



## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

This report addresses issues that students should consider when preparing for the Dance performance examination. The examination is described on pages 35 and 36 of the *VCE Dance Study Design* and in the Performance examination specifications and advice on the VCAA website on the Dance study page.

### **Dress requirements**

#### **Technique solo**

In general, students wore appropriate dance clothing when presenting this solo to enable an accurate assessment of their physical skills throughout the performance.

As in previous years, teachers and students should be advised to use the following list when considering the choice of costume.

- Assessors must be able to see the performer's body shape clearly.
- The body line should be clean and not distorted by loose or overly tight/small garments that display the dancer's undergarments.
- If wearing a long dress, ensure they are an appropriate length for the leg line to be seen. Long skirts that are not opaque are not suitable as they distort the student's alignment.
- Where sheer shirts are worn over the top of a leotard, ensure the line of the body can be clearly seen and that the shirt does not interfere with the execution of physical skills.
- Knee pads may be worn if appropriate and part of safe dance practice (ensure they do not interfere with the dancer's alignment).
- Undergarments should be neatly pinned or secured to avoid mishaps and should, ideally, match the colour of the outerwear.
- Hair should be secured off the face to enhance the student's projection and use of eye line (use sufficient hairspray and pins if necessary to hold the hair in place throughout the whole performance).
- Appropriate footwear must be worn according to the selection of movement vocabulary as part of safe dance practice (socks are an inappropriate choice and students will be asked to remove them).
- Footwear must be well secured to avoid any mishaps.
- Jewellery, especially long earrings, should be removed to avoid mishaps.

#### **Male modern- or contemporary-style dancers**

- Open, unbuttoned shirts tend to compromise the alignment of the torso; therefore, form-fitting T-shirts are recommended.
- The body line of the lower body needs to be seen; therefore, males should ensure that the selection of shorts or trackpants allows muscle strength and alignment to be assessed.

#### **Street style including hip-hop**

- The costume should be selected to reflect the choice of movement vocabulary. However, it must meet the demands of safe practice; for example, overly long trousers covering the feet do not allow the dancer to 'grip' the floor and overly baggy clothing does not allow physical skills to be adequately seen.
- High-top sneakers or runners, if appropriate for the selection of movement vocabulary, are an acceptable choice of footwear.
- If students choose to dance with a hat as a prop rather than as part of their costume, ensure it is incorporated into the execution of the movement vocabulary.

#### **Composition solo**

In general, students selected costumes and props that enhanced the expressive intention and allowed freedom of movement.

Teachers and students should be advised to use the following list when considering the choice of costume and props.

- A simple costume to support the intention should be selected.
- Students should rehearse in the costume prior to the examination in case any aspect of it hinders their ability to execute movement vocabulary.



- If props are used, it is recommended that students practise sufficiently with the selected prop(s) prior to the examination to avoid any malfunction and to ensure smooth transitions between the sections.

## Music

Most students made good choices of accompaniment, which supported the choreography of the dance. The fact that most students can easily edit music to structure their choreographic ideas has resulted in a more positive approach to the choice of music. The majority of students used MP3 players successfully.

To ensure that their assessment time runs smoothly, students need to ensure that

- any musical accompaniment is tested on the equipment that is to be used in the examination in order to avoid technical difficulties on the day of the performance or music not being recorded at all
- a backup copy of the music (on another MP3 player or cassette) is brought along on the day of the examination to allow for any technical difficulties, and, if using cassettes, the tape is at the correct starting point before entering the examination room
- if using an MP3 player, it is fully charged
- if using a smartphone, it is switched to 'flight' or 'airplane' mode, as any interruptions are the student's responsibility
- the music is cut to the appropriate duration so it does not continue after the performance has ended
- music for both solos are stored in separate folders and clearly labelled 'technique solo' or 'composition solo', in case an assessor operates the music
- if operating the music themselves, students should leave a lead-in space at the start of the music.

During the allocated 'marking through' time, it is important that students check the volume of the music and adjust it accordingly to maintain an appropriate sound level during the examination.

If students choose to use a music operator during the examination, this person is required to face away from the performer to avoid distracting the performer or assessors. To avoid any mishaps, the MP3 player is to be placed next to the amplifier and not held in the lap of the music operator. Furthermore, once the music has commenced, the MP3 player is not to be turned off until the performance has been completed.

## Time limits

The time limits for both solos are detailed in the examination specifications and included in the information for students that is sent to schools in Term 3, with notice of the examination date, time and venue.

Each solo is timed from the moment the student begins to move. Some students seemed unaware of the time limits prescribed for each component of the practical examination. If the solo dance does not meet the required duration, a penalty will be applied for equity. Students who performed shorter works often failed to achieve high scores as the dance was not fully developed and did not meet the assessment criteria at the highest level.

Teachers should advise students to ensure the duration of their solo is appropriate to their fitness level and stamina.

## Plagiarism

Teachers are advised to monitor the development of students' solos and check the originality of their work prior to the examination. Using a large amount of choreographed movement phrases or sequences and/or whole dances from YouTube or similar sources is considered plagiarism.

## Safe dance practice

Knowledge and understanding of safe dance principles that were developed in the Dance technique Area of Study should be applied in order to meet criteria 1 to 4 of the technique solo successfully.

Control of various physical skills is necessary to demonstrate safe dance practice. As in previous years, students failed to engage their core muscles appropriately and/or consistently throughout the dance to enable control over a range of physical skills. Teachers should recommend that students avoid potentially unsafe, uncontrolled and/or risky execution of movement vocabulary, including unsupported back bends and recoveries, and the execution of inverted positions where the head, neck and shoulders are compromised.

At times, students included movement vocabulary that was beyond their physical capabilities. Over-forced toe plantar flexion continued to be a problem, especially where students force the top of the foot into the floor and execute balances of a long duration.



When knee pads are worn, students need to consider the injury risk when executing falls that land directly on the knee joint, especially from elevated positions. Teachers should monitor students' falling techniques to ensure the correct use of quadriceps and core muscles and, therefore, control over the fall. Falling onto both knees from an elevated position is a professional movement and should be avoided.

Some students lacked stamina and ran out of steam by the last section. Teachers should advise students to develop their fitness over a period of time and to rehearse the more demanding sections of the choreography 'flat out' to avoid this problem.

#### **Other issues**

On the day of the examination, students need to arrive at the examination centre with sufficient time to complete administrative checks, prepare their equipment and complete an adequate warm-up. Students should also ensure they have the correct equipment and paperwork before approaching the examination area to avoid delaying the process.

When in the examination room, students should use their rehearsal time efficiently. Students need to consider the pathway of the dance, the volume of the music and the nuances of the floor surface. They should also ensure they perform the dance at an appropriate distance from the assessors and that the body facing of certain movements, such as a leg mount, is suitable for the situation. They should not perform the dance 'flat out' during rehearsal time as they may not have enough stamina left to perform at their highest level during the examination.

Each performance needs to be presented as a single uninterrupted performance. If the student either forgets the dance or experiences a costume/prop mishap, they should continue performing as soon as possible. The music should be set up by the student at the appropriate point and is not to be turned off unless the student clearly indicates to the assessors that they do not wish to continue.

### **Unit 3 – Technique solo**

The technique solo is based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 2 of Unit 3, and is designed to assess students' ability to demonstrate technical and physical skills through a range of body actions, skill in the choreographic manipulation of the elements of movement, and performance skills in solo performance.

#### **Expressive intention**

The choice of expressive intention should allow students to address each of the criteria equally. Many students chose to base their expressive intention on an exploration of the assessment criteria.

#### **Choice of dance style**

Students need to base their choice of movement vocabulary on a 'personalised' movement selection and, therefore, do not need to reflect a particular dance style. However, where a particular style(s) was selected, students should have been aware of how suitable their choice would be in terms of fulfilling the requirements of the criteria. It is important that teachers advise students that the selection of a choreographic style should facilitate the opportunity to demonstrate a range of skills, including floor, aerial, and non-locomotor and locomotor movements. A lack of range offers students less opportunity to demonstrate each physical skill effectively.

Criteria 1 to 4 required students to demonstrate their control of technical and physical skills within a range of safely executed body actions.

In high-scoring performances, students demonstrated a personalised movement vocabulary that was executed safely. These students explored a broad combination of body actions to illustrate a skilled application of various physical skills. Their performance also demonstrated an ability to control these skills through complex movement choices, such as elevations, turns and floor work.

In lower-scoring performances, students demonstrated less ability to control and execute a combination of physical skills. In an effort to attempt more complex skills, students either lost control by pushing beyond their physical limits or failed to explore a full range of skills, opting for more simplistic movements. These students need to develop their control and range of skills, including weight shifts, aerial work and control of floor skills, to ensure a broader demonstration of dance skills.

Teachers should advise students to explore the full potential of every physical skill by conducting regular dance technique classes and exploring each physical skill in detail before progressing to the next. Teachers should also increase the length of time spent on different skills, the frequency of these skills being practised and the degree of



difficulty of the skills included in students' technique classes. Systematic rehearsal of the work under performance examination conditions in the months leading up to the examination could also assist in refining the various physical skills.

Criteria 5 to 7 required students to demonstrate skill in the choreographic manipulation of each element of movement – time, space (shape) and energy – to create expression throughout the solo.

Students with high-scoring performances generally personalised the dance by manipulating the time, shapes and energy in a variety of contrasting ways. These students made full use of curved and angular shapes in interesting ways, sometimes using different parts of the body in opposition. The use of rhythm and tempo was made more complex by working with and against the music. The use of energy covered a range of movement qualities resulting in skilful arrangements of force and flow through longer phrases and movement sequences.

Students with lower-scoring performances struggled with manipulating all these elements, perhaps due to inexperience. Some students made use of time in terms of tempo and some rhythmic variation, but they were less confident with contrast in shape and energy. When energy was used, it was often sustained at one level with little variation.

Students should be encouraged to work with different musical styles, and to play around with the tempo and rhythm as well as shape and energy through various improvisations to further understand these concepts.

Teachers should advise students that a skilful manipulation of time, shape and energy will extend opportunities.

Criterion 8 required students to demonstrate skill in projecting the whole body to communicate to the audience. Students need to demonstrate the use of whole-body focus (including eye line) and control in transitions between movement phrases. Generally, students projected effectively to the audience with a confident use of eye line.

Students with lower-scoring performances lacked the confidence to project to their audience and appeared too focused on trying to remember their steps. These students often forgot movements or movement phrases, or seemed to just mark through the dance.

Students should be encouraged to regularly rehearse at a performance level in order to accurately reproduce the choreography without thinking about which movement should come next.

Teachers should allow students to perform their finished dance solo in a variety of settings prior to the examination and to rehearse regularly in a large space to develop confidence in this area.

### **Specific information**

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 a highly skilled application of the principles of alignment to maintain control through a range of safely executed body actions. This involved maintaining appropriate muscle tone, safe and appropriate alignment of head, shoulder girdle, hip, knee and ankle joints, and 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 highly skilled application of endurance to maintain control through a range of safely executed body actions, and displayed complex sequences of movements that showed a high level of muscular strength. 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 transference of weight and balance within a range of body actions**

A high-level performance demonstrated subtle adjustments of weight and transitions, and maintained a highly skilled awareness of alignment principles and balance when transferring weight through a range of safely executed body actions, including turns, falls and elevated movements.

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

A high-level performance demonstrated a highly skilled range of motion in a range of joints and maintained consistent control of flexibility through a number of safely executed body actions, including turns, falls and elevated movements.



**Criterion 5: Skill in the varied use of time**

A high-level performance demonstrated highly skilled manipulation of time to create expression throughout the execution of phrases or sections of the dance. This involved the variation of duration, tempo, accent and rhythm.

**Criterion 6: Skill in the varied use of space (shape)**

A high-level performance demonstrated highly skilled manipulation of shape to create expression throughout the execution of phrases or sections of the dance. This involved the dancer using a range of curved and angular movements in both the upper and lower body.

**Criterion 7: Skill in the varied use of energy**

A high-level performance demonstrated highly skilled manipulation of the dancer's energy. This involved exploring a range of movement qualities to show variations in the flow and force of the movement.

**Criterion 8: Skill in projection of the whole body to communicate to the audience**

A high-level performance consistently maintained projection of the whole body throughout the dance, which led to a clear interpretation of the selected movement vocabulary and communication of performance skills to the audience.

## **Unit 4 – Composition solo**

The composition solo, based on the key knowledge and skills specified for Outcome 2 of Unit 4, is designed to assess students' ability to demonstrate solo composition skills through the expressive use of spatial organisation and the development of a unified composition.

### **Expressive intention**

The choice of expressive intention should have facilitated an appropriate selection of spatial organisation and movement vocabulary to reflect the criteria.

Students who scored very highly included an appropriate amount of text to adequately describe their expressive intention in terms of a clear beginning, development(s) and resolution.

Lower-scoring expressive intentions did not have the scope to be developed and/or were not suitable to be choreographed into a unified composition. Some expressive intentions had inherent problems in that two sections were written in a similar way, compromising the clarity and development of the choreographic idea. Overly complex expressive intentions did not help students communicate their idea(s). Simplifying the idea(s) for each section of the dance would allow assessors to follow the progression of the work. Also, some students tackled experiences that were well beyond what could be expressed within the time limit.

Teachers should remind students of these aspects and that the composition is assessed against the written statement of expressive intention.

### **Props**

Often, props were used in the composition solo by students to act out their narrative or storyline rather than to support the intention. As such, they often hindered the student's creation of movement vocabulary.

Students should be advised to communicate their choreographic idea through the whole body rather than by manipulating the prop. Where props are used, they need to have an essential connection to the intention of the dance. Also, too many props can be an unnecessary distraction and may also increase the chance of a malfunction or a safe dance incident.

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

Students with high-scoring performances demonstrated a purposeful arrangement of spatial organisation that clearly reflected the expressive intention. As the intention of each section developed, there was a deliberate decision to vary the spatial organisation in a meaningful way.

Students with lower-scoring performances did not develop manipulations of spatial organisation in a purposeful way and, often, the combinations were too simplistic and/or ignored the written statement of expressive intention. If established, manipulations were often repeated throughout the progression of the solo.



Students needed to make conscious decisions about how various elements of spatial organisation would appropriately communicate their idea(s) in the planning stages of their solo.

Teachers could facilitate this process by supporting students to develop and refine the spatial organisation of the dance through the use of work plans and improvisations. Consideration should be given to understanding how performing phrases on different levels or with different uses of personal dimension, for example, changes the intention.

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

Students who gave high-scoring performances understood that the main task of constructing the solo was to devise and manipulate phrases into sections, and to demonstrate transitions between the sections to create a sense of unity relevant to the whole composition. The selection of movement vocabulary related strongly to the expressive intention in each section of the dance, resulting in the expressive intention being communicated in a meaningful way.

Students who gave lower-scoring performances either chose basic movement combinations that were based on a dance/drama or literal movement responses that did not reflect the ideas in the written expressive intention, or had complex movement vocabulary that did not change or develop to signify the changes in the sections. At times, sections were overly short and underdeveloped, which affected the way the expressive intention was communicated.

Students should be encouraged to choose an expressive intention that allows progression and development in each section. If using mime or gesture, students should consider incorporating a more varied movement vocabulary throughout the phrases/sections to accompany the gesture in order to communicate the expressive intention in a more skilful way.

Teachers could support this process by advising students to realise the expressive intention through meaningful movement choices. The communication of the expressive intention should be thought about in terms of a structure, for example, using the model of three or four sections with transitions in between. Teachers should advise students that the movement material set up in the beginning section should be used in some way to develop further manipulation(s) of the phrasing in order to build on, contrast and establish a thematic relationship between each section and create a unified composition.

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

Performance skills included maintaining appropriate levels of energy, expressive communication of movement to create meaning and appropriate use of facial expression.

Generally, students' performance skills were expressive and allowed them to communicate the expressive intention effectively.

It is important that students allocate sufficient time to rehearse their solo. They need opportunities to perform in front of an audience as often as possible to help them improve their overall performance skills and gain confidence to communicate their selected intention.

### **Specific information**

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 choreographer's expressive intention**

A high-level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of direction throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively. This involved manipulations of various directions, including circular, diagonal, forward, backward, sideways, upward and downward.

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

A high-level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of levels throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively.



**Criterion 3: Skill in the varied use of eye/body focus to communicate the choreographer's expressive intention**

A high-level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of focus throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively. This involved variations of head, eye and body focus.

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

A high-level performance maintained control and a highly skilled manipulation of dimension throughout the phrases or sections of the dance to communicate the student's expressive intention effectively. This involved manipulations of various sizes of 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 expressively 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, such as manipulation of motif, rearrangement of movement and manipulation involving repetition, 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(s)**

A high-level performance demonstrated excellent skill in expressively 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, using a range of choreographic devices to effectively contrast or complement the movement material introduced in the beginning section, and communicating the student's expressive intention.

**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 expressively 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, 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, and communicating the student's expressive intention.

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

A high-level performance demonstrated excellent skill in maintaining performance skills throughout the dance (for example, appropriate levels of energy, expressive projection of movement, use of facial/whole body expression), which led to a clear interpretation of the selected movement vocabulary to communicate the student's expressive intention.