



External Assessment Report 2012

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

In general, candidates were well presented and prepared for the Practical Assignment.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Planning essay

- ◆ There was evidence of well researched plans with insightful research and personal action plans.
- ◆ There was evidence of full use of appendices, and some candidates presented their work in innovative and interesting formats.

Technique

- ◆ Some centres presented candidates who were fully prepared and displayed excellent technical skills and performance qualities.
- ◆ Where centres had presented candidates in two contrasting styles there was clear evidence of a range of skills, both in terms of technical qualities and dynamics.
- ◆ The majority of candidates were well rehearsed and presented their work with confidence.

Choreography

- ◆ Some candidates presented choreographies with a strong design element that enhanced their work and integrated their theme very effectively.
- ◆ Some candidates presented pieces that fully explored their theme and fully developed their use of choreographic devices.
- ◆ On the whole the choreographies were well rehearsed and showed leadership qualities on the part of the choreographer.
- ◆ Some candidates were able to discuss with clarity their choreography when informally questioned at the assessment.

Evaluations

- ◆ There was evidence of good evaluative and reflective essays encompassing the creative processes and technical demands of the course.
- ◆ Some candidates chose to include appendices to help contextualise their evaluations.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Planning Essay

- ◆ It is advised that centres monitor more closely the length of the planning essays. A guideline is set by SQA, and candidates should be discouraged from writing over-long essays.
- ◆ Centres should ensure that the plans are individual to the candidates and do not rely on providing a template/house style.
- ◆ Centres should refer to the marking instructions to ensure that candidates give the appropriate weighting to the plans in terms of word-count.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to write about their personal action plan in the main body of the essay and not only have this element only in the appendices. Appendices are for support material and are not marked.

Technique

- ◆ Some centres presented candidates using dances that didn't include the appropriate level of technical difficulty for this level.
- ◆ Centres should ensure that the two chosen styles are sufficiently different in style, dynamics and technical qualities.
- ◆ Centres should consider carefully the music choices for the two techniques and provide candidates with the opportunity to express themselves in terms of speed and performance opportunities for self-expression.
- ◆ Centres should continue to ensure that in the preparation of their candidates they are being introduced to the technical elements at the appropriate level for this qualification.

Choreography

- ◆ Centres should continue to encourage candidates to further develop their choreographic skill. It is important at this level that candidates are able to fully explore motif and development. It is not enough at this level for a motif to consist of one movement, for example.
- ◆ There was evidence of a high number of candidates choosing a narrative structure for their choreography. Centres should encourage further development of candidates' knowledge and understanding of structure and form.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to use a style of choreography that fully expresses their chosen theme — not a particular dance style that limits their creativity.
- ◆ Where the guideline is a minimum of two minutes for the length of choreography, candidates should be discouraged from presenting choreographies that are over-long.

Evaluation

- ◆ The written notes (200 words max) that are taken into the evaluation assessment should be individual to each candidate, not given to them by the centre.
- ◆ It was evident in some centres that the standard of writing was of a substantially lower level than the written plans. Centres need to take into account the comments made earlier in this report and be careful not to 'over mentor' candidates when writing the planning essays.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Centres are encouraged to revisit and regularly refer to the marking instructions, NAB materials, exemplification and online resources.
- ◆ Centres should familiarise themselves fully with the assessment arrangements for the Visiting Assessment, and should refer to the annual SQA Dance update letter, which contains new information and advice and guidance.
- ◆ In terms of technical dance skills, centres should use the full time available to them to develop correct alignment, strength and flexibility.
- ◆ Attention to the planning essays for future candidates should include: adhering to the appropriate word count, and writing the personal action plan fully in the main body of the essay.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	294
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	357
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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	42.0%	42.0%	150	140
B	30.8%	72.8%	110	120
C	20.2%	93.0%	72	100
D	3.1%	96.1%	11	90
No award	3.9%	100.0%	14	-

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.