



Course Report 2018

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| Subject | Dance |
| Level | National 5 |

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: question paper

For session 2017/2018, a question paper for National 5 Dance was introduced. There was an Understanding Standards event in October 2017, which focussed on the new question paper and exemplified the specimen question paper with candidate's responses. There was clear evidence that centres had worked hard to help candidates gain the knowledge and understanding required for this assessment.

The question paper has been well received by centres and candidates. It was pleasing that the first live question paper performed as expected, with candidates demonstrating a range of abilities. This indicates that Dance has maintained the level of demand expected at National 5 with the introduction of this method of assessment.

Generally, candidates understood the requirements for all three sections of the question paper. Jazz was the most common style used in responses for section 2, knowledge and understanding of a dance style. Some candidates misunderstood key terminology for National 5 Dance and were disadvantaged because of this.

Component 2: practical activity

The practical activity component consists of the creation of a piece of choreography for two dancers, coupled with a choreography review that demonstrates the candidate's ability to research, plan, review and evaluate the whole creative process. The choreography review can be presented in a variety of formats.

The collaborative marking model of a sample of 12 candidates was well received by all centres — the positive feedback centres gave highlights the benefits to centres of this approach to assessment. Visiting assessment for the practical activity was both a successful and positive experience for centres.

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.

Choreography

At the Understanding Standards event candidate's choreographies were exemplified to highlight the difference between a piece created with dance steps that have no meaning, and a piece created with originality and creativity. There was clear evidence that some centres had worked hard to help candidates gain the skills required to apply creativity and inform their use of original movement. There was a slight move away from candidates selecting predictable themes.

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.

Choreography review

The assessment evidence for choreography review was, for the most part, presented as a written report. Centre assessors were asked to mark the reviews prior to the assessment day, and this provided more time for a professional dialogue between the visiting assessor and the centre assessor. This assessment process was well received by all centres who found it to be beneficial to the smooth running of the day.

The majority of centres showed that they were in line with the national standard. A few centres were identified as requiring some support and appreciated the opportunity to explore the options available to them with the visiting assessor.

Component 3: performance

For course assessment, candidates perform one technical solo in their chosen dance style. This solo should allow for the demonstration of both technical ability and performance skills appropriate to National 5 level.

The collaborative marking model of a sample of 12 candidates was well received, with all centres giving positive feedback — highlighting the benefits to centres of this approach to assessment. Visiting assessment for the performance was both a successful and positive experience for centres.

Jazz and contemporary were the most common styles of dance presented across all centres at National 5.

Centres presented candidates of differing ability levels and a wide range of marks were accessed, giving a clear indication that national standards are understood. Most centres were able to meet the demands of performance through suitably choreographed dances that were appropriately challenging and well received by candidates.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper

Candidates demonstrated secure understanding of alignment and posture in question 2, and many gave a detailed example of the negative effect on performance.

Overall, many candidates were well prepared for question 4(a), and could give an accurate time and place for where the selected dance style originated.

Overall, questions 6(a) and 6(b) were generally well answered, demonstrating candidates had been well prepared for describing steps. Some candidates made reference to generic dance steps rather than style specific steps. When candidates did not access all the marks, it was because markers found it difficult to follow the description to execute the step fully and effectively.

For question 7, most candidates were able to describe the use of one device in detail to access full marks.

Many candidates were able to describe the use of costume, lighting or set design to demonstrate secure knowledge of the professional choreography they studied.

Component 2: practical activity

Choreography

It was pleasing to see a small shift away from predictable themes, and it was evident that some centres are encouraging candidates to select original and interesting themes. Where the stimulus was thoroughly researched and developed into an effective motif, candidates were able to show creativity in their choreography, and were able to access the full range of marks. It was clear the centres that had spent time preparing candidates through creative tasks and improvisation workshops, as candidates found the transition to the final choreography more straightforward.

Some candidates were able to demonstrate effective use of space and choreographic devices above the standards set for National 5.

Choreography review

The majority of candidates produced a written report. In general, the level of candidate work for the review was excellent. It was clear that when a positive learning journey was experienced, this supported discussion and reflection in a meaningful way for the choreography review.

The majority of candidates were able to articulate their creative ideas in the review in a concise and organised manner.

It was evident many candidates had carried out extensive research of their selected

stimulus, as they were able to write a detailed description of the research, and the impact in relation to the theme of the dance.

Many candidates reflected on their skills as a choreographer extensively which, in turn, demonstrated the development of transferrable life skills.

Component 3: performance

There was evidence in many centres that tutor-choreographed dances provided greater depth and challenge, allowing candidates the opportunity to access the full range of marks.

There was evidence in many centres that time had been taken to ensure candidates had acquired secure technical skills before preparing course assessment. This resulted in candidates being able to concentrate on the performance quality of their movement, as they were equipped with the required technical skills and demands for National 5 Dance.

It was evident that a number of centres had worked hard to develop and improve candidate performance quality. This ensured that candidates were able to access the full range of marks.

The majority of candidates were well prepared for their chosen solo assessment and were able to concentrate and focus, ensuring they produced their best performance possible. Centres are commended for this attention to detail.

In general, jazz and contemporary were the most popular dance style selected, and were performed well. Many centres introduced the commercial dance style this year, and many candidates performed well in this area.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

In question 1(a) some candidate's responses related to generic exercises to maintain strength or stamina, and therefore could not access all the marks available. The question asked for a technical exercise, and candidates should have referred to dance-specific technical exercises, rather than jogging or bleep test.

Many candidates who selected musicality for questions 3(a) and 3(b) referred to timing rather than musicality, and therefore could not access the marks. It was clearly evident that candidates lacked knowledge and understanding of the difference between timing and musicality.

Candidates that selected self-expression demonstrated good understanding of a task used to improve this skill.

Some candidates did not provide enough detail on the developments of the selected dance style from origins to present day to access all the available marks. Some candidates did not fully describe the developments of the selected dance style, and wrote only about the origin, or the present day, rather than both within their response.

Many candidates did not understand the terminology of a key characteristic for question 5, and referred to generic dance performance qualities such as sharp dynamics, fast speed or theatrical.

Many candidates did not answer question 8 as expected. It was clear that candidates had not fully understood the requirements of the question as they answered part (b) in part (a). Part (a) was asking for a description of the use of space, not the impact on the intention. It was evident that candidates lacked the necessary dance terminology to demonstrate a full understanding of the use of space. Candidates should have made reference to levels, formations, floor plans, directions and proximities within the response to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the use of space.

Similarly, in question 9 some candidates answered part (b) in part (a). Some candidates did not refer to mood and atmosphere in part (b), therefore they could not access any marks.

Component 2: practical activity

Choreography

In some centres there was evidence of a lack of knowledge and understanding about what equates to original movement and how it could be developed. Focus given to the creative journey and the development of movement throughout the year is key to providing the foundations for choreography.

Many candidates found it difficult to apply a choreographic structure to help convey the intentions of the duet. Many applied narrative structure, however the movement they selected lacked meaning, which therefore did not help to convey the story the candidate intended to tell through the duet.

In a few centres, candidates' use of set steps within choreography proved very limiting when awarding marks for creativity.

In some centres, candidates focus on telling a long narrative story inhibited creativity. Candidates would be better advised to focus on the development of one key aspect of the story.

Choreographic review

When candidates were unable to follow a methodical structure it was challenging to follow their thoughts in an organised manner. Centres are encouraged to help candidates structure the order of their paragraphs.

In a few centres, candidates were unable to relate the use of their choreographic devices to the creative theme/intention in any depth. Candidates are to be encouraged to explore each device and the value and impact of its use within their own choreography.

The majority of candidates were able to discuss their own strengths and weaknesses as choreographers, but could not be allocated the full range of marks because they did not discuss the impact that this then had on their choreographic process.

Some candidates still find it difficult to link the skills identified in the evaluation to the examples given, therefore are unable to access the full range of marks.

Component 3: performance

Where attention to the development of a strong and appropriate technical skills base was not evident, candidates struggled to perform well. For some candidates, a lack of centre and alignment impacted on almost every aspect of their performance.

Lack of technical ability meant that attention could not be given to performance quality, as candidates in some cases gave their full focus to completing the performance correctly. In such cases, candidates were unable to access the full range of marks.

In a small number of centres, the centre choreographed technical solo presented for examination had limited technical requirements and style-specific steps that lacked challenge and breadth. It is vital candidates are given the opportunity to demonstrate their technical skills as appropriate to the dance style in order to reach the national standards at National 5 level.

Some centres presented tutor-choreographed solo's that lacked technical skills, challenge and opportunities for candidates to demonstrate contrasting dynamics. Therefore, candidates were unable to access all the marks available.

Some centres could work with candidates to develop a greater understanding of the essence of contemporary dance. This could, in some cases, have provided more opportunities for candidates to observe professional dance works that would afford a greater insight into the performance of key style-specific steps, characteristics and features that are essential in contemporary dance performance.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper

It is vital centres prepare candidates for the question paper through encouraging appropriate use of dance terminology. This will ensure candidates understand the demand of questions and can articulate their knowledge.

Centres should ensure candidates understand the difference between technical and performance skills to fully answer section 1. It is imperative that candidates provide responses that are dance specific within section 1, rather than using methods that relate to the Physical Education course, for example, gradual build up. Candidates should have knowledge of dance specific exercises that help to develop both technical and performance skills.

Centres can prepare candidates for section 2 through different classroom activities to ensure they can provide a detailed response about the history and developments of the selected dance style.

It is important centres select an appropriate professional choreography to study for section 3. Candidates need to be able to study and evaluate the use of theme; structure; devices; and space and theatre arts in order to be fully prepared for the demands of the question paper. Some candidates could not access the full range of marks because the professional work selected did not have enough choreographic content for the candidates to discuss.

Candidates should provide an answer in the introduction question for section 3, as choreography is subjective. This allows the marker to mark the paper according to the candidate's interpretation of the theme and intentions.

Some candidates found it difficult within section 3 to reference back to the intentions of the piece. This is essential to demonstrate understanding of the choreographic principles and the impact it had on conveying the theme. Where candidates simply stated the intention they provided in the introduction question, they were unable to access marks. When preparing candidates for the question paper, it is strongly recommended that centres encourage candidates to always refer back to the intentions of the piece.

Component 2: 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 to establish what an initial motif is and how its development is key to the theme/stimulus. If the candidates understand how to apply this approach, it may discourage them from creating new steps all the time and from using technical dance steps.

Centres should focus on using a structure and three devices that are appropriate to the selected theme for two people. It is useful if candidates are encouraged to plan the use of

choreographic principles before starting the rehearsal process with their dancers.

Centres should discourage long, drawn-out storytelling and concentrate on developing original movement with a clear focus.

Choreography review

Centres should present the choreographic review to candidates with a methodical structure that encourages logical thinking. When candidates are allowed to present their thoughts in a disorganised manner, they often miss significant opportunities to gain marks. More often than not, the assessor can see that the candidate has an understanding of the area to be discussed from the choreography produced, but cannot allocate marks because this paragraph has been omitted from the final review.

Component 3: performance

Centres should ensure that candidates have a strong technical foundation from which to build, prior to embarking on set technical dances.

Centres should ensure that they give essential attention to the development of a strong performance quality, as appropriate to the chosen dance style. Centres should consider the best way to support this development and not leave it as the sole responsibility of the candidate.

To control anxiety for the performance assessment, some candidates would benefit from more opportunities to perform their solo before the final assessment day.

All candidate evidence presented at the Understanding Standards event are published on the Understanding Standards website. Additional evidence will be published for the question paper in due course following the 2018 examination.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2017 | 499 |
| Number of resulted entries in 2018 | 558 |

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 | 50.9% | 50.9% | 284 | 70 |
| B | 24.0% | 74.9% | 134 | 60 |
| C | 17.2% | 92.1% | 96 | 50 |
| D | 6.6% | 98.7% | 37 | 40 |
| No award | 1.3% | - | 7 | - |

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 which 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.

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 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.

Grade boundaries from exam 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 exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.