



GENERAL COMMENTS

This report addresses a series of issues which should be considered in preparing for the Dance performance examination. The requirements for this examination are described on page 31 of the Dance Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design and the assessment criteria as published. These documents can be downloaded from the VCAA website www.vcaa.vic.edu.au.

Venue/performance issues

Students should ensure that any props required are already set up when assessors enter the examination room so as not to delay the assessment schedule for other students. Suitable props should be selected so as not to jeopardise the safety of either the student or assessors. Teachers should suggest guidelines so students can make informed decisions about the type of prop(s) to be used.

Students need to ensure they wear appropriate attire for both the technique and composition components of the examination. Students should wear plain, form-fitting dance wear for the technique component to ensure that assessors are able to appropriately assess technique. Costumes which reflect the expressive intention of the composition solo are appropriate; however, students should be mindful of the use of long skirts or other garments that may hamper movement. Students should rehearse in the costume a number of times prior to the examination to ensure that they are comfortable performing in the costume they have selected.

It is the students' responsibility to choose appropriate footwear for the examination and to ensure that they rehearse in this footwear prior to the examination. Bare feet or appropriate dance footwear are recommended when performing the solos as part of safe dance practice. Socks or ordinary shoes are not considered appropriate.

If the performance is interrupted, the student should continue performing as soon as possible. The music should not be turned off unless the student clearly indicates to the assessors that he/she does not wish to continue with the performance.

Students should perform at a reasonable distance from the assessors. This distance should enable the assessors to see all aspects of the student's dance movements throughout the performance.

It is important that good quality recordings are used to accompany performances, allowing both the students and assessors to hear without distortion. Students should record their music at the beginning of a new cassette tape with sufficient 'lead in' time, and should also have a spare cassette tape that has a second recording of the music. It is important that students have their music cued when assessors enter the assessment room to avoid unnecessary waiting. All recorded music accompanying the student's performance should be provided on cassette tape rather than CDs; this will avoid problems such as the music jumping while the student is performing, or music not playing at all (which may happen with burnt CDs). This information is included in the letter which accompanies the Statement of Intention form sent to schools in Term 3.

Teachers must familiarise themselves with the dance terminology used in order to properly interpret the assessment criteria. Definitions of the terms used in the assessment criteria and the Study Design are published on pages 19 – 21 of 'The Arts; VCE Dance Implementation Resource Kit' April 2001. This kit can be downloaded from the VCAA website. It is essential that students are familiar with all these terms and apply them throughout their practical work.

TECHNIQUE SOLO

General Comments

The technique solo, which is based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 3 of Unit 3, is designed to assess students' ability to demonstrate physical skills and use the elements of movement in solo performance.

Students who presented accomplished performances demonstrated a high standard of technique by displaying excellent control of a range of physical skills through various body actions. These students also showed an excellent understanding of the elements of movement by presenting a range of variations in time, space and energy combinations, and maintained excellent projection skills throughout the performance.



Criteria 1 to 4 required students to demonstrate control of a range of physical skills within a variety of body actions.

In the Dance Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design, body actions include turning, elevation, falling, gesture and locomotion. Teachers need to guide students in showing variation within each action to allow different physical skills to be demonstrated; for example, repeating an eight count phrase of turns on the diagonal from two feet to two feet will not show different physical skills though the body action of turning. Not showing variation will result in a lower score than might otherwise be achieved. Opportunities for learning and experimenting with different ways of demonstrating physical skills through body actions should be included in technique classes and undertaken on a weekly basis.

Teachers should have an understanding of the safe use of the dancer's body when teaching students to develop their techniques. Knowledge developed in Outcome 1 of Unit 1 can be applied in a practical way as students learn to safely execute various physical skills/body actions.

The choice of technique(s) used in the dance should allow the student to address each of the criteria at the highest level.

Criteria 5 to 7 required students to demonstrate skill in the use of the elements of movement; namely time, space and energy.

Most students demonstrated variation in the use of all the elements of movement throughout their solo. To develop an increased awareness, workshops on the expressive use of the elements of movement should be included as part of students' weekly classes.

Criterion 8 required students to demonstrate skill in the use of projection.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to developing their skills in projection during the rehearsal process. It appeared that some students were not well rehearsed and concentrated too heavily on remembering and/or executing the movement. Students are reminded that their performance should demonstrate the use of whole body focus and control in transitions between movements.

Other issues

Teachers should consider using checklists designed to help students monitor the degree to which they have addressed all aspects of the examination criteria.

Students' learning opportunities can be enhanced by the inclusion of sequential and integrated learning activities across all outcomes. For example, a theoretical understanding of the safe use of physical skills, body actions and the elements of movements can be developed when completing Outcome 1 of Unit 3. This understanding can then be used as a starting point from which to clarify all aspects of the criteria for the technique solo. The learnt group dance work in Unit 3, Outcome 2 should extend and develop students' use of physical skills, body actions and elements of movement through the accurate reproduction of challenging movement phrases. Activities undertaken in Unit 3, Outcome 3 should then consolidate students' understanding through exploring, learning and refining a wide range of body actions which vary the time, space and energy.

Students can develop a range of body actions which vary the use of time, space and energy by participating in set technique classes where they reproduce movement phrases. Experience in using improvisation techniques in a compositional workshop context may assist students in developing their personal movement vocabulary.

The exploration and selection of movements are crucial stages of the overall dance-making process. At these stages, students should aim to challenge themselves and extend their existing skills and movement vocabulary. Teachers can assist by monitoring the level of difficulty within the movements and advising students on ways of including safe movements which challenge them but still remain within their capabilities. Knowledge and understanding of safe dance principles developed in the dance technique Area of Study should be applied in all practical activities including performance work.

The technique solo should be presented as a single, uninterrupted performance of between two and a half minutes and five minutes duration.



Specific Information

The criteria assessed a range of movement skills and the use of the elements of movement and performance skills. Each criterion was weighted equally and was marked on an eight-point scale (0-7) that assessed the extent to which the performance demonstrated the following capabilities.

Criterion 1: Control of body alignment and coordination of body parts within a range of body actions

A high level performance demonstrated excellent control of body alignment and coordination when a range of body actions were executed. This involved the maintenance of appropriate muscle tone; the safe and appropriate alignment of head, shoulder girdle, hip, knee and ankle joints; and the complex coordination of body parts.

Criterion 2: Maintenance of stamina and control of muscular strength within a range of body actions

A high level performance demonstrated optimum use of stamina and excellent control of muscular strength within a range of body actions. This involved the use of balanced positions; turns; falls and recoveries; elevated movements and landings; and very fast or very slow movements.

Criterion 3: Control in the use of balance within a range of body actions

A high level performance demonstrated excellent control in the use of balance within a range of body actions. This involved balances using various body parts as well as the appropriate use of balance in turns, falls and elevated movements.

Criterion 4: Control in the use of flexibility within a range of body actions

A high level performance demonstrated excellent control in the use of flexibility within a range of body actions. This involved the flexible use of all joints.

Criterion 5: Skill in the varied use of time

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of time. This involved the complex use of both tempo and rhythm.

Criterion 6: Skill in the varied use of space

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of space/body shape. This involved the use of a range of curved and angular movements in both the upper and lower parts of the body.

Criterion 7: Skill in the varied use of energy

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of energy. This involved using a range of movement qualities which showed variations in the flow and force of the movement.

Criterion 8: Skill in projection

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of whole body focus, control in transitions between movements and an overall degree of performance quality.

COMPOSITION SOLO

The composition solo, which is based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 2 of Unit 4, is designed to assess students' ability to demonstrate solo compositional skills through the expressive use of spatial organisation and the composition of a unified dance piece. A unified dance composition includes a clear beginning, development(s) and a resolution.

Students generally demonstrated a good understanding of spatial organisation; however, they need to understand the importance of using sections to develop a unified composition. Students should be given the opportunity to experiment with different ways of developing and resolving a work, including developing sections by using variations of the elements of dance design.

Students who crafted outstanding compositions demonstrated a sophisticated use of spatial design to communicate their expressive intention. They also demonstrated an excellent capacity to use phrases to select and arrange movement expressively, forming a unified composition that had a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution. These students also maintained excellent performance skills throughout the solo performance.

Criteria 1 to 4 required students to demonstrate skill in the varied use of spatial organisation.

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The Dance Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design defines spatial organisation as including the use of direction, level, focus and dimension. Students should include a range of each of these aspects in their composition solo. An understanding of spatial organisation can initially be developed in a theoretical way when completing Outcome 1 of Unit 4.

Criteria 5 to 7 required students to demonstrate skill in the varied arrangement of movement into thematically related phrases and sections to express the intention of the student in a unified composition.

An understanding of the expressive use of phrases and sections can be developed in a theoretical way when completing Outcome 1 of Unit 4 and should build on an understanding of the relationship between the elements of dance design (expressive intention, form and movement vocabulary) developed in Outcome 1 of Unit 3.

Criterion 8 assessed the use of performance skills in communicating the expressive intention.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to developing their performance skills during the rehearsal process.

Other issues

Students' choice and refinement of an expressive intention on which the composition solo will be based can be influential in determining their score for the examination. The expressive intention must provide students with enough scope to develop and present a unified composition with a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution. The expressive intention should also provide stimulus for the movement vocabulary and spatial organisation to be developed.

Composition solos that were awarded low marks generally presented an expressive intention which was either unsuitable for addressing the criteria or appeared to be far too complex for the experience and/or dance skills of the student. In some cases, it seemed evident that students had not given thought to how the selection of their expressive intention could be translated to address the criteria before commencing their dance-making processes. In order to ensure that the choice of expressive intention is appropriate, teachers need to work with students as they conceptualise how the expressive intention might translate into movement.

Another common fault in low scoring composition solos was selecting a movement vocabulary which did not reflect the chosen expressive intention. The dance often began with several phrases of gestural movement to communicate the expressive intention, then lapsed into a series of movement sequences which clearly did not develop or relate to the student's chosen intention. Students need to ensure that choreographic devices are used to select and arrange the movements to form a unified relationship between the beginning, development(s) and resolution, and that they communicate their expressive intention as outlined on the pro forma presented to the assessors.

Low scoring composition solos often used gestural movements which reflected the lyrics of the music. The movement vocabulary needs to be sufficiently developed in each section to convey the chosen expressive intention. The choice of expressive intention needs to allow for a change in the movement vocabulary.

Following the structure of the music doesn't create a beginning, development and resolution for a dance work based on an expressive intention.

The choice of music should enhance the students' ability to find movement solutions in communicating the expressive intention. If students choose to combine more than one music selection it is important they consider why that is necessary. Students need to be aware that combining three different pieces of music does not automatically mean that a unified piece of music is formed. If students do combine music, they need to ensure there are appropriate transitions between the pieces and that a clear musical structure is formed. Any cuts in the music need to be clean, as badly cut music will affect the transitions between the sections.

All students completed the set pro forma provided by the VCAA outlining the expressive intention of their composition solo from beginning to resolution. Students must be careful to provide succinct information concerning the expressive intention of each section of the solo. It is not necessary to describe the use of spatial organisation or the movement vocabulary used. Teachers should guide students in the writing of this pro forma as the composition solo is marked against this outline.

Students' knowledge and understanding of safe dance principles that they developed in the dance technique Area of Study should be applied in all areas of dance-making, including performance work.



The composition solo should be presented as a single, uninterrupted performance of between two and a half minutes and five minutes duration.

Specific Information

The criteria assessed performance skills and a range of composition skills. Each criterion was weighted equally and was marked on an eight-point scale (0-7) that assessed the extent to which the performance demonstrated the following capabilities.

Criterion 1: Skill in the varied use of direction to communicate the student's expressive intention

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of direction in order to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved movement performed in circular, diagonal, forward, backward, sideward, upward and downward directions.

Criterion 2: Skill in the varied use of level to communicate the student's expressive intention

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of levels in order to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved movement performed on a range of levels from high to low.

Criterion 3: Skill in the varied use of focus to communicate the student's expressive intention

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of focus to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved the varied use of head, eyes and body focus.

Criterion 4: Skill in the varied use of dimension to communicate the student's expressive intention

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in the use of dimension to effectively communicate the student's expressive intention. This involved movement shapes ranging from small to large.

Criterion 5: Skill in the selection of movement vocabulary and expressive arrangement of movement to form a unified composition with a clear beginning

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in selecting and arranging movement to form a clear beginning section in the dance work. This involved establishing movement material through linking movement into phrases and using a range of choreographic devices to effectively introduce and communicate the student's expressive intention.

Criterion 6: Skill in the selection of movement vocabulary and expressive arrangement of movement to form a unified composition with a clear development

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in selecting and arranging movement to form a clear development section in the dance work. This involved developing the movement material through linking movement into phrases and using a range of choreographic devices to effectively contrast or compliment the movement material introduced in the beginning section.

Criterion 7: Skill in the selection of movement vocabulary and expressive arrangement of movement to form a unified composition with a clear resolution

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in selecting and arranging movement to form a clear resolution section in the dance work. This involved developing the movement material through linking movement into phrases and using a range of choreographic devices to effectively resolve and unify the dance work in relation to the movement material used in the preceding sections.

Criterion 8: Use of performance skills in communicating the student's expressive intention

A high level performance demonstrated excellent skill in maintaining, for example, appropriate levels of energy, the expressive use of movement and the use of facial expression.