



## External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Dance
Level(s)	Higher

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

# Comments on candidate performance

## General comments

Candidates were well prepared and presented work in both practical and written elements that was of a good standard.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Planning Essay

- ◆ There was widespread evidence of well structured planning essays that captured the key elements for inclusion.
- ◆ Many candidates included detailed planning for their choreographic process.
- ◆ There was good use of appendices with some candidates giving excellent detail with particular reference to costume/design and choreographic influences.

### Technique

- ◆ Most candidates presented themselves in a professional manner, with well prepared solos and good performance qualities.
- ◆ There was evidence of a good understanding of the technical challenges at Higher level, and some candidates demonstrated their skills to a very high standard.
- ◆ There was evidence of a good understanding of alignment of the body, the use of strength and flexibility, and an ability to interpret the music with confidence and sensitivity.
- ◆ Centres, on the whole, made good choices in terms of dance styles and music choices for their candidates.

### Choreography

- ◆ Some candidates integrated visual elements into their choreography that enhanced their themes and choreographic intention.
- ◆ On the whole candidates demonstrated the ability to structure their work while utilising a range of choreographic devices.
- ◆ There was evidence of some candidates fully exploring their individual style and presenting work that was innovative and developmental.
- ◆ When questioned, some candidates were able to discuss their work with clarity and were able to analyse their work and give clear reasoning for choreographic choices made.

### Evaluation

- ◆ In general the evaluations covered the relevant points and were structured in a cohesive manner.
- ◆ Some candidates also included appendices to contextualise the evaluation of their work over the course of the planning and development stages.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Planning**

- ◆ Centres should encourage their candidates to write a more balanced planning essay. At times too much attention was given to the choreography and the personal action plan was not given the appropriate weighting.
- ◆ Some essays were over-long. Centres should continue to encourage their candidates to adhere closely to the suggested word count.

### **Technique**

- ◆ Some candidates struggled to achieve the national standard in the two solo dances. In terms of technical skills, they lacked the body awareness to achieve the alignment, strength and stamina at Higher level.
- ◆ Centres should strive to be aware of the standard of the technical elements for this level and neither make the solo either too simplistic or over technical.
- ◆ The recommended time limit for the solos should be adhered to.

### **Choreography**

- ◆ Some pieces were too simplistic, and at times the movement content was under-developed.
- ◆ Centres should strive to develop the individual's own choreographic style and encourage them to explore more fully their own choreographic vocabulary. Candidates should be mentored throughout the choreographic process, and movement choices questioned and use of 'conventional' dance steps discouraged. The recommended length of the piece is two minutes, so candidates should be encouraged to make the movement rich and relevant to their theme and not 'padded' with extraneous movement.
- ◆ In terms of costume and design, candidates should be encouraged to fully develop these elements and make their choices relevant to their theme.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

Centres should continue to refer to the online resources, exemplars and dance update letters available from SQA.

Centres should refer to the following to present their candidates to meet the Marking Instructions guidelines:

- ◆ Word count for planning essay
- ◆ Encourage candidates to create their own individual choreographic style
- ◆ Length of choreography
- ◆ Utilise fully costume and design elements in their choreography
- ◆ Technical skills in dance which reflect national standards at Higher level.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	370
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	380
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## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 200				
A	42.6%	42.6%	162	140
B	30.3%	72.9%	115	120
C	16.3%	89.2%	62	100
D	2.4%	91.6%	9	90
No award	8.4%	-	32	-

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.