



2008 Dance GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2008 Dance written examination paper reflected the current *VCE Dance Study Design*. As in previous years, the examination questions were based on the key knowledge and skills that underpin the outcomes in Units 3 and 4. Students were required to demonstrate their understanding of choreographic principles and the prescribed works studied in both units.

The examination paper consisted of five questions, which included a scenario question that required students to apply their knowledge and understanding of the generic processes or skills dancers use when preparing to perform and when performing solo dance works. Questions 3, 4 and 5 related to dance works selected from the Prescribed List of dance works published annually in the *VCAA Bulletin VCE, VCAL and VET*. Responses indicated that the students had studied appropriate works selected from the current prescribed list. Teachers should note that the prescribed list for 2009 has one more work added to Unit 3. All questions were compulsory and students could not attain high marks if they did not answer all questions.

The marks allocated for each question will vary from year to year and are indicated on the examination paper at the end of each question. Students should use this information to plan the length and/or amount of detail required for each response. Students undertaking VCE Dance in 2009 may use past written examinations from 2007–2008 and other material, such as Assessment Reports and sample examination material, available on the VCAA website <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au> to assist in their examination preparation. Students should be advised that this material serves only as a sample and that the number and type of questions will vary from year to year.

Students should read each question carefully to ensure they understand what is being tested. They should identify the key words and phrases, consider how the weighting of each question will impact upon the depth of knowledge required and ensure they cover all aspects of the question in their response.

Students who gained high marks in all questions demonstrated consistent use of correct terminology as well as detailed knowledge and understanding of the key knowledge and skills relevant to each question.

Students who did not gain high marks did not provide sufficient detail, displayed a limited understanding of the concept(s) involved, and/or showed limited knowledge of appropriate dance terminology. The glossary attached to the re-accredited study design contains explanations of the terms used in the study. It is essential that students become familiar with these terms early in the year and use them consistently in all written tasks, including the examination, especially when asked for a definition of a concept. Diagrams were awarded marks only if they provided information that was additional to written responses.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	3	10	10	16	9	49	4.6

This question tested students' understanding of Unit 3 of Outcome 3, rehearsal processes used to improve the group's ability to execute the choreography.

High-scoring responses described in detail three correct and/or appropriate rehearsal processes which increased the dancer's ability in a group context to execute the choreographed movement. Full marks were awarded only if the answer demonstrated a clear understanding of each rehearsal process selected.

Appropriate processes may have included:

- development of movement memory
- refinement of physical execution of movement vocabulary, phrases and sections
- development of spatial accuracy and orientation
- refinement of safe and appropriate technical skills
- refinement of choreographed variations of time, space (including shape) and energy

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- refinement of body and eye focus, facial expression and projection through the whole body
- refinement of communication of expressive intention.

Low-scoring responses overlooked the key word 'rehearsal' and either lapsed into a description of various movement creation processes rather than referring to rehearsal processes and/or used simplistic or incorrect dance terminology.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response to this question.

Repetition: we had to repeat specific movement phrases throughout the dance in order to get the choreography into our muscle memory. This helped the group improve the more challenging movement phrases (such as the execution of a series of fouettes) by practicing together.

Clarification: where appropriate we asked our choreographer questions about timing and the correct execution of steps so each dancer could further refine and clarify the execution of specific movement phrases. This enabled every dancer to work together as a group. For example the movements performed in unison could be performed in exactly the same way at exactly the same time.

Feedback: we received feedback from our teacher who told us corrections to help develop spatial accuracy. For example, one correction was to spread out into the space when executing the developpe to second. This made us aware of our placement in the space so we didn't kick each other.

Question 2

This question tested students' understanding of the generic processes or skills dancers use when:

- preparing to perform
- performing solo dance works.

This question was based on a scenario therefore students were not required to relate their answers directly to the solo dance works choreographed in Units 3 and/or 4.

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	30	3	7	5	10	5	40	3.4

High-scoring responses described in detail three clearly identified and appropriate processes used to **prepare** for a solo dance work performance. These processes refer to what a dancer does on the day of performance to prepare for performing.

Appropriate processes may have included:

- physical warming up
- orientating themselves in the performance space
- spacing of the dance in the performance space
- mental preparation and visualisation
- checking/cueing music
- thinking through and personally connecting to the expressive intention
- final run through of difficult movement phrases.

Many low-scoring responses confused pre-performance skills with movement creation processes or related their answer to the learnt group work. Students need to revise their understanding of processes as they relate to choreography, rehearsal and pre performance/performance and be able to discuss each area appropriately.

Following is an excerpt of a high level response to this question.

In preparing for a performance it is important to warm up beforehand. As a warm up should contain a cardio component a series of cardio jumps and runs combined with stretching to make sure the appropriate joints and muscle groups are warmed up prepares the body to work at full capacity during the performance. This will allow me to execute each movement to my full potential. For example I must stretch my hamstrings properly to be able to efficiently perform movements such as splitz without injury.

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Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	8	3	8	9	14	9	48	4.4

High-scoring responses described in detail three clearly identified and appropriate performance skills which enabled the dancer to execute the choreography when **performing** a solo dance work performance.

Appropriate performance skills may have included:

- technical proficiency
- knowledge and clarity of choreographed body actions
- accurate execution of the choreographed elements of movement
- accurate orientation in the performance space
- use of eye/body focus to communicate the expressive intention
- appropriate facial expression to communicate the expressive intention
- projection through the whole body to communicate the expressive intention
- use of peripheral vision and sight lines to maintain directions and pathways
- adherence to accents and phrasing in movement and/or music.

Low-scoring responses confused performance skills with pre-performance skills or movement creation processes.

Following is an excerpt of a high level response to the question.

One skill a dancer uses during the performance of a solo dance work is transference of weight. A technically demanding solo will have many directional changes, turns and elevations and it is important for a dancer to be aware of their weight placement. Awareness of correct transitions of weight between the right/left sides of the body will allow a dancer to efficiently control various body actions.

Question 3

Work chosen	None	1	2	3	4	5	6
%	0	54	16	13	13	1	4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Average
%	1	1	2	2	3	4	5	4	7	5	8	5	9	4	7	5	3	3	4	2	4	3	2	1	0	5	12.4

This question tested students' understanding of Outcome 1 of Unit 3, dance design used in solo prescribed works.

The question required students to select one prescribed solo work studied in Unit 3 and articulate the ways in which the choreographer manipulated all three elements of dance design (expressive intention, form and movement vocabulary) in relation to the selected prescribed solo work. It is interesting to note the popularity of the solo work *Cry* (Alvin Ailey) in response to this question.

The question invited an extended response to which marks were assigned using the bands of descriptors described below.

Band 1: 21–25 marks

- Answers in this range demonstrated a **highly skilled** knowledge of the prescribed work through a sophisticated and very detailed analysis of the ways in which all three elements of dance design (expressive intention, movement vocabulary and form) relate to each other throughout the whole selected dance work.
- Answers were analytical and insightful, explaining the formal structure, the number and progression of the sections, detailed examples of movement vocabulary throughout the complete solo work, including how the form and the use of movement vocabulary communicated the expressive intention throughout the selected dance work.
- Highly skilled use of correct dance terminology.

Band 2: 16–20 marks

- Answers in this range demonstrated a **competent**, but at times inconsistent, knowledge of the prescribed work through a detailed analysis of ways in which all three elements of dance design (expressive intention, movement vocabulary and form) relate to each other throughout the majority of the selected dance work.



- Answers were analytical, explaining the formal structure, the number and progression of the sections, detailed examples of movement vocabulary throughout the majority of the solo work, including how the form and the use of movement vocabulary communicated the expressive intention throughout the majority of the selected dance work.
- Competent use of correct dance terminology.

Band 3: 11–15 marks

- Answers in this range demonstrated a **sound** knowledge of the prescribed work through a fairly detailed understanding of the use of dance design throughout the majority of the work; however the analysis may have contained some inconsistencies, i.e. some elements of dance design may have been analysed in less depth.
- Answers were, on the whole, analytical, examining the work in some detail through explanation of the formal structure, examples of movement vocabulary throughout some sections of the solo work, including how the form and the use of movement vocabulary communicated the expressive intention throughout some of the selected dance work.
- Sound use of dance terminology.

Band 4: 6–10 marks

- Answers in this range demonstrated a **limited** knowledge of the prescribed work and a limited understanding of the use of the elements of dance design throughout the work, i.e. not all elements of dance design were addressed and discussion of the expressive intention was limited or not linked to the discussion of form and/or movement vocabulary.
- Answers were, on the whole, descriptive rather than analytical, examining the work in little detail with limited use of specific movement examples and/or form to illustrate the answer.
- Answers lacked the use, where appropriate, of dance terminology, or it may have been misused.

Band 5: 0–5 marks

- Answers may have shown a **minimal** knowledge and understanding of the prescribed work, with very minimal or inappropriate understanding of form and/or specific movement examples to illustrate the answer.
- The information may have included some relevant points, but these were random rather than being organised as part of a coherent structure.
- Dance terminology was rarely used and/or where it was used may have been misapplied, making the answer difficult to follow.

Responses ranked in Band 1 contextualised the linkages between the expressive intention, detailed examples of the use of movement vocabulary and form of the dance.

Lower-scoring responses often lapsed into a detailed discussion of technical/physical skills involved in performing the movement vocabulary but did not make any links to either the expressive intention and/or the form of the dance which impacted significantly upon the marks awarded for this question.

Very low-scoring responses used incorrect terminology when discussing dance design, for example, many students confused the concept of dance design with other choreographic principles such as cultural influences, and/or presented a synopsis of the expressive intention without any links to the movement vocabulary and form, or with a simplistic description of movement vocabulary and form.

Following is an excerpt of a response typical to Band 1. The work being analysed is *Cry*.

Ailey wished to convey the progressive story of servitude, pride and the liberation of female African Americans. Thus Cry was a narrative ABC form which illustrated the key ideas of this journey; slavery, pain and joyThe first section established the soloist as an African American who is a slave. This is conveyed by the manipulation of a cloth through different images such as making beds and scrubbing floors. As the phrases develop we are also given insight into her proud African heritage. This is seen when she wraps the cloth around her head and locomotes through the space like a high priestessSection two demonstrates her inner struggle pain felt as she travels through her adverse situation, enslaved by the whites. She begins the section by throwing her skirt away, demonstrating the outrage she feels. She collapses her upper torso and rotates it gently with her arms crossed in front of her. This gesture communicates that she is bound by the chains of slavery. She also uses a collapsing quality through her torso after a series of fast chenne turns, arms held in angular shapes at ear level, to convey frustration. She contracts using a vibrating quality as if crying hysterically due to her suffering. As the section progresses her frustration and anger escalate. This is shown through the motif of a scream after she falls sobbing into the folds of her skirt.....The third section resolves the dance and communicates her celebration due to her liberation. The movement vocabulary in this section employs many more traditional Black African steps to show her faith....a typically African step is when she executes foot shuffles

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while swinging her dress forwards and backwards.....she manipulates movement from the previous section such as when she opens up her arms and swings her head. The slow angular shape which conveyed pain in the second section is manipulated in this section to become fast and curved in shape showing her joy and celebration.....

Question 4

Work chosen	None	1	2	3	4	5
%	0	14	37	11	19	19

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	2	3	16	14	19	14	14	7	11	4.4

This question tested students' understanding of Outcome 1 of Unit 4, cultural influences on group prescribed works.

Responses that gained high marks accurately outlined the expressive intention of the selected prescribed group work and comprehensively discussed two relevant cultural influences which affected (or influenced) the choreographer's **choice** of the expressive intention.

Lower-scoring responses showed a limited understanding of the cultural influence(s) influence upon the choreographer's choice of expressive intention. Students accurately identified a plausible cultural influence however did not make clear the impact of this cultural influence on the choreographer's choice of expressive intention.

Very low-scoring responses tended to describe the expressive intention in too much detail and/or the identified cultural influence(s) was either discussed in an inaccurate/limited way or not discussed at all. Most failed to provide a link back to the expressive intention or discussed the movement vocabulary rather than the expressive intention.

Following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response. The work being analysed is *Steps in the Street*.

The expressive intention is to communicate the chaos, disorientation, loss and hardship experienced by people during a time which had seen many international, military, economic and political conflicts occur. It is a representation of the emotions of desperation and isolation of the human heart which had occurred as a result of turmoil. As the title suggests: Devastation – Exile – Homelessness.

Graham's choice of expressive intention would have been influenced by the political and social events leading up to 1936. The influence of World War One's huge impact and lasting devastation in many nations all over the world would no doubt have influenced such a socially and politically themed work. Around 1930, the stock market virtually collapsed, leaving many people all over the world unemployed, homeless and in terrible poverty. It also caused a political upheaval in several countries; some of which had never fully recovered from World War One. Dictators such as Hitler gained a great deal of support and power, and democracy weakened. In 1936, General Franco and his 'Nationalists' led a bloody coup in Spain, leading to a brutal three year Civil War. Therefore Graham's 'Devastation – Exile – Homelessness' captured the emotions of what millions of people were suffering.

Question 5

Work chosen	None	1	2	3	4	5
%	0	13	35	7	15	30

Question 5a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	22	0	14	0	64	2.8

This question tested students' understanding of Outcome 1 of Unit 4, choreographic principles associated with group prescribed works.

Responses that gained high marks accurately listed the four elements of spatial organisation under the heading 'Spatial Organisation', and the five types of group structures under the heading 'Group Structures'.

Low-scoring responses either contained missing aspects to the list or used incorrect dance terminology. It is essential that students develop knowledge of the choreographic principles listed in the study to be able to discuss each principle accurately.

Incorrect responses to this part of the question generally impacted on the student's response to part b. of the question.

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Following is a response which achieved a high mark.

SPATIAL ORGANISATION: level, focus, dimension and direction.

GROUP STRUCTURES: canon, contrast, unison, symmetrical and asymmetrical.

Question 5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Average
%	9	1	5	2	2	2	4	2	5	3	5	3	6	4	6	5	10	3	4	2	4	2	3	1	6	12

A maximum of six marks was awarded for each correctly defined and analysed example of the element of spatial organisation or group structure used to communicate the expressive intention in the selected dance work as specified in the question. The work analysed in this question should have been different to the work selected in Question 4.

Responses that gained high marks correctly defined two elements of spatial organisation and two elements of group structure, as specified in the question, and comprehensively analysed the choreographic manipulation of the defined element and how it communicated the expressive intention in the selected group dance work.

Lower-scoring responses did not explicitly address all parts of the question. For example, many students comprehensively analysed the choreographic manipulation of the element and how it communicated the expressive intention, however they failed to provide a definition and this lowered their overall score.

Very low-scoring responses provided superficial and general discussions of the selected work without addressing definitions or attempting to analyse choreographic manipulations of specific examples in relation to the expressive intention. This showed that the student did not understand the prescribed work beyond a basic impression made during their initial observations.

Following is an excerpt of a response which received a high mark. The work being analysed is *Road to the Stamping Ground*.

An asymmetrical group is an unbalanced proportion within the spatial design of the placement of dancers on the stage, judged by dividing the space into even sections horizontally and vertically. The dance Road to the Stamping Ground begins with three females forming a triangular shape. The expressive intention at this point is to communicate the behaviour of birds. The dancers stay in this grouping while the females perform a series of flapping movements which depict the movement of a bird. The grouping is asymmetrical as there is one dancer positioned at the front which creates an unequal proportion when the stage is divided horizontally and vertically. As birds usually fly in an arrow shape this triangular asymmetrical grouping supports the expressive intention.