

2015 VCE VET Dance performance examination report

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 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 of the solo dances performed must correlate to the elective units of competency that the student is enrolled in as part of the Units 3 and 4 sequence of the VCE VET Dance program. Each of the two dances 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.

- CUADAN305 Increase depth of jazz dance technique
- CUADAN306 Increase depth of ballet dance technique
- CUADAN307 Increase depth of cultural dance technique
- CUADAN308 Increase depth of contemporary dance technique
- CUADAN309 Increase depth of street dance technique
- CUADAN310 Increase depth of social dance technique
- CUADAN311 Increase depth of tap dance technique

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

In general, students' Industry Statements were not well written; many were too brief, consisting of one-word responses, or contained irrelevant or inaccurate statements. Students should not reference specific practitioners or movement practices unless there is specific evidence of these characteristics in the movement vocabulary of their solos. A number of contemporary Industry Statements referenced Martha Graham and the use of the contraction and release of the torso to initiate movement; however, this was not evident in the movement vocabulary of the solo.

In terms of the 'specific style of the performance', students could respond with a description of specific nuances of the style. For example, 'This solo is a commercial jazz dance and is informed by the video clip created to accompany the music'.

In terms of 'context for the performance' it is intended that students respond with comments regarding the setting of the dance. For example, 'This dance is designed to be presented in a conventional theatrical setting featuring proscenium arch staging as part of an evening of short contemporary dance works'. Comments regarding emotion, intention or narrative are not appropriate responses.

In terms of 'the appropriate market/audience for this performance' an appropriate response might have been, 'Although the initial context for this performance is a movie set, the piece was recreated for the school dance showcase and, therefore, the intended audience for this work is teachers, parents and friends of the school community. The work, therefore, needs to appeal to a broad audience, and engage and entertain a broad demographic not necessarily familiar with viewing dance'.

The solos presented were generally appropriate in terms of duration; however, some solos did not meet the two-minute minimum requirement and this affected students' ability to fully address the criteria.

Some solos did not have a clear ending and assessors were unsure if a performance had resolved. It is suggested that the music have a defined ending and the dance have a concluding position on two feet or a kneeling pose to indicate the conclusion of the dance.

The movement vocabulary of most solos was consistent with the stated dance styles; however, there were examples when there was insufficient variety in the movement vocabulary, with the solo structure being a series of repeated phrases. It should be noted that the movement vocabulary selected should be informed by the nominated dance style. Solos should be selected on their ability to reflect the key movement characteristics of the selected style. Some solos presented in the style of jazz were heavily informed by a series of callisthenic-style tricks and lacked appropriate movement transitions and sufficient movement vocabulary consistent with the stated style. Technically complex movements such as multiple 'fouettes', 'tours a la seconde' and 'ronde de jambe en l'air' should not be attempted by students who are not yet technically proficient in their execution under performance conditions.

In terms of attire and presentation, some hairstyles impacted on the student's ability to effectively 'spot' when turning and detracted from their performance focus as they needed to adjust their hair during the performance. Some garments were excessively loose-fitting and concealed the body lines. This included flannelette shirts tied around the waist and oversized trackpants and T-shirts. Socks are not considered safe or appropriate footwear for the performance of any assessed dance style. Clothing with the student's name or school logo should not be worn into the examination room by either the student or the music player.

Most students use an iPod or iPhone to play their music. Students should be reminded to set the volume appropriately on these devices, as well as the device to which it is plugged in. The rehearsal time in the examination room prior to the commencement of the assessment should be utilised to ensure the volume is sufficient to accompany the performance.

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 assessment criteria are designed to assess performance skills and a range of technical dance skills specific and consistent with the stated dance style. Each criterion is weighted equally and is marked on a ten-point scale (0–10).

1. Correct posture and body alignment

This was generally the lowest-scoring criterion in both solos. Students were often not able to consistently maintain the application of correct posture and skeletal body alignment when in motion. In these performances core strength was limited and control and alignment of the head, torso, limbs, knees, ankles, spine and shoulders was compromised. Students scoring highly in this criterion demonstrated style-specific gravity and levity as well as maintaining their core strength, posture and skeletal body alignment throughout their solos. Some contemporary solos lacked sufficient style-specific gravity and levity.

2. Balance

This was one of the lower-scoring criteria due to either a lack of stability in the execution of balances or a limited range of balances demonstrated in the dance. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of style-specific extending, folding and rotating actions that use a variety of body parts as balance points and these should be integrated into the choreography. High-scoring performances demonstrated style-specific balances and stability that was embedded in highly complex movement phrases, and balances that were sustained and steady when stationary. Extending, folding and rotating a broad range of body parts as balance points were also characteristic of high-scoring performances.

3. Flexibility

The demonstration of this criterion was generally good and most students scored well in both dances. High-scoring solos demonstrated flexibility integrated in highly complex movements using an extensive range of body parts (including joints and spine) in a style-specific manner.

4. Stamina

The level of muscular and cardiorespiratory stamina sustained throughout the entire performance was generally good. This indicated that students had regularly performed their solos under performance conditions prior to the examination to ensure sufficient levels of fitness. Students could execute their solos to the best of their ability, without showing obvious signs of physical exertion or compromising their artistic and technical execution.

5. Isolation, coordination, weight transference

This was one of the lower-scoring criteria in both solos. Lower-scoring performances often lacked accuracy in technical execution, such as footwork not well placed, turns not 'finished' neatly and awkward movement transitions when executing less complex movement sequences. Clarity in arm and head use was also lacking in lower-scoring performances. High-scoring performances demonstrated sustained control of highly complex, style-specific movement sequences, executed with secure and confident transference of weight and movement transitions. Movement transitions integrated throughout the performance included complex and varied isolation and articulation of upper and lower body parts as appropriate to the chosen style.

6. Travelling and spatial awareness

The use of personal and general performance space and orientation was generally well done. Students used the space in appropriate, style-specific ways to create sufficient patterns and pathways using varied locomotor techniques. High-scoring students used complex and varied pathways and patterns, while low-scoring students used simple pedestrian actions only, or hardly moved from centre stage.

7. Expressive use of movement dynamics

Students generally scored well in this criterion and students executed their performances with appropriate application of a range of style-specific expressive movement dynamics. High-scoring performances included a wide range of style-appropriate movement dynamics and their variations in an integrated manner. Low-scoring performances demonstrated less range in the use of the force and flow of movements, and the energy release was not always sustained or consistent.

8. Musicality, rhythm and timing

Generally students were able to maintain appropriate tempi and phrasing throughout their performances. High-scoring students demonstrated complex and diverse variations in timing, including changes of speed, movement accents and rhythmic patterns that both corresponded to and contrasted with the accompanying movement in a manner that was authentic to the selected dance style.

9. Memory retention, concentration and focus

This was one of the highest-scoring criteria. Most students had committed their solo to movement memory and were able to execute the dance with unwavering concentration and focus. Low-scoring students had significant lapses in focus or memory. Their solos often appeared unrehearsed, with possible sections of improvisation evident.

10. Artistic and interpretive expression and polish

Most students were able to present their solos in a stylistically authentic and polished manner. Stylistic nuances were evident in the high-scoring performances, with refined, style-specific interpretive choices and a well-developed and sustained sense of performance presence.