

NextGen: HN unit specification

Contemporary Dance (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: JLI6 47

SCQF level: 7 (16 SCQF credit points)

Valid from: August 2026

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It is for lecturers and assessors, and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver and assess the unit.

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Unit purpose

This unit enables learners to develop skills in contemporary dance, specifically:

- fundamental skills and techniques
- artistry

Entry is at your centre's discretion. We recommend the unit to learners who have completed one or more of the following:

- Dance at SCQF Level 6
- Higher Dance

Learners study this unit as part of Higher National Certificate (HNC) Dance. They can also study it on a stand-alone basis.

Learners who complete the unit may progress to further studies and/or work in the dance or performing arts industries.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

1. demonstrate fundamental skills and techniques in contemporary dance
2. demonstrate key characteristics in contrasting contemporary dance techniques
3. demonstrate contemporary dance skills and techniques in performance
4. apply critical reflection and knowledge, highlighting awareness of key skills and practices

Evidence requirements

The standard of evidence for the outcomes should be consistent with the SCQF level of the unit.

Outcome 1

Learners must demonstrate fundamental skills and techniques in contemporary dance. They must:

- participate in contemporary dance classes that include centre practice, floor work, travelling and jump phrases
- demonstrate co-ordination, control and accurate alignment and shape
- perform with an awareness of rhythmical frameworks and accents
- demonstrate appropriate interpretation of musical phrasing and dynamics

To assess learners' competence, you observe their participation in classes, in which they demonstrate the knowledge and skills required for this outcome.

You must complete an assessor checklist and record the assessment for evidence. You must clearly label each learner, for example, with a badge or a sheet of paper attached to their clothing, using either a number or a letter system. Each learner's label must be clearly visible on the recording. No more than eight learners should be in each recording.

Outcome 2

Learners must demonstrate key characteristics in contrasting contemporary dance techniques. They must:

- perform a minimum of three movement phrases in contrasting contemporary dance techniques (each lasting a minimum of 40 seconds)
- demonstrate the key characteristics of the chosen techniques
- demonstrate appropriate intention and dynamics
- demonstrate use of space and spatial awareness

To assess learners' competence, you observe their performance of a minimum of two contrasting choreographed phrases.

You must complete an assessor checklist. You may record the assessment for evidence.

Outcome 3

Learners must demonstrate contemporary dance skills and techniques in a performance. They must:

- participate in a live performance of contemporary dance
- perform tutor-set choreography
- demonstrate effective use of the performance space
- demonstrate artistic expression and communication

To assess learners' competence, you assess their performance of a tutor-set choreography lasting a minimum of 2 minutes. Learners can perform a solo or in a group.

You must complete an assessor checklist and record the assessment for evidence.

You must clearly label each learner, for example, with a badge or a sheet of paper attached to their clothing, using either a number or a letter system. Each learner's label must be clearly visible on the recording. No more than eight learners should be in each recording.

Outcome 4

Learners must apply critical reflection and knowledge, highlighting awareness of key skills and practices. They must:

- participate in a professional discussion, demonstrating their self-reflection and understanding of key skills and practices

To assess learners' competence, you assess their reflections and responses through a professional discussion lasting a minimum of 5 minutes.

You must complete an assessor checklist. You may record the assessment for evidence.

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • posture and alignment • connection in movement • technical centre and floor work • travelling floor work and jumps • varied dance rhythms and time signatures • musical phrasing and dynamics and how they enhance performance 	<p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate correct posture and alignment throughout a contemporary class • demonstrate connection and flow throughout a contemporary class • demonstrate technical skills in both centre and floor work phrases • demonstrate travelling floor work and travelling and jump phrases • perform with an awareness of rhythmical frameworks, accents and dynamics
<p>Outcome 2</p> <p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key characteristics of contemporary dance techniques • use of breath • weight placement and transference • strength and control • intention and dynamics and how they enhance performance 	<p>Outcome 2</p> <p>Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate contrasting contemporary dance techniques • demonstrate effective use of breath, weight placement and transference, momentum, and gravity • perform with the appropriate intention and dynamics required in a given contemporary dance technique

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 3</p> <p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diverse expressive movement qualities • synthesis of artistry and technique • spatial awareness • projection and communication with the audience 	<p>Outcome 3</p> <p>Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpret and express a range of movement qualities while performing contemporary dance • integrate technique and expressive artistic qualities in the performance of contemporary dance • perform with appropriate spatial awareness • project and communicate with the audience to convey the mood, emotion or character of the choreography
<p>Outcome 4</p> <p>Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of reflection • the importance of listening skills • how to analyse and evaluate their personal technical and artistic performance • ways to evaluate their focus and approach • how to identify and implement strategies leading to personal progression 	<p>Outcome 4</p> <p>Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse and reflect on their technique and performance skills in contemporary dance • evaluate the effectiveness of their focus and approach in the studio • set targets for progression • identify and implement strategies to achieve personal goals

Meta-skills

You must give learners opportunities to develop their meta-skills throughout this unit. We have suggested how to incorporate the most relevant ones into the unit content, but you may find other opportunities.

Self-management

This includes focusing, integrity, adapting and initiative. The most relevant are:

- focusing:
 - remaining focused throughout classes and performance assessments
 - retaining and applying feedback in a consistent way to build on technical and artistic development
- integrity:
 - contributing in a positive way to class (or rehearsals)
 - being punctual and prepared for class (or rehearsals)
- adapting:
 - working with others
 - responding to new and challenging choreography
 - responding and adjusting to varying musical rhythms and tempos
 - adapting movement phrases (choreography) to work in different performance spaces
- initiative:
 - creating and developing movement phrases
 - instigating individual and group development tasks

Social intelligence

This includes communicating, feeling, collaborating and leading. The most relevant are:

- communicating:
 - engaging with tutors and fellow dancers
 - engaging in reciprocal feedback tasks
 - communicating through expressive movement qualities
- feeling:
 - developing empathy with fellow dancers
 - demonstrating empathetic responses to music and tone
 - demonstrating empathetic responses to character and mood
 - developing synchronicity with the emotional states of other dancers
 - demonstrating inclusivity in practice
- collaborating:
 - working with fellow dancers to develop movement phrases
 - working with fellow dancers to resolve challenges within movement phrases
 - absorbing and applying direction from a choreographer or tutor

Innovation

This includes curiosity, creativity, sense-making and critical thinking. The most relevant are:

- curiosity:
 - exploring self-expression
 - exploring musical response

- creativity:
 - developing artistry through creative and musical expression
 - exploring emotions through movement
- sense-making:
 - understanding terminology
 - analysing vocabulary
- critical thinking:
 - reviewing and reflecting on personal performance
 - strategising for achievement of long-term goals

Literacies

This unit provides opportunities to develop the following literacies.

Communication

- presenting and performing
- expressing emotion and feelings through movement
- working with others

Digital

- researching
- communicating and documenting

Learning for Sustainability

Throughout this unit, you should encourage learners to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability.

This includes:

- a general understanding of social, economic and environmental sustainability
- a general understanding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- a deeper understanding of subject-specific sustainability
- the confidence to apply the skills, knowledge, understanding and values they develop in the next stage of their life

The following SDGs are particularly relevant to this unit:

- 3 good health and wellbeing
- 4 quality education

Delivery of unit

This is a mandatory unit in HNC Dance.

The notional time for delivery and assessment is 80 hours. The amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your discretion.

We recommend that you run this unit throughout the duration of the HNC Dance course.

You can integrate and cross-assess this unit with the following mandatory and optional units at SCQF Level 7:

- Classical Ballet
- Jazz Dance
- Commercial Dance
- Choreographic Practice
- Contact Improvisation
- Dance Injury Prevention, Wellbeing and Health
- Dance Teaching Skills

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

This unit is designed to develop learners' contemporary dance techniques. They develop technical skills in a range of movement phrases including travelling, floor work and jumping techniques.

The contemporary dance techniques you choose to base this unit on may depend on tutor skills and experience, current trends, or demand from learners.

Learners develop strength, stamina and control through participating in regular, studio-based classes. Regular classes offer a good opportunity for learners to develop their skills and understanding of current contemporary dance techniques, as well as understanding their own strengths. Learners increase their understanding of musical phrasing and how to develop dynamic content as they participate in tutor-set choreography.

Through reflective tasks, learners have the opportunity to analyse their strengths and areas for development, increasing autonomy in their practice.

Learners will increase their knowledge and understanding of the importance of safe practice in dance through warm up, cool down and increased technical understanding.

You should use subject-appropriate language when delivering the unit. The following list of vocabulary is not exhaustive, but an indication of the level learners should be working at.

Centre practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • roll downs • plié in parallel, first, second, fourth and fifth • tendu • rond de jambe • chassé • retiré • contraction • tilts • spiral • high release • flat back
Release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arm swings • leg swings • back swings • weight transference • fall and recovery • drop, weight and momentum • somatic exercises
Travelling floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • swings • rolls • falls • slides • shunts • swipes
Travelling jumps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparation bounces • hops • gallops • jeté • bison • barrel

Resources

Classes, workshops and assessments should take place in an appropriate location, such as a dance studio, gym hall, assembly hall or stage. We recommend the location has:

- a wooden or sprung floor
- adequate heating
- a sound system
- audio and visual equipment

Staff teaching this unit should have subject expertise in Dance and be qualified to at least SCQF level 8 or equivalent. They should have appropriate knowledge of safe dance practice, including appropriate:

- posture
- alignment
- warm up and cool down
- hydration
- clothing, footwear and hair styling

Approaches to delivery

The overall unit delivery time is a notional 80 hours of contact time for delivery and assessment. We expect learners to carry out a further 80 hours of self-directed study.

Demonstrate fundamental skills and techniques in contemporary dance (outcome 1)

Learners demonstrate a full contemporary class consisting of:

- technical centre practice
- floor work
- jumps
- travelling phrases

Throughout the class, learners should demonstrate they can maintain correct posture and alignment while executing technical centre phrases, floor work phrases and travelling jumps safely and effectively.

You should introduce learners to a range of strengthening and training exercises.

You should encourage learners to record their work to help with reflection and evaluation, and engage in reciprocal peer feedback tasks to enhance their learning.

Demonstrate key characteristics in contrasting contemporary dance techniques (outcome 2)

Learners should demonstrate a minimum of three movement phrases from contrasting contemporary dance techniques that illustrate their understanding of the key characteristics of the given style.

They should understand the purpose of safe and effective weight placement and transference in static and travelling phrases.

Learners can engage in repetitive practice to develop strength, control and balance.

You can combine assessment of outcomes 1 and 2.

Demonstrate contemporary dance skills and techniques in performance (outcome 3)

Learners must perform a tutor-set choreography lasting a minimum of 2 minutes. This may be performed as a solo or in a group.

Learners should demonstrate performance skills, artistry and communication with an audience. They should explore:

- expressive movement qualities
- synthesis of artistry and technique
- the use of space in performance
- projection
- communication with the audience

The performance does not need to have a large public audience. Learners could perform to each other.

You should introduce learners to a range of recorded and, where possible, live contemporary performances.

You should encourage learners to research the work of significant choreographers and companies, and their influence on contemporary dance. They could include:

- Akram Khan Company
- Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
- BalletBoyz
- Company Wayne McGregor
- Gauthier Dance
- Henri Oguike Dance Company
- Kidd Pivot
- Motionhouse
- Nederlands Dans Theater
- Rambert

- Richard Alston Dance Company
- Scottish Dance Theatre
- Pina Bausch
- Matthew Bourne
- Christopher Bruce
- Mark Bruce
- Merce Cunningham
- Isadora Duncan
- Katherine Dunham
- Martha Graham
- Rudolf von Laban
- José Limón
- Twyla Tharp
- Jasmin Vardimon
- Charles Weidman

You should encourage learners to record their work to help with reflection and evaluation, and engage in reciprocal peer feedback tasks to enhance their learning.

Apply critical reflection and knowledge, highlighting awareness of key skills and practices (outcome 4)

Learners must participate in a professional discussion, lasting a minimum of 5 minutes, demonstrating their self-reflection and understanding of key skills and practices.

The conversation should be centred around the learners' progress, strengths, areas for development and strategies to achieve personal goals.

Approaches to assessment

Use your professional judgement when observing learners in class and assessments to ensure all knowledge and skills are evidenced and consistent with the SCQF level of the unit.

Evidence can be generated through a range of assessment types. For this unit, we recommend performance, and oral or written.

You must record assessments for outcomes 1 and 3, and retain them as evidence with your assessor observation checklist. You may record the assessments for outcomes 2 and 4, but this is not mandatory. You can combine assessment of outcomes 1 and 2.

Demonstrate fundamental skills and techniques in contemporary dance (outcome 1)

For their assessment, learners must demonstrate sound and secure contemporary dance technique through a complete contemporary class without tutor demonstration or verbal instruction.

Practical demonstration must include:

- technical centre practice
- floor work
- jumps
- travelling jumps

You assess learners on an ongoing basis and in a prepared demonstration class.

Demonstrate key characteristics in contrasting contemporary dance techniques (outcome 2)

For their assessment, learners should demonstrate a minimum of two movement phrases in contrasting contemporary dance techniques, each lasting a minimum of 40 seconds.

You assess their ability to demonstrate:

- key characteristics of the chosen technique
- appropriate intention and dynamics
- use of space and spatial awareness

Demonstrate contemporary dance skills and techniques in performance (outcome 3)

Learners demonstrate performance skills in contemporary dance. They should participate in a live performance lasting a minimum of 2 minutes and demonstrate an appropriate level of skill in:

- expressive movement qualities
- synthesis of artistry and technique
- the use of space in performance
- projection
- communication with the audience

Apply critical reflection and knowledge, highlighting awareness of key skills and practices (outcome 4)

For their assessment, learners must participate in a professional discussion, lasting a minimum of 5 minutes, demonstrating their self-reflection and understanding of key skills and practices. You assess their ability to:

- analyse and reflect on their technique and performance skills in contemporary dance
- evaluate their focus and approach in the studio
- set targets for progression
- identify and implement strategies to achieve personal goals

Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You must consider the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and those with additional support needs is available on the [assessment arrangements web page](#).

Information for learners

Contemporary Dance (SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

- what the unit is about
- what you should know or be able to do before you start
- what you need to do during the unit
- opportunities for further learning and employment

Unit information

This unit enables you to develop fundamental skills in contemporary dance. It provides opportunities for you to increase your knowledge of technique and artistry, and develop performance skills.

We recommend the unit if you have completed one or more of the following:

- Dance at SCQF level 6
- Higher Dance

During the unit, you:

- learn fundamental knowledge of contemporary dance techniques
- learn the key characteristics of contrasting contemporary dance styles
- learn about rhythm, dynamics, musical response and phrasing
- apply performance skills and artistry in performance
- engage in reflective practice to enhance your performance

You are assessed through some or all of the following:

- performance and in-class observation
- oral assessment
- written assessment
- question-and-answer sessions

When you finish the unit, you may wish to progress to further studies and/or work in the dance or performing arts industries.

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills that are useful for the dance and performing arts sector.

Meta-skills are transferable behaviours and abilities that help you adapt and succeed in life, study and work. There are three categories of meta-skills: self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

Self-management

You develop the meta-skill of focusing throughout classes and performance assessments, and when implementing feedback.

You develop integrity by being punctual and prepared, and making a positive contribution to classes and rehearsals.

You develop adapting when working with others, and when you respond to new choreography, rhythms, tempos and performance spaces.

You develop initiative by creating and developing movement phrases, and instigating group and individual tasks.

Social intelligence

You develop the meta-skill of communicating when you engage with tutors and fellow dancers, and express yourself through movement.

You develop feeling through having empathy with your fellow dancers when you dance together. You also develop empathetic responses to music, tone, character and mood. You also develop feeling by demonstrating inclusivity in your practice.

You develop collaborating when you work with fellow dancers, and receive direction from your choreographer or tutor.

Innovation

You develop the meta-skill of curiosity by exploring self-expression and your response to music.

You develop creativity through creative and musical expression, and by exploring emotions through movement.

You develop sense-making by learning, understanding and analysing terminology.

You develop critical thinking when you review and reflect on your personal performance, and plan how to achieve long-term goals.

Learning for Sustainability

Throughout this unit, you develop skills, knowledge and understanding of sustainability.

You learn about social, economic and environmental sustainability principles and how they relate to the dance and performing arts sector. You also develop an understanding of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Administrative information

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Superclass: LB

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Please check [our website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this unit.

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