

Course report 2026

National 5 Dance, SCQF level 5

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

Note: we've made changes to the course assessment from session 2026–27.

Check your [subject page](#) for more information.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question paper and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they did not perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 920

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 850

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	359	42.2	42.2	70
B	195	22.9	65.2	60
C	168	19.8	84.9	50
D	102	12.0	96.9	40
No award	26	3.1	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find [statistical reports](#) on our website.

General commentary on grade boundaries

Our main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels, and to maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, we aim to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It's very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, we hold a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. We can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do

this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy.

How the course assessment performed

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected.

It was fair and accessible, and sampled a range of content from the course specification.

There was an appropriate balance of 'A' and 'C' type questions. Candidates gained marks for questions across all three sections of the paper.

Practical activity (choreography and review)

The practical activity performed as expected.

The standard of choreography presented was varied. Candidates demonstrated a range of abilities and gained a broad distribution of marks.

Most candidates presented their choreography reviews as a written report.

Performance

The performance component performed as expected.

Most candidates presented jazz and lyrical dance styles, followed by contemporary, commercial and hip hop. A few candidates chose ballet and Highland.

Candidates demonstrated a wide range of abilities, and this was reflected in the broad distribution of marks awarded. Many candidates gained marks in the highest band, indicating strong performance levels.

How candidates performed

There was a noticeable difference between candidates who performed well and candidates who did not meet the national standard.

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

Candidates performed well in section 1 and described an exercise to improve flexibility. In section 2, they detailed the origins of the dance style.

Many candidates gave good answers that demonstrated a secure knowledge and understanding of the course content. Many candidates communicated clearly and effectively.

Many candidates selected suitable professional dance works, with some choosing more current and modern pieces.

Practical activity

Choreography

Many candidates presented a choreography for two people, which was refined, well-rehearsed, included a clear structure and used three devices.

Some candidates selected interesting themes, incorporating creative and original movements. Candidates developed these themes to enhance the intentions, which helped them access the upper band of marks.

Candidates who carried out appropriate research and then used their findings to inspire movements and select choreographic principles, successfully communicated their theme.

Choreography review

Many candidates performed well in their choreographic review and accessed all available marks. They thoroughly researched and provided details of their choice of choreographic principles and linked these to their theme and intentions.

Performance

Many candidates gained high marks for their practical performance.

Many candidates presented a solo that demonstrated their own sense of performance and musicality. They confidently used varying dynamics and self-expression to access the full range of marks.

Most candidates maintained their focus and concentration throughout and delivered a strong performance.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

Many candidates did not demonstrate a clear understanding of essential dance vocabulary and/or misinterpreted the command words.

Many candidates did not demonstrate knowledge of practical skills effectively in their written responses.

Section 1

- Question 1: Many candidates did not make a clear evaluative judgement when discussing their flexibility, which limited their ability to gain all the marks available.
- Question 2: Many candidates misinterpreted the terminology and discussed other performance skills instead of quality and dynamics.
- Question 3: Most candidates focused on avoiding objects, tables or examiners in the performance area when referring to general and personal space, rather than explaining how they used space effectively in their solo.
- Some candidates demonstrated a lack of subject knowledge and understanding of the key skills, such as quality and dynamics, and personal and general space.
- Many candidates did not refer to their solo performance, make clear links to their own work, or provide relevant and specific examples.
- Some candidates demonstrated a practical understanding of creating texture and highlights in their solo performance, but their theoretical knowledge was limited.
- Some candidates used a formulaic answer structure and did not gain all the marks available. The National 5 Dance question paper has a holistic marking

approach, so a formulaic answer structure is not always suitable. Candidates must demonstrate their depth of knowledge in a detailed response rather than responding with point, evidence and impact for an explain or evaluate question.

Section 2

- Question 4: Some candidates described jazz hands as a style-specific step. Jazz hands are more appropriate for a key characteristic, as it does not require movement of the full body.
- Question 6: Most candidates provided general information on developments in music and costume, rather than responding directly to the specific requirements of the question.
- Question 6: Many candidates focused on the impact of an influential choreographer and did not explain the developments in costume and music over time.

Section 3

- Question 7(b): Most candidates did not explain how to use motif development and only explained the intentions of the movements.
- Question 8: Many candidates demonstrated a limited knowledge of lighting.

Practical activity

Choreography

A few candidates did not perform well in the practical activity.

Some candidates tried to convey complicated storylines in the 2 minutes allocated, which limited how they developed their movements. These candidates often used generic dance steps or actions that resembled mime, rather than producing original and creative movements that developed throughout the choreography to support and reinforce their chosen theme and intentions.

Some candidates showed limited evidence of planning, particularly when using choreographic devices and spatial elements. Candidates often applied them in a basic way, for example:

- two-dimensional formations
- limited use of levels
- simple partner work to communicate the intentions, which did not demonstrate creativity or development

Some candidates demonstrated a limited understanding of choreographic structure, selecting a narrative approach for their chosen theme or intentions, when a different structure may have been more appropriate.

Performance

Some candidates showed limited technical skills and only accessed the middle or low band of marks. Their performance did not demonstrate a strong technical foundation or refined technique, and required more accuracy, control and confidence to access all the marks for dance technique.

A few candidates lacked appropriate technical content in the tutor-choreographed solos and did not access the full range of marks. The style-specific steps did not provide enough challenge or variety and did not meet the level of complexity required for National 5 Dance.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper

Section 1

You should spend time with candidates covering key dance terminology and the underlying principles. Many candidates gained high marks in their solo performance but did not transfer their understanding to the question paper. This was mainly when describing and explaining the key skills of flexibility, dynamics and personal space.

When describing general and personal space, candidates should reference stage directions to support their answers. Candidates should describe how they travel through general space or extend movements within their personal space.

You should use an integrated approach to learning and teaching, as this ensures that candidates develop knowledge and understanding alongside practical skills. This approach encourages candidates to develop a deeper understanding of the key skills and principles. It also helps candidates recognise the demand of questions and use accurate dance terminology to provide a detailed answer.

Section 2

Some candidates did not fully answer the specific demands of the questions and so did not gain all the marks available.

You should make sure candidates understand the distinction between the key characteristics and style-specific steps. Support candidates to develop a clear understanding of question requirements and to link their answers to the question.

You should encourage candidates who choose Rich Man's Frug to use this work in section 2 of the question paper, as it's more appropriate for jazz history and influential choreographers.

Section 3

Candidates should start studying the set professional work early in the course, to become familiar with the full piece. This includes the movement material, choreographic principles and theatre arts used throughout.

You must make sure that candidates use a professional dance choreography. They must not select choreographies from musicals or use only one section of a full professional work, as this limits the level of detail they can provide.

You should make sure candidates understand the key choreographic principles, including:

- theme and/or stimulus
- motif development
- structure
- devices
- spatial elements
- music/sound
- theatre arts, including lighting techniques and states used in professional productions

You should provide exposure to live performance, as candidates need to view a complete professional dance choreography that demonstrates the key choreographic principles outlined in the course specification. This helps them describe, explain and evaluate the choreography in detail, and justify it in relation to the theme or intentions.

Experiencing dance in a live theatre setting is essential for building knowledge and appreciation of creative movement, choreographic principles and theatre arts. You should not limit this to the set work for section 3, as candidate exposure to a range of live dance performances improves their understanding, supports all course components and helps candidates answer the question paper.

You should spend time with candidates developing their understanding of the key command words, including describe, explain and evaluate, as this helps them fully understand the demands of each question. We outline the content for the question

paper in the mandatory section of the course specification, and you must be familiar with all content to support effective delivery.

Practical activity

You must let candidates experience experimental learning through choreography workshops. This approach is essential, as it helps candidates develop creative movement, and apply appropriate choreographic devices and spatial elements before creating their own work.

You should provide structured opportunities for candidates to explore creative movement, motif development, choreographic structure, choreographic devices and spatial elements, as this helps them apply these skills more effectively. It also reduces reliance on predictable choices, such as side-by-side formations or using unison and canon, that lack clarity and appear as poor timing.

You must make sure candidates do not perform in their own choreography.

You must mark the choreography reviews before the assessment event and use the column on the marksheet for the centre assessor's marks.

Performance

Candidates would benefit from extra opportunities to perform their solos to an audience in the assessment space before the assessment. This can help boost their confidence and improve their awareness of the space.

If using a dance studio, it's good practice for candidates to perform away from the mirrors or to cover mirrors. Candidates should perform towards the assessor to access the full range of marks.

You must make sure tutor-choreographed solos are carefully aligned with the demand of National 5 Dance, so the standard of each performance fully reflects the technical and performance requirements of the qualification. You must give all candidates opportunities to demonstrate the key technical and performance skills, such as musicality, using contrasting dynamics and using performance space effectively, so they can meet the assessment criteria. Avoid over simplifying or

diluting material. The Understanding Standards Materials section of [our secure site](#) clarifies the national expectations and appropriate solo content.

You should help candidates develop and refine technique during regular classwork. Try not to introduce the solo too early in the course, instead focus on helping candidates build a strong technical foundation. This can give them the skills required to perform with greater accuracy, control and confidence, and access the marks for dance technique.

Changes to the course assessment from session 2026–2027

We've made changes to this course following feedback. We've:

- reduced the marks for the practical activity course assessment task from 65 to 55 marks, scaling is still 45 marks
- reduced the marks for section 2: choreography review from 30 to 20 marks
- introduced a maximum word count of 1,500 words and a penalty for exceeding this by more than 10%

We've amended the practical activity details in the course specification. Please ensure learners have the updated assessment task and know to submit their word count for the choreography review. Please update your teaching notes and assessments, for example prelims, to reflect the changes.