



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Dance Practice
Level	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

Candidates on the whole were well prepared and presented work of a high standard.

New centres need to continue to access the guidance and support provided by SQA prior to the Visiting Assessor (VA) visit. Exemplification of written work (Planning and Evaluating) is available on SQA's secure website and there is an annual Subject Update letter. The detailed Marking Instructions for the Practical Assignment, Planning, Development and Evaluation stages, are also available on SQA's public website, www.sqa.org.uk. In 2011, centres will be issued with an Instructions to Centres document prior to the Visiting Assessor's visit.

A Higher Dance Update Event is planned for the end of January 2011. This event will focus on assessment, exemplification of national standards and exam administration.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Planning essays

There was evidence of well written planning essays with extensive research and sophisticated writing skills.

Some candidates made full use of the appendices and referred to these well through the main body of the essay.

There was evidence that candidates had engaged well with the planning process and were using this to clearly inform their choreographic processes and personal improvement in their dance technique.

Dance techniques

Candidates demonstrated good quality technique in their chosen styles.

There was some excellent attention to detail and candidates showed evidence of good placement, strength and stamina.

Overall, candidates displayed some excellent performance qualities and endeavoured to engage their audience through good use of stagecraft and empathy to the movement style and music.

Choreography

There was evidence of some well crafted choreography and well informed choices with regards to theme.

Candidates who chose to develop their own choreographic language were able to fully demonstrate the elements specified in the Marking Instructions. They were able to express

their theme through more original choreography rather than choreographing a piece in a particular style.

Some pieces were very well presented in terms of costume/design and choice of music/backing track.

Evaluations — most were well written and covered the relevant points required. There was evidence of some very good reflection on candidates' own work.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Planning essays

It is to be encouraged that candidates make full use of the appendices and refer to them in the main body of the plan. The personal action plan for development should not be put into the appendix as this is not marked. The appendix is for support materials only, therefore for the 10 marks allocated to the personal action plan, candidates should be writing about all the relevant points within the main body of the essay.

Dance techniques

Some candidates struggled to reach the standard for the qualification at Higher level. In understanding the standards to be applied, centres should use the NABs for the Units as guidance. It is advised that further development is given to these candidates in terms of technical skills through the evidence required for the Units, eg development of their classwork with specific reference to technical and general dance skills in relation to alignment, control, placement and strength. It is advised that centres do not put added pressure on their candidates by exceeding the required minimum duration for the technical solos.

Candidates are required to perform two contrasting technical styles, not two dances in the same style.

All solos should be centre devised and not standard dances that already exist, eg Highland.

In the selection of skills and techniques (12 marks), teachers should chose four skills specific to the technique chosen rather than duplicating general factors of performance, eg in Jazz: a balance in a specific position, isolations, use of floor, pirouettes, jazz pas de bourre.

Choreography

Candidates should be advised to choreograph in their own style and not, for example, in a hip hop style. The Practical Assignment is designed to encourage candidates to express their own ideas and themes through their own choreography and shouldn't be limited by a particular dance style.

Centres should encourage students to use more than the minimum of two dancers in their choreography. The number of dancers in the choreography at times limited the scope of development of material.

Centres should be fully aware of the marks allocated to the choreography section of the Practical Assignment and mentor their candidates in fully using all the areas that they can gain marks in. This is with particular reference to costume/design and music.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Centres need to continue to be aware of the national standard for Higher Dance Practice and fully utilise the NABs and any support documentation provided by SQA. Centres should also take advantage of any events provided by SQA.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to choreograph in their own style.
- ◆ Centres need to fully familiarise themselves with the Marking Instructions when preparing candidates for assessment.
- ◆ Centres should familiarise themselves fully with the assessment arrangements and provide VAs with all the appropriate marking schemes in time with the guidelines provided by SQA.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	217
Number of resulted entries in 2010	288

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	44.8%	44.8%	129	140
B	32.6%	77.4%	94	120
C	18.1%	95.5%	52	100
D	1.0%	96.5%	3	90
No award	3.5%	100.0%	10	—

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, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.