement.

Lower-scoring responses:

- identified a single movement rather than a phrase of movement
- incorrectly identified physical skills
- defined a physical skill but did not link it to movement
- identified a physical skill and movement but did not identify how the physical skill ensured the movement was executed safely
- discussed safe dance practice without linking the discussion to a movement from the phrase they had described.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	4	8	13	13	16	36	4.1

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 3, Outcome 3, 'Dance technique, performance and analysis of a learnt dance work'. Specifically, it related to demonstrating safe dance practice, including refinement of physical skills through appropriate exercises repeated and developed over time.

High-scoring responses identified one or more correct physical skills and outlined how those physical skills can be refined. The responses may have included, but were not limited to, details of exercises used to refine the physical skill, such as a tendu sequence to refine control; training programs that continuously refine and improve the skill, such as abdominal workouts to improve core strength; or a discussion of how repetition of a skill leads to refinement of that skill, such as practising a complicated phrase repeatedly to improve coordination. As the question asked for two examples, students who gave only one example received half of the available marks, no matter how detailed that one example was.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Physical skills can be refined through systematic dance training of repeating movement sequences. Repetition of a particular movement skill improves accuracy of that skill, and so a dancer has the ability to refine their movement. For example, repetition of a sequence of pirouettes allows a dancer to improve their balance, control, coordination and alignment, as the skill can be refined and made more accurate with increased repetition.

Physical skills can also be refined by stretching before dance training. Stretching of appropriate muscles elongates a dancer's line, improving the elasticity of their muscles. Thus, a dancer can refine their flexibility and alignment, ultimately improving their ability to execute movement vocabulary that requires these skills.

Lower-scoring responses:

- described injury management strategies
- did not refer to physical skills
- gave only one example, either with excessive or minimal information.

Question 4

Work chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
%	0	5	11	12	1	11	7	37	12	4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	4	7	10	12	11	17	9	8	6	7	5.8

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 3, Outcome 1, 'Dance perspectives'. Specifically, it related to influences on choices made by choreographers in relation to the intention, movement vocabulary and production aspects in the selected dance works.

High-scoring responses described two different influences that were accurate and plausible. They then discussed how each of those influences affected the intention of the dance. These responses clearly linked each individual influence with a different element of the intention. Students need to ensure they understand what an influence is.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Title of solo dance work: 'Take me to church'

Influence: Polunin's personal struggles

Polunin began training from a very young age which allowed him to develop an exceptional talent. He moved away from his family at the age of 13 to attend the Royal Ballet School, where he continued to train until he was talented enough to become a part of the Royal Ballet. He was the youngest principal to dance for the Royal Ballet and the pressure began to affect him. He began suffering from the lack of freedom he had and started taking drugs to rebel against the rigidity of the ballet world.

Impact: This impacted the intention of the dance work as it was choreographed to highlight the struggles he faced and the highlights of his career. In Section A the intention was showing the struggles and defeat. In Section B the intention demonstrated the exceptional skills of Polunin and his highest moments. In Section C the intention demonstrated the suffering he faced from the pressures in his life and Section D shows the final goodbye to his fans and the dance world which was all influenced by his personal struggles throughout his career.

Influence: Polunin's swansong

Polunin's struggles throughout his career had led him to making the decision to leave the dance world. The piece was choreographed to be a final goodbye to his fans who supported him throughout his career. It was the last chance for Polunin to demonstrate his gravity-defying elevations and artistry to the world before he moved on from his dancing career. The performance was his swansong to give Polunin one last chance to perform.

Impact: This impacted the intention of the dance work as it was conveying to his fans his story and the highlights of his career while also showcasing the struggles to his fans. In Section A and C the intention depicted the lowest points of his career. In Section B and D the intention reflected the exceptional skills of Polunin and gave audiences an opportunity to witness his talents one last time.

Lower-scoring responses:

- did not show an understanding of what influences are
- identified incorrect or implausible influences
- discussed how other elements, such as production aspects, affected the intention, rather than influences
- described the influence without discussing how it affected the intention
- described the intention without discussing how it was affected by influences
- focused on how the influence affected movement vocabulary rather than intention.

Question 5

Work chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
%	1	2	10	9	0	14	9	38	14	4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	2	5	5	9	8	14	9	11	9	9	7.0

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 3, Outcome 1, 'Dance perspectives'. Specifically, it related to influences on choices made by choreographers in relation to the intention, movement vocabulary and production aspects in the selected dance works.

High-scoring responses described two different influences that were accurate and plausible. They then discussed how each of those influences affected the movement vocabulary of the dance and included examples of movement vocabulary in their discussion. These responses clearly linked each individual influence with a different example of movement vocabulary. Students need to ensure they understand what an influence is.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Title of solo dance work: 'White rabbit's solo'

Influence: Christopher Wheeldon's training and experience

Christopher Wheeldon had very strong training in classical ballet from a young age. He trained at the Royal Ballet School where he then went on to dancing for the Royal Ballet. He spent time as a soloist for the company before he was promoted to a principal dancer. He then went on to dance for the New York City Ballet and choreographed for the company as well. He also choreographed for many other ballets such as the San Francisco Ballet and the Bolshoi Ballet.

Impact: Wheeldon's training and experience with classical ballet can be seen to impact the movement vocabulary. For example in Section B of the dance work Watson prepares for a turn using turn out of the supporting foot to then rise and step onto relevé to complete 3 attitude turns maintaining a turned out position with his elevated leg. This movement demonstrates the classical ballet background of choreographer, Wheeldon. Another example is in Section C where Watson turns out his supporting leg and developpés his other leg into the air while his arms elevate to a fifth position. This is another example of classical ballet movement influenced by Wheeldon's training.

Influence: The character of the White Rabbit

The White Rabbit was described in the Alice in Wonderland novel as a rabbit. He was described as having a nervous energy, whose characteristics were his twitchy and erratic behaviour.

Impact: This was seen to impact the movement vocabulary as Watson performed a real rabbit movement. Watson began crouched down in a curved shape on a low level to then quickly elevate his legs behind him, balancing on his hands. This movement was influenced by the character of the White Rabbit. Another example is when Watson began a plie and quickly rose to a higher level by shifting his body from side to side using a vibratory energy quickly. This movement helped demonstrate the nervous and twitchy behaviour that the White Rabbit was described to have.

Lower-scoring responses:

- did not show an understanding of what influences are
- identified incorrect or implausible influences
- linked movement vocabulary to an aspect of the intention and did not discuss influences
- described the influence without discussing how it affected the movement vocabulary
- discussed the movement vocabulary without providing any links to the influence.

Question 6

Work chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
%	1	3	12	4	1	14	4	51	8	1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	8	3	5	6	23	6	12	9	29	5.2

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 3, Outcome 1, 'Dance perspectives'. Specifically, it related to choreographic devices that are evident in the selected dance works.

High-scoring responses correctly identified a choreographic device and gave two examples of how the device was used in the dance work. The students had a good understanding of choreographic devices and how they are used to manipulate movement vocabulary. They gave two separate examples of the use of the device, and for many devices each example had two descriptions of movement: the description of the movement as it was, and how the choreographic device changed the movement. In the case of motif, high-scoring students explained what made that particular movement a motif, rather than it just being a movement that was repeated (e.g. its importance in relation to the intention). With repetition, students gave a detailed description of the movement vocabulary and made it clear that the same movement was repeated in the same way.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Title of solo dance work: 'You're all the world to me'

In Section 2 of the dance work the choreographer uses Retrograde. The phrase begins as the dancer is at a low level lying on the couch before standing to a medium level and using the pedestrian movement of running in a straight direction to the left wall where he elevates to a high level onto the wall, suspends the movement then jumps back down. The dancer then retrogrades the entire movement phrase by rewinding and reversing the original movement vocabulary. He uses the pedestrian movement of running in a straight direction towards the right. Once he reaches the right wall he moves to a low level by bending his knees and collapsing his torso to once again lie on the couch at a low level, showing Retrograde.

In Section 3 of the dance work the choreographer once again uses retrograde. He is positioned on the roof of the room as he begins to travel in a diagonal direction with his weight placed evenly between both his knees and hands. He travels by transferring his weight between these four points, creating a crawling action as he moves his head in a circular movements. The movement phrase is then retrograded by rewinding and reversing the original movement. He begins to transfer his weight continuously between all four points, crawling backwards whilst also moving his head in circular motions, showing retrograde.

Lower-scoring responses:

- incorrectly identified choreographic devices
- combined elements of different choreographic devices

- named one device but described a different device
- linked the device, or the resulting movement, to the intention, which was not required
- gave two movement examples to describe the way the movement was manipulated, but did not provide a second example of the use of the choreographic device.

Question 7

Work chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
%	0	14	15	0	17	41	9	1	3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	2	17.0

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 4, Outcome 1, 'Dance perspectives'. Specifically, it related to how group structures, spatial arrangements and the elements of spatial organisation are manipulated to communicate the intention.

High-scoring responses correctly identified the five group structures: symmetrical, asymmetrical, unison, canon and contrast. They showed an understanding of what the structure is, described at least one example of the use of the structure, and explained how the use of that structure helped to communicate the intention of the dance. Many high-scoring responses included diagrams to assist their description, particularly in regard to symmetrical and asymmetrical groupings.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Title of group dance work: 'Infra'

Group Structure 1: Symmetry

Example: In the development of section 6b, the quartet form a symmetrical shape and structure. The partnerships stand in a linear line across the stage and the inside person leans out to their partner, bending their outside knee and stretching their outside leg. They hold hands with their partner and create an angular line with the other arm pointing in an upwards direction. This balanced, symmetrical shape and structure communicates the orderly, organised and structured surface level appearance of a busy city such as London.

Group Structure 2: Asymmetry

Example: At the beginning of section 6b various groups of dancers enter the stage. A quartet occupies the upstage right corner while a trio are placed in the centre stage left area. A solo dancer begins a phrase down stage on the left. This creates an asymmetrical and unbalanced structure which communicates both the many emotional layers of a cold, heartless city and the chaos that really occurs under the surface since the stage replicates this chaos.

Group Structure 3: Canon

Example: In the beginning of section 7a, a female duet occupy centre stage. One performs a slow, sustained chasse turn and embellishes it with an arm gesture that moves across her chest then unfolds out and extends in a sideways direction. When she is finished the other female dancer replicates her movement performing the same movement directly after to form a canon. This depicts an empathetic and loving relationship between the two women. The use of canon emphasises how one is showing and guiding the other to be in touch with her emotions and allow human connection.

Group Structure 4: Contrast

Example: In the development of section 7a, a male dancer position down stage left performs small pedestrian gestures. Simultaneously the female duet face their body focus towards each other and lean backwards to create a curved arched shape of their backs. Then move towards each other with one extending an arm to support the other while she executes an arabesque. This contrasting movement highlights the emotional contrast between the groupings. The females represent a true empathetic human connection that can occur when people give way to emotional impulses. The male depicts a person trapped in social constructs and the socially acceptable behaviours he feels he can exhibit and it prevents him from experiencing the empathy of the duet.

Group Structure 5: Unison

Example: In the development of section 6b the two males in the quartet elevate their female partners at the same time who hold an arabesque position in stillness while their partner travels diagonally downstage. The males then lower the females to the ground but lift their back leg higher to a ponché position in unison. This use of unison communicates the monotonous daily work that occurs in a corporate city like London. It depicts routine and structure with the women being used like puppets or machinery.

Lower-scoring responses:

- incorrectly identified group structures or used incorrect terms
- separated canon into two parts (complex and simple) and missed addressing one of the other structures
- described the group structure but not how that structure helped to communicate the intention
- described the movement vocabulary but did not show an understanding of the group structure.