



Course report 2019

Subject	Dance
Level	National 5

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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 assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper continues to strengthen external assessment for National 5 Dance, allowing candidates to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding developed throughout the course. At the 2018 grade boundary meeting, concerns were raised about the inclusion of hidden optionality as the level of demand differs within the options. Therefore, the 2019 paper and future papers will ask for specific content rather than give options within questions.

Generally, candidates understood the requirements for all three sections in the question paper, however many did not provide enough detail to access all the marks available for each question. Some candidates misunderstood key terminology used for National 5 Dance and were disadvantaged because of this. In the 2019 question paper, a range of dance styles were used for section 2 including, jazz, contemporary, ballet and hip hop. In section 3, many centres chose a professional dance that allowed candidates to analyse the use of key choreographic principles and relate this to the intentions of the piece. However, a number of centres continue to use choreographies created for TV shows and competitions that only last a maximum of two minutes. These choreographies do not offer enough scope for candidates to fully respond to specific questions, particularly questions 9 (on motif development) and question 11 (on structure).

Practical activity

Centres presented candidates with a range of abilities and a wide range of marks were accessed, giving a clear indication that national standards are understood.

The collaborative marking model of a sample of 12 candidates was well received by all centres. Visiting assessment for the 2019 National 5 Dance practical activity was a successful and positive experience for centres.

Choreography

Centres are encouraging candidates to use creative movement, rather than dance steps that have no meaning. There was clear evidence that some centres had worked hard to help candidates gain the skills and confidence required to apply creativity and inform their use of original movement, with a slight move away from candidates selecting predictable themes.

Choreography review

The majority of candidates presented their choreography review as a written report. Centres are required to mark the choreography reviews before the assessment day. This allows more time for professional dialogue between the visiting assessor and the centre assessor. This assessment process was well received by all centres. Many centres clearly understood the requirements of the choreography review and many candidates were able to access the top band of marks.

Almost every centre was very well prepared for visiting assessment, with all documentation and candidate mark sheets complete and ready for use. This, in turn, streamlined assessment time and helped make the process run smoothly for the candidates.

Performance

The collaborative marking model of a sample of 12 candidates was well received by all centres. Visiting assessment for the 2019 National 5 Dance performance was a successful and positive experience for centres.

Jazz, contemporary and lyrical were the most common styles of dance presented across all centres at National 5 level. Some centres presented a commercial dance solo for performance. This is an up and coming dance style that helps to engage candidates in the subject and allows them to demonstrate their strengths in performance qualities. While this is encouraged for the performance component to ensure the National 5 course is current for candidates, it is, however, difficult to define the history of commercial dance as it is an evolving dance style that changes alongside current music trends.

Centres presented candidates with a range of abilities and a wide range of marks were accessed. A number of candidates accessed the top band of marks, demonstrating the level of technical ability and performance quality is improving across centres and giving a clear indication that national standards are understood. Most centres met the demands of performance through suitably choreographed dances that were appropriately challenging and well received by candidates.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Many candidates interpreted and understood the requirements for question 1. They answered this with a clear and detailed response, demonstrating knowledge of the use of strength when travelling. Question 4 was well answered. Candidates clearly completed self-evaluation tasks throughout the course and understood the value of this development method to improve skills.

Overall, candidate responses for question 7 were good. Candidates demonstrated a secure knowledge of the origin of their selected style. Many candidates provided enough detail in their responses to access the highest mark bands.

Many candidates answered questions 8, 9(a), 10 and 11(a) from section 3 well. They related appropriate choreographic principles to the intentions of the selected professional piece. The theatre arts question performed particularly well, demonstrating candidates' understanding of the impact of theatre arts on the theme/intentions of the piece.

Practical activity

Choreography

There was a small shift away from predictable themes for choreography at National 5. Candidates were well prepared through creative tasks and improvisation workshops as they found the transition to the final choreography more straightforward and were able to apply creativity to the duet presented for examination.

Choreography review

Many candidates researched their themes thoroughly to ensure secure understanding and were able to apply their knowledge to review their choice of choreographic principles. Many candidates articulated their creative decision in detail to access the top band of marks.

Performance

The majority of candidates were well prepared for their chosen solo assessment and were able to concentrate and focus, ensuring they produced the best performance possible.

Candidates were secure in their technical skills, so were able to concentrate on the quality of their movement during their performance. It was evident that candidates worked hard to develop and improve performance quality. They were able to access the full range of marks. Jazz and contemporary were the most popular dance styles this year and they were performed well. Many centres introduced commercial dance style this year, which many candidates performed well.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Section 1

Question 2: candidates were expected to evaluate the use of turnout, however, many candidates discussed turnout in general instead of referring to personal performance.

Question 3: some candidates did not demonstrate knowledge of musicality and referred to timing. This should be covered through learning and teaching, both practically and in classroom settings.

Section 2

Question 5: some candidates found it difficult to explain the use of dynamics for their selected dance style. Dynamics is a skill that overlaps all components within National 5 Dance and candidates should be familiar with this skill, which can help to enhance performance and choreography. Candidates should have knowledge of the dynamic quality used to help identify the selected dance style they have studied to prepare for the question paper. Through various learning and teaching approaches, candidates should have the opportunity to gain knowledge of this skill and apply it to solo performances, choreography workshops or study the professional choreographer's use of dynamics to develop key movements.

Questions 6(a) and 6(b): some candidates did not select an appropriate influential choreographer to answer the questions. They referred to someone in the dance profession who had influenced them, rather than the selected dance style they had studied. It is essential candidates are guided towards suitable influential choreographers who have had an impact on a style of dance.

Question 6(b): many candidates did not fully answer this question, as they did not articulate the influence the choreographer had on the dance style.

Section 3

Question 9(b): some candidates found it difficult to explain the developments of a key movement or motif in the professional choreography they studied. This is a key choreographic principle that candidates should have the opportunity to study to prepare fully for the demands of the question paper.

Question 11(b): this was challenging for candidates who had studied professional choreographies with limited content and application of choreographic principles (mainly dances choreographed for competition) and these candidates were disadvantaged.

Some candidates could not access the full range of marks because the professional work they studied did not have enough choreographic content for them to discuss.

Practical activity

Choreography

Some candidates lacked knowledge and understanding about what equates to original movement and how to develop key movements through choreographic devices and spatial elements. In some centres, candidates were trying to tell elaborate stories in two-minute choreographies. Candidates would be better advised to focus on developing one key aspect of the story and working on communicating a clear structure through the dance. Focus given to the creative journey and the development of movements, devices, spatial elements and structure throughout the year is key to providing the foundations for choreography.

Choreography review

When candidates were unable to follow a methodical structure in their choreography review, it was challenging to follow their thoughts in an organised manner.

In a few centres, candidates were unable to relate the use of choreographic devices to the creative theme/intention in any depth.

Performance

In a small number of centres, the tutor-choreographed technical solos presented for examination had limited technical requirements and style-specific steps lacking challenge and breadth. It is vital candidates are given the opportunity to demonstrate their technical skills as appropriate to the dance style to reach the national standards for National 5 Dance.

Some candidates did not demonstrate an understanding of the style-specific steps, characteristics and features in particular for contemporary dance.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

It was evident that many candidates did not fully understand the requirements of the command words used in the question paper. Centres should focus on the meaning of command words to fully equip candidates for the question paper. Centres should also encourage candidates to use dance terminology correctly throughout the course. This will help candidates to articulate their knowledge in their responses to the question paper.

A significant number of candidates were able to access high marks for performance, particularly for performance skills. However, they find it challenging to transfer their knowledge to the question paper. For example, they struggle to articulate the fundamental skills of musicality in section 1 or dynamics in section 2 for the selected dance style. Centres can take an integrated approach to technical and performance skills. Learning both in a practical and classroom setting can ensure candidates fully understand all the key skills in the National 5 Dance Course.

Centres should guide candidates through learning and teaching activities that identify the key stylistic features, influential choreographers, history and developments of the selected dance style for section 2 before candidates undertake independent learning activities. At times, the information candidates source can be inaccurate. Centres should encourage candidates to provide detailed responses to written tasks and complete practice papers to prepare for the question paper.

It is important that centres select an appropriate professional choreography to study for section 3. Candidates need to study and evaluate the use of theme, movement, structure, devices, spatial elements and theatre arts to be fully prepared for the demands of the question paper.

To prepare fully for the question paper, candidates are expected to watch a full dance production created for stage that includes the key choreographic principles listed in the course specification and will allow candidates to fully explain, describe and evaluate the choreography in detail and justify in relation to the theme and/or intentions.

Practical activity

Choreography

Centres should ensure that the foundations for developing creative movement are in place before allowing candidates to embark on choreography.

Centres should spend time with candidates, establishing what an initial motif is and exploring motif development to help communicate the theme/stimulus. If candidates understand how to apply this approach, it may discourage them from creating new steps all the time and using technical dance steps.

Centres should focus on using a structure and three devices that are appropriate to the selected theme and two people. Centres should encourage candidates to plan the use of choreographic principles before they start rehearsing with their dancers.

Choreography review

Centres should present the choreography review to candidates with a methodical structure that encourages logical thinking. When candidates present their thoughts in a disorganised manner, they often miss significant opportunities to gain marks.

Candidates should be encouraged to explore each device and the value and impact of its use within their own choreography.

Performance

Centres should ensure that candidates have a strong technical foundation to build upon before they start learning set technical dances.

Centres should ensure that candidates develop a strong performance quality, appropriate to the selected dance style. Centres should consider the best way to support the development of performance skills. To help control nerves, some candidates would benefit from more opportunities to perform solo before the final performance assessment.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	558
Number of resulted entries in 2019	693

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	41.0%	41.0%	284	70
B	25.8%	66.8%	179	60
C	20.5%	87.3%	142	50
D	8.7%	96.0%	60	40
No award	4.0%	-	28	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ 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.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.