

2016 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 in the CUA20111 Certificate II in Dance, with selected units of competency from the CUA30111 Certificate III in Dance qualification and documented by the VCAA. 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 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 use of a distinctly different style and movement vocabulary.

The dances selected should allow students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge developed in the following units of competency from the 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

Most students elected to perform solos in contemporary, jazz and street. Tap, social and ballet were also selected but not with the same frequency, and few students selected cultural dance.

The Industry Statement

Many Industry Statements were not well constructed, and responses were inaccurate or misguided. The reference of specific practitioners or movement practices and principles in the statement should be evident in the movement vocabulary and stylistic characteristics of the solos being presented. 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 solo movement vocabulary.

In terms of the 'specific style of the performance', students could have responded with a description of specific nuances of the style; for example, 'This solo is a contemporary dance piece underpinned by the fall and recovery theories of Doris Humphrey in which the dancer moves in and out of the floor. The underpinning movement theme of the ebb and flow of the ocean references her piece "Water Study"'.

In terms of 'context' it is intended that students respond with comments regarding the appropriate setting or settings for the dance. This may include theatrical proscenium arch, as part of a music

video clip, cruise ship entertainment or audition piece. Comments regarding emotion, intention or narrative are not appropriate.

'The appropriate market/audience for this performance' refers to those who would view the piece. Responses could have included teachers, parents, friends, the school community or the general public. For example, 'This street dance work was initially created to be performed outside in the school amphitheatre as part of the opening ceremony of Youth Well Being Week at our school. The audience was parents and students, carers, social workers and members of the wider school community. It was later performed on the school dance showcase and was well received by a broad demographic not necessarily familiar with viewing dance as entertainment.'

Most solos generally met the time requirements; however, some ballet solos did not meet the two-minute minimum requirement, which impacted on students' marks. Teachers should ensure that the solos selected meet the time requirement. It is appreciated that some established repertoire pieces are under the minimum time limit and teachers should either select alternative solos that meet the time limit minimum or adapt solos to meet the time requirement. There were instances when solos were too long; students could not sustain stamina and technical accuracy diminished, which impacted on their marks. These solos often contained unnecessary repetition of movement vocabulary.

Some solos did not have a defined ending and assessors were left unsure if a performance had resolved. It is suggested that both the music and dance have a defined ending. A clear concluding position or pose could be used to indicate the conclusion of the dance.

In terms of attire and presentation, most students were dressed appropriately, wearing style-specific attire that allowed visibility of body lines. Appropriate footwear and protective clothing (including knee pads) were mostly worn; however, in social dance there were instances of inappropriate footwear. Bare feet and foot thongs are not appropriate for this style of dance. Some hairstyles such as a long, high ponytail and hair out over the face impacted on a student's ability to effectively 'spot' when turning and detracted from their focus.

The movement vocabulary selected was generally style-appropriate; however, it sometimes failed to match the information stated in the Contemporary Dance Industry Statement, when referencing Martha Graham, Cunningham, Humphrey and Limon. Some solos also had an excess of repeated phrases. Some hip-hop and jazz solos used a limited range. Teachers are advised that the movement vocabulary selected should reflect the key movement characteristics of the selected style.

The use of an iPod or iPhone to play music was generally done with minimal fuss; however, students are reminded to set the volume appropriately on these devices as well as the provided external device to which it is plugged in. It is not appropriate to use a laptop to play accompanying music, and teachers should refer to the requirements and conditions set out in the VCE VET Dance performance examination specifications. Music choices were generally appropriate, with minimal music malfunctions such as text messages being received while music was playing, which caused a drop in volume when devices were not switched to flight mode.

While it is acceptable to use props, there were instances when props were merely adornment and were not an integrated aspect of 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).

Criterion 1 – Correct posture and body alignment

Correct posture and skeletal body alignment when in motion were generally satisfactory; however, a greater engagement of abdominal muscles would have enhanced students' muscular control and general alignment. 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, street and jazz solos lacked sufficient style-specific gravity and levity, with weight needing to be held lower in the body with a greater sense of connection with the floor.

Criterion 2 – Balance

High-scoring solos demonstrated style-specific balances, using a range of body parts and stability that was embedded in highly complex movement phrases. Highly complex movement phrases included static balances that were sustained with strength and stability, underpinned by correct postural alignments and abdominal engagement. Extending, folding and rotating a broad range of body parts as balance points was also characteristic of high-scoring performances.

Criterion 3 – Flexibility

The demonstration of this criterion indicated that there needed a greater focus on integration of a range of style-specific movements that demonstrate flexibility in a range of body parts. Examples include the full, fluid use of spine and torso in contemporary dance and wrist/hand flexibility in some cultural dance. 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 arrangement.

Criterion 4 – Stamina

The level of muscular and cardiorespiratory stamina sustained throughout the entire performance was generally good, and most performances were of the appropriate duration of 2–5 minutes. However, there were some solos that did not meet the minimum time requirement and this impacted on student's ability to score highly in this criterion. Additionally, some solos were too long, and as these solos progressed students demonstrated diminished levels of fitness and obvious signs of physical exertion that compromised their artistic and technical execution.

Criterion 5 – Isolation, coordination, weight transference

This was one of the lower-scoring criteria in both solos, with a lack of accuracy in technical execution. High-scoring performances demonstrated sustained control of a variety of highly complex integrated style-specific movement sequences, with multiple and varied transferences of

weight and movement transitions with varied isolation and articulation of upper and lower body parts.

Criterion 6 – Travelling and spatial awareness

Teachers/choreographers need to be aware of the performance space guidelines to ensure that choreography best utilises the space as some lower-scoring performances used simple pedestrian actions only or minimal evidence of travelling movements. Generally the use of personal and general performance space and orientation within the performance area was good. High-scoring solos used the space in appropriate style-specific ways to create complex patterns and pathways using varied locomotor techniques.

Criterion 7 – Expressive use of movement dynamics

The solos that included a wide range of style-appropriate movement dynamics and their variations in an integrated manner scored higher than solos that demonstrated less of a range of the force and flow of movements, with the energy release not sustained or inconsistently applied in a style-specific manner.

Criterion 8 – Musicality, rhythm and timing

Generally students were able to sustain appropriate tempi and phrasing throughout their solos. Complex variations of tempo, movement accents and rhythmic patterns were evident in the higher-scoring performances, with movements that corresponded and contrasted with the accompanying movement in an authentic stylistic manner. There were some instances when the selected music was too fast for students to keep up with and this affected their stamina and technical accuracy, and other instances where extremely slow accompanying music impacted on stability, posture and alignment, and balance.

Criterion 9 – Memory retention, concentration and focus

Most students scored extremely well in this criterion and completed their solos with excellent concentration and focus movement memory.

Criterion 10 – Artistic and interpretive expression and polish

Excellence in artistic expression was not limited to the most skilled students, with some of the most committed, authentic and engaging performances coming from students with moderate technical skills. Most students were able to present in a style-specific and polished manner, with stylistic refined nuances and individual interpretive choices more evident in higher-scoring performances.