



Course Report 2018

Subject	Dance
Level	Higher

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: performance

This component requires candidates to perform two technical solos in two contrasting dance styles. Each technical solo lasts between a minimum of 1 and a half minutes and a maximum of 2 minutes, and should allow candidates to demonstrate their technical ability and performance skills appropriate to Higher level.

Centres presented candidates with a range of abilities, and a wide range of marks were accessed, which gives a clear indication that national standards are understood. The component performed largely as expected. Feedback indicates that on a few occasions there were presentations of styles that were not sufficiently contrasting, but this did not affect the overall outcome.

Most centres were able to meet the demands of performance through suitably choreographed dances that were appropriately challenging and well received by candidates. In some centres, the solos presented for the performance component lacked technical challenge for this level, and the choreography did not allow candidates to demonstrate dynamic contrast within the solo. Resources available on the SQA Understanding Standards secure site are beneficial to ensure centres are creating solos of the appropriate standard for this level.

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.

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 performance and practical activity was both a successful and positive experience for centres.

Component 2: practical activity

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

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.

This component performed largely as expected. Feedback indicates that many candidates are not using complex structure and devices within their choreographed work, which is reflected in their marks.

Choreography

There was clear evidence that centres had worked hard to help candidates gain the skills to be more creative and informed in their use of original movement; especially when they had progressed through National 5 before embarking on Higher. There was a slight move away from the replication of a number of more predictable themes, as candidate choreography was more creative and imaginative.

Feedback highlights that candidates need to continue to work on the originality of the movement content and ensure that they are using the movements to communicate their theme, as opposed to using traditional dance steps that show the dancers technique. Structure and devices are being used, however candidates are not using a complex structure or device, and this is reflected in their marks. Levels are being used as a choreographic device, therefore candidates are not able to gain marks for space through their use of levels.

Choreography review

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

The majority of centres were fully 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.

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 performance and practical activity was both a successful and positive experience for centres

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: performance

There was evidence 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 the required technique (the foundations of performance) were put in place before focus was given to personal performance. It was also evident that the majority of candidates had progressed from National 5 Dance before embarking on Higher Dance. This resulted in candidates being able to concentrate on the performance quality of their movement, as they were equipped with the required technical skills for Higher 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 the best performance possible. Centres are commended for this attention to detail.

Jazz, contemporary and commercial were the most common styles of dance presented at Higher level, although it is also commendable that centres are utilising a wider range of styles to ensure that the candidate is demonstrating the most appropriate style for their learning.

There is still a range in levels of presentations and this is largely dependent on the skills and experience of the presenting centre. However, presentations and skills are improving each year.

Component 2: practical activity

Choreography

In many centres, it was clear that candidates had participated in a range of choreographic workshops that helped to develop their knowledge and understanding of choreographic principles. When candidates had selected a stimulus, thoroughly researched it and developed it into an effective original motif reflecting their chosen theme, and then successfully used motif development and choreographic devices to further enhance their theme, they could access the full range of marks.

Some candidates were able to demonstrate effective use of choreographic principles above the standards required for Higher.

Choreography review

The majority of candidates produced a written report, some were supplemented with a mood/stimulus board.

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 a concise and organised manner.

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

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: 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 candidates did not give attention to performance quality. Some candidates gave their full focus to completing the performance correctly, and therefore were unable to access the full range of marks.

Some candidates were not able to utilise the full performance area because they were used to performing the solo, either facing a different direction or as part of a larger group. Practising the solos individually prior to the exam would help with the candidates' use of space.

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 to reach the national standards at Higher level.

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

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.

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

While candidates are using a choreographic structure and devices within their choreographies, many are opting to use a simple structure and devices, therefore they are not able to access the full range of marks because the marking criteria at this level requires the use of complex structure and devices.

Many candidates are using levels as a choreographic device, therefore they are then not able to access marks for their use of levels within the use of space section of the marking criteria.

In some centres, candidates focusing on telling a long narrative story inhibited creativity, especially if this was derived from a movie where the candidate directly copies the story line.

Choreographic review

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

In some centres, candidates need to be more specific about how their research has influenced their movement choices and give specific examples of movements from their motif. More clarity and detail are needed when candidates are writing about spatial elements in their review. This could be helped by breaking it down into different aspects of space such as: levels, formations, direction and pathways.

The evaluation is the area of the choreographic review that candidates find the most challenging. Many candidates discuss their strengths and areas for development without referring to choreographic skills, while others do identify the choreographic skills but are not able to access the full range of marks because they do not discuss the impact that this had on their choreographic process.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: performance

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

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

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

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. Understanding that a motif is more than a single movement and how to fully utilise and develop it within their work would also be beneficial for candidates and it would help them to access the full range of marks.

Centres should focus on using a complex structure and complex devices appropriate to a theme for three or more people.

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 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.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	427
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	461
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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	53.4%	53.4%	246	98
B	27.3%	80.7%	126	84
C	11.1%	91.8%	51	70
D	1.1%	92.8%	5	63
No award	7.2%	-	33	-

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.