



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Dance
Level(s)	Higher

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

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

In general candidates were well presented and prepared for the external assessment event.

There was evidence of thoroughly researched choreography, and practical solos were of a good standard.

There was again an increased number of centres presenting candidates for external assessment this year.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Planning Essay

- ◆ In the main, the planning essays were well conceived and written in a cohesive and structured way.
- ◆ There was evidence of effective use of appendices.
- ◆ There was evidence of a good level of knowledge of choreographic processes and use of structures.
- ◆ Some candidates wrote particularly well in the personal action plan section of the essay, demonstrating thorough knowledge of training principles in relation to themselves and dance technique.

Technique

- ◆ Candidates were generally well prepared for the two solo performances.
- ◆ Candidates were able to demonstrate the requisite technical skills required for Higher level.
- ◆ There was evidence of candidates performing with attention to the use of space, dynamics and performance qualities.
- ◆ Some candidates also demonstrated an excellent grasp of technical skills in terms of alignment, strength and flexibility.

Choreography

- ◆ There was evidence of some excellent choices of themes that were translated well into a piece.
- ◆ Some candidates chose music that suited their theme and demonstrated a sophisticated use of music within their pieces.
- ◆ Candidates also used costumes that were well thought through and, in some instances, innovative and creative.
- ◆ Some candidates used their use of movement and choreographic devices to great effect, creating work that was insightful and creative.

Evaluation

- ◆ Most of the evaluations were well written and covered the relevant points required.

- ◆ There was evidence of some very good reflection on candidates' own work and recommendations for the future.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Planning Essay

- ◆ Centres need to continue to be vigilant about the word count for the planning essays. Some essays continue to be over-long.
- ◆ Candidates continue to place their personal action plan in the appendix. The appendix is there for candidates to supplement their essay. Marks are not given to the appendix, and some candidates lost marks because of this. The personal action plan must be included in the main body of the plan to achieve the 10 marks available here.

Technique

- ◆ Centres are urged to comply with the recommended time duration for the two technical dance solos. Candidates can be disadvantaged if the dance is over-long.
- ◆ It is recommended that centres make sure that the styles chosen are sufficiently distinct in style and tempo to provide candidates with sufficient scope to demonstrate their skills and qualities.
- ◆ Centres should consider the distinctiveness between styles — for example, contemporary dance is not equivalent in technical demands/qualities to a lyrical jazz piece.
- ◆ Some candidates should continue to work on their posture, alignment and technical skills with attention to performance qualities and stagecraft.

Choreography

- ◆ Centres should continue to develop choreographic skills in their candidates' work. For instance, a motif is a short movement phrase and not simply a single movement in isolation.
- ◆ Some candidates should develop their movement content more fully and avoid using more recognisable dance steps. They should be developing movement that fully reflects their theme in the time allotted for the piece.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to develop their choreography to suit the theme as opposed to choreographing in a particular dance style; they should be encouraged not to limit their creativity.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres are advised to continue to refer to the online resources, exemplification and Dance Update Letters available from SQA.

Centres should remember the following key points in order to present their candidates successfully:

- ◆ the word count for the planning essay
- ◆ the scope and purpose of the personal action plan and including this in the main body of the Planning essay (not in the Appendix)
- ◆ the duration of technical dance solos
- ◆ the standard of technical skills in dance solos; these should reflect national standards for Higher Dance Practice

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	357
Number of resulted entries in 2013	370

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	42.7%	42.7%	158	140
B	32.2%	74.9%	119	120
C	15.4%	90.3%	57	100
D	1.4%	91.6%	5	90
No award	8.4%	100.0%	31	-

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.