

GENERAL COMMENTS

The VCE VET Dance performance examination assesses students' technical ability and interpretive skills in performance. Students perform two solo dances of different styles from a prescribed list of styles as prescribed by the VCE VET Dance program. The dances are learnt from the established dance repertoire of a choreographer or teacher. Each solo should be presented as a single, live, uninterrupted performance and be between two and five minutes in duration. Each solo must also correlate to the elective units of competency the student is enrolled in as part of the Units 3 and 4 sequence of the VCE VET Dance program and must demonstrate a distinctly different style.

The dances selected should allow students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge developed in the following units of competency from Certificate II in Dance, with selected units of competency from Certificate III:

- CUADAN305A Increase depth of jazz dance technique
- CUADAN306A Increase depth of ballet dance technique
- CUADAN307A Increase depth of cultural dance technique
- CUADAN308A Increase depth of contemporary dance technique
- CUADAN309A Increase depth of street dance technique
- CUADAN310A Increase depth of social dance technique
- CUADAN311A Increase depth of tap dance technique

While students can select from a wide range of styles, most students in 2014 chose contemporary, jazz and street. Tap, ballet, cultural and social were also selected but not with the same frequency.

The solos presented were generally appropriate in terms of duration; however, some classical variations and street dance solos did not meet the two-minute minimum requirement, which had an impact on students' marks. Excessive walking and posing, especially with pauses between pieces of music, were observed. Some solos were also excessively long. In these cases, the student's level of fitness deteriorated as the performance progressed, affecting technical execution and artistry.

The selection of movement vocabulary was generally appropriate to the skill level of individual students and the style stated; however, there were some instances where there was excessive repetition in the movement vocabulary and some instances where there was insufficient technical difficulty in the movement for students to score highly. It should be noted that the dance style should be defined by the choice of movement vocabulary selected. There were instances where some students presented solos that were a blend of two styles. The problem of clarity of styles was most evident in ballet, contemporary, street and jazz. Teachers should take care to select solos that inherently display the key characteristics of the selected style. There were instances where jazz routines were described as 'commercial' and relied heavily on street movement vocabulary, thus blurring the lines between styles.

Movement such as 'fouettes', 'développé à la seconde', 'Russian jetés', 'turns à la seconde', 'illusions' and 'six o'clocks' should not be included unless the student is technically proficient in executing these steps under performance conditions.

There were also some contemporary solos that contained unsafe movement vocabulary, placing students in a position of physical vulnerability and increasing the likelihood of injury. Teachers should avoid selecting a repertoire that contains such movement and emphasise the importance of safe dance practices.

In terms of attire and presentation, some students had hair falling over their faces or hairstyles that impacted on their ability to effectively 'spot' when turning. Students adjusted their hair during the performance and this impacted on their focus and ability to sustain performance quality. Some pants were too long and assessors could not see the student's feet. Other garments, such as T-shirts, hoodies and tops, were too baggy, preventing assessors from seeing body lines. Leggings that extend down over the feet to the toe line are inappropriate, as are socks, as they present safety issues. Romantic tutus or long skirts worn for ballet and contemporary also prevent assessors from seeing the lower body lines. Students should also not wear garments with their school name or logo in the examination.

Some solos did not have clear endings and, often, assessors were left unsure if a dance had reached its conclusion. It is suggested that the choreography and music both have a defined ending. End poses requiring students to maintain a complex balance should be carefully considered and a more secure final position chosen, such as a position on two feet or a kneeling pose.

There were some instances where students did not use the performance space effectively. There were occasions when students danced too close to assessors or even under the table. Some dances appeared to have been choreographed as group dances with minimal travelling patterns or changes of movement pathways (and this was sometimes stated as such on the Industry Statement). It is possible to use such dances, but they need to be adjusted to use the space in a manner appropriate to a solo format. These dances also contained excessive repetition of movement vocabulary, usually in the form a repeated chorus.

There were a few students who seemed very underprepared and their solos appeared to be improvised. There were also several students who appeared to present solos that were self-choreographed with reference to the VCE Dance criteria and not the VCE VET Dance criteria.

Some Industry Statements were too brief, consisting of one-word responses or inaccurate information. Statements made with reference to 'context' and 'audience' lacked clarity and accuracy. Students should not reference specific practitioners unless there is evidence of these characteristics in the movement vocabulary. The document should also not contain the name of the student's teachers or school.

Most students used an MP3 player to play their music. Teachers should remind students to set their devices to 'flight mode' as text messages received while the music was playing affected the volume of music. Music levels and normalisation of sound after the music is edited may need to be addressed to ensure sufficient volume can be achieved as some devices had a low recording level that could not be lifted to a good level for the performance.

There were also some instances where devices showed a blank screen and had to be reset before the student assumed their starting position. It is recommended that students allow sufficient lead-in time prior to the beginning of the recorded music to enable them to press play and assume their opening position.

If a student takes another student into the examination to play their music, this student should be instructed not to distract or cue the performer in any way.

Some students continue to present with tablets, laptops and CDs, which is contrary to VCAA advice.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Interpretation of criteria

For the purpose of the VCE VET Dance performance examination, skill encompasses the level of ability that a student demonstrates in all criteria, the use of a range of skills in each criterion and the degree of difficulty involved in meeting each criterion. This is the means used to distinguish between levels of performance in the demonstration of various criteria.

Both solos are assessed using the same set of criteria. The published examination criteria are designed to assess performance skills and a range of technical dance skills specific to and consistent with the stated dance styles. Each criterion is weighted equally and is marked on a 10-point scale (0–10).

Criterion 1: Correct posture and body alignment

This criterion assessed the application of correct posture and skeletal body alignment when in motion and stationary, and included assessment of style-specific whole-body alignment (including the head, torso, limbs, knees, ankles, spine and shoulders) throughout the performance. Style-specific gravity and levity is also assessed in this criterion. Some students presenting jazz and contemporary solos lacked the style-specific gravity required in these styles and their approach to gravity and levity was quite balletic.

Criterion 2: Balance

This criterion assessed the demonstration and maintenance of balance within a range of movement sequences, including maintenance, and integration of style-specific balance and stability when undertaking movement phrases. Not all solos used a wide range of balances both when stationary and in movement. Teachers should consider including different style-specific extending, folding and rotating actions that use a wide range of body parts as balance points. The lack of range was most evident in some street and contemporary solos.

Criterion 3: Flexibility

The demonstration of flexibility within a range of body parts in an integrated style-specific manner using a range of body parts (including joints and spine) was assessed in this criterion. Most solos demonstrated flexibility in the legs, but

there were occasions when these movements were not integrated into the choreography. Teachers should consider selecting pieces that enable students to demonstrate flexibility in a range of body parts.

Criterion 4: Stamina

The level of muscular and cardio-respiratory stamina sustained throughout the entire performance was assessed in this criterion. Teachers should encourage students to regularly perform their solos under performance conditions prior to the examination to ensure they have sufficient levels of fitness to execute their solos without tiring and compromising their artistry and technical execution.

Criterion 5: Isolation, coordination, weight transference

This criterion assessed the sustained coordination and control of style-specific movements including isolation and articulation of upper and lower body parts appropriate to the chosen style, and the transfer of weight and movement transitions within movement sequences. Teachers should encourage students to regularly rehearse their solos to ensure accurate technical execution and clarity in arm and head usage.

Criterion 6: Travelling and spatial awareness

The use of personal and general performance space and orientation within the performance space in a style-specific manner to create patterns and pathways using locomotor techniques are assessed in this criterion. Some solos used very simple running or walking as the only means of locomotion and some solos were very static, hardly moving from centrestage. Care should be taken to ensure that solos selected use a range of style-specific patterns and pathways, and a variety of locomotor techniques. Teachers should encourage students to regularly rehearse their solos in a space that has similar specifications to the examination space, as documented in the VCAA Advice to Teachers and examination specifications, to ensure the appropriate use of personal and general performance space and orientation within the performance space.

Criterion 7: Expressive use of movement dynamics

This criterion assessed the application of a range of style-specific expressive movement dynamics and their variations, including the force and flow of movement in an integrated manner, releasing energy in a coordinated and controlled manner. Some solos lacked a range of expressive movement dynamics and their variations, and this had an impact on the student's level of achievement in this criterion as they did not demonstrate range.

Criterion 8: Musicality, rhythm and timing

In this criterion, students were required to maintain appropriate tempi and phrasing and use of variations in timing, including variations in tempo, movement accents and rhythmic patterns, to create an authentic connection between music and dance. Most students were able to physically interpret the music and rhythm while maintaining appropriate tempi and phrasing throughout their performances.

Criterion 9: Memory retention, concentration and focus

Most students were able to score well in this criterion and demonstrated appropriate levels of concentration, focus and movement memory. Teachers should encourage students to learn their solos early in the year to enable sufficient time for rehearsal in solo format to ensure that the solos are committed to movement memory.

Criterion 10: Artistic and interpretive expression and polish

This criterion assessed students' ability to present a stylistically authentic and polished performance with stylistic nuances observed. Teachers should encourage students to learn their solos early in the year to enable sufficient time to refine their interpretive expression and create a sustained performance presence. The intention of the Industry Statement should be evident within the students' performance.