



Notes and guidance: Practical guidance for non-exam assessment

A-LEVEL DANCE – 7237 – PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR NEA

Contents

You can use the title links to jump directly to the different sections of this Practical guidance for NEA.

Section	Page
Introduction	3
Visits	3
Filming	4
Paperwork	4
Programme notes	4
Solo programme note	4
Quartet programme note	5
Group choreography task programme note	6
Holistic approach to teaching and learning	6
Group choreography task	7
Successful choreography	8
Rubric infringement	8
Scheme of Assessment	8
NEA Advisers	9
Example of Course Outline and Sequencing	10

Introduction

The non-exam assessment (NEA) in A-level Dance is Component 1 *Performance and Choreography*. This is not a moderated component but an externally assessed one. The exam takes place within each centre and is assessed by a visiting examiner on a specific, agreed date between 1 March and 30 May in each year.

Examiners arrange visits directly with their allocated centres via the exams officer. Examiners can only arrange their schedules in the Spring term after examiner standardisation has taken place, meeting centres' preferences as far as possible. The examiner will not necessarily have any details regarding the number of students. Exams officers must be included in all correspondence. Once confirmed, the exam date may only be changed in **exceptional circumstances**.

The examiner is responsible for creating a timetable for the day of the exam. They are advised of the following by AQA:

- that they should be able to examine approximately 14 A-level students in one day (although no more than 6 hours, excluding breaks)
- to allow at least 9 minutes per solo, 13 minutes per quartet and 13 minutes per choreography task when creating a timetable
- to factor in breaks when required
- the order of the day should be all solos first, followed by quartets and then group choreography tasks
- if a student is dancing the same quartet more than once they need to be assessed in the first viewing of the work.

The examiner will provide the timetable prior to the exam. Other information they will need to know in advance:

- practitioner(s) chosen for Question 4
- the style/genre of the quartets for Question 5 (it is worth remembering that there is no requirement for students to perform in the style of a specified practitioner from the set works or the areas of study. However, if they do, the selected practitioner must be different to that selected for solo performance)
- running order of the students, preferably with full name and candidate number (in order to complete the student details on the mark sheets in advance).

Visits

An examiner will aim to arrive in a centre approximately 30 minutes before the start of the exam. As per safeguarding regulations, they will need to be chaperoned at all times and never left alone with students. Programme notes should be made available on arrival, preferably in the correct running order, as this will speed up the preparatory work of the examiner. The examiner will factor into the timetable meeting all students 5 minutes before the start of the exam. This will hopefully make the students feel at ease and provide an opportunity to make sure everyone is aware of the order and protocols for the day.

Filming

In preparation for the visit please make sure the filming requirements have been read and understood. Technical guidance for video recording students' practical work is available on the [subject page of the AQA website](#).

At the end of the exam, the examiner is required to take the recording away with them. This should be encrypted before they leave, using the AQA password (available either from the exams officer or the examiner). It is advisable to keep a copy of the exam recording in case there are problems with the one given to the examiner.

Paperwork

All examined students and teachers will need to sign a CRF (candidate record form) which the examiner will take away at the end of exam.

Programme notes

It is important that programme notes for **all three tasks** have the following information included at the top of the sheet:

- Centre number
- Student name
- Student number
- Question number
- Duration of dance
- Title of the aural setting
- Composer of the aural setting
- Titles are required for Questions 1 to 3
- Names/number of dancers are required for Questions 1 to 3.

Solo programme note

A programme note is required for all examined students (so they can be attached to **each** individual mark sheet). This can be personalised for the individual student or be a generic one used for the whole group. The compiling of the programme note can be an effective classroom task in preparation for the Component 2 written exam. It should reveal insight into the movement style of the practitioner chosen.

Example of a programme note in relation to Richard Alston:

'Starting points:

- Soda Lake (1981)
- Strong Language (1987)
- Roughcut (1990)

'The fast footwork and the rhythmical energy ..., the articulateness in the torso and emphasis on flow and efficiency with physical energy are all common stylistic characteristics.'

'... there is a striking spaciousness of behaviour, a leanness of line that comes from confident extension as much as physique... there is a freedom to be open, across the front of the body or by stretching one side forward above the waist or at the hips...'

'Alston's work is stronger when he maintains the freedom and explosive potential of his contemporary language and uses this in conjunction with classical formality and precision.'

Jordon (1992)

This solo performance has considered Alston's

- use of influences (Cunningham, release principles and classical ballet)
- choice and manipulation of the **three** movement components
- choice and use of the aural setting.

The word limit for this performance task (150 words) is different to the group choreography task.

Quartet programme note

A programme note is required for all examined students (so they can be attached to **each** individual mark sheet). This can be personalised for the individual student or be a generic one used for the whole group. The programme note should focus on the analysis of the style/genre chosen and being presented. There is no need for lengthy explanations of the choreographic intention.

Example of quartet programme note:

Chosen style/genre(s): Jazz/Contemporary dance

One aspect of the year 1 course content was to practically explore features and qualities within a variety of genre/styles linked to the specification. This exploration also focused on developing ensemble skills specifically linked to the context of performing within a quartet. We decided to focus on an exploration of two genres merging and the impact this has on performance. We concentrated on aspects of both Jazz and Contemporary dance which we thought would be complementary or provide a contrast to each other.

- The use of Jazz dance isolations contrasting with the fluidity of Contemporary dance.
- The use of direct correlation in relation to the music, with a focus on 'accenting' and rhythm found in both genres.
- The consideration of key ensemble skills, including spatial formations, focus, contact work and spatial awareness.
- The consideration of performance/interpretative skills within both genres in relation to facial expression, projection and focus.

The word limit for this performance task (150 words) is different to the group choreography task.

Group choreography task programme note

The length of the programme note for the choreography has a maximum word limit of 300 words. This should allow students the opportunity to explain their own individual interpretation and approach to the task, clarifying how they have translated their research and subsequent understanding of the chosen task and its focus into the final dance idea(s). It is therefore not necessary for students to describe the choreographed dance they are about to present or identify all choreographic or structuring devices used. Having a word limit encourages students to develop a succinct writing style and therefore should not be disregarded. Overly long programme notes can sometimes delay or even confuse the examiner.

Holistic approach to teaching and learning

The specification states:

'Knowledge, understanding and skills will be developed and demonstrated within performance, choreography and critical engagement with the study of professional repertoire located within specific areas of study. The study of professional dance works, within the areas of study, promotes the integration of theory and practice and underpins students' own approaches to performance and choreography.'

The following is an **example** of how to sequence the NEA practical work alongside theoretical investigation. As an example, it serves to illustrate how to consider a holistic approach to the teaching of the subject.

- The example is based on 4 hours 40 minutes of teaching time per week, split across three lessons (two studio sessions and one in a general teaching room).
- The practitioner used for Component 1, Question 4, tends to be chosen from the Compulsory Area of Study, hence the sequencing of the theoretical aspects of the Year 2 course.
- In this example, the Optional Area of Study chosen pre-dates the Compulsory Area of Study and therefore introductory/contextual work regarding the Optional Study happens in term 1 of the first year. The focus in the first term may be different when using an Optional Area of Study which sits alongside or post-dates the Compulsory one.
- Tasks undertaken in choreography could have contextual links to **any** named practitioners in the specification, thus allowing for the initial study to be made through practice.
- After the completion of the practical exam, all lessons are focused on the completion of the Optional Area of Study/Set Work and revision for end-point assessment.

[See page 10 to 13](#)

Group choreography task

In October 2023 the specification was amended in relation to the use of dancers. It now states:

The student can, if they wish, perform in the dance themselves or act, for example, as accompanist or sound operator.

This means choreographers can be in their own pieces if they so wish; however, this is not compulsory. The number of dancers needed for the group task remains the same, ie **3 to 5 dancers**.

Teachers can provide guidance and tutoring throughout the process. It is also beneficial to provide opportunities for interim assessments which will generate feedback and target setting in relation to the specific criteria.

The following is an example of how students can structure their preparation (also linked to criteria):

- research the tasks and decision-making about **choice and use of aural setting/dancers** (number, gender, role)
- experiment to create movement material/ideas ('chunks'/'nuggets' of ideas) (**selection**)
- develop movement material/ideas (**manipulation**)
- layer ideas, considering balance, coherence and sectional structure (**structuring**)
- rehearse (which will encompass consideration of the **use of 'other constituent features'**)
- interim assessment(s) with feedback and target setting (draft(s))
- fine tune/rehearse
- present.

Examples of questions to ask students within the creative process

Avoid or ask WHY in relation to the use of:

- Always using Centre Stage to present ideas.
- Always getting dancers to face the front.
- An overreliance on unison.
- Waiting for the start of the next phrase to start a new idea (the 6, 7 and 8 questions).
- Getting stuck with the **continual** use of the beat of the music.
- The use of lyrics **unless** pertinent to the task.
- Many entrances and exits and leaving soloists/duets on stage (this is not really 'group choreography').

Encourage/initiate a discussion about the following:

- Choose an aural setting that will allow you to; explore layers/sounds and exploit mood/atmosphere.
- Consider the choice of dancers, in relation to number and unique skills they can offer.
- Carefully consider structure in relation to the task and always have reasons for the chosen structure.

- Consider a range of devices to use, eg the different types of canon, counterpoint, accumulation, contact, unison (if relevant).
- Always stick to the question about the selection of the three movement components, eg 'the exploration of the spatial elements in my section 1 link with a specific aspect of the research, which is ...' etc.
- Make sure the duration of the dance matches the exam rubric: 3 to 4 minutes for group choreography (3 to 4 minutes for quartet performances and 2 to 3 minutes for solo performance).
- Detailed initial research on all three tasks in order to **choose** one rather than **reject** two. Is the chosen task being fully explored/focused on or has it only been used as a stimulus?
- Create a mind map/poster of initial research and translation into movement component ideas.
- Create a storyboard/sequential structure of ideas diagram.

Successful choreography

- Students presenting dances which clearly and fully explore the source (the chosen choreographic task) in an individual, analytical and researched way and not just using the task as a stimulus.
- Students presenting dances which demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of how to manipulate the movement components through the use of choreographic devices and how to structure the dance material in a coherent way.
- Students choosing and using appropriate aural setting (and physical setting where appropriate) to enhance the choreographic intention.
- Students utilising the skills of the dancer(s) to enhance the choreographic intention/presentation of the work.
- Students demonstrating a consistency in approach to the final presentation.

Rubric infringement

When checking the timing of the duration of the performance:

- it should begin with either the start of the aural setting or the movement by the dancer(s), whichever comes first
- it should finish with the end of the aural setting or the movement of the dancer(s), whichever comes last.

Scheme of Assessment

For further details about the required conditions for assessment and the assessment grids for all three practical tasks, teachers are strongly advised to refer to the [AQA | A-level | Dance | Scheme of assessment](#).

Examples of mid and high-level group choreography responses

Use the A-level Dance Answers and commentaries on [centre services](#). You will find both the recording and the supporting Senior examiner commentary for each in relation to the 2023 Component 1 paper.

NEA Advisers

All centres are allocated a non-examined assessment Adviser who is an experienced teacher and/or examiner. They provide guidance and support throughout the academic year on delivering the NEA Component 1.

Under Ofqual rules NEA advisers are not permitted to answer queries about Component 2, the written paper, as this is an examined unit. Written paper queries can be emailed to aqadance@aqa.org.uk. Advisers can only respond via email and are not able to have a telephone conversation. The team pride themselves on responding quickly with detailed and supportive answers. Your Adviser will not be your examiner and also will not be an Adviser for GCSE Dance, as this is a separate team.

AQA send NEA Adviser contact details to exams officers from mid-September at the start of each academic year. Please check with them for details for your subject. If you do not know who your assigned adviser is, you can either ask your exam officer to contact AQA or you can email eos@aqa.org.uk and they will put you in contact with the appropriate person.

A1 Dance: Example of Course Outline and Sequencing (and potential links with other strands)

A1 Dance	Sep	Oct	Nov	December
Component 1: Performance (Solo and Quartet) 1 lesson	Development of skills and techniques referencing various styles and genres as outlined in the specification.	Development of skills and techniques referencing various styles and genres (could link with theoretical investigation).	Development of skills and techniques referencing various styles and genres/introduction to and the understanding and application of performance/interpretative skills used in Component 1 assessment (could link with theoretical investigation into American Modern Dance).	Development of skills and techniques referencing various styles and genres/introduction to and the understanding and application of performance/interpretative skills used in Component 1 assessment (linked to choreography assessment).
Component 1: Group Choreography 1 lesson	Exploration of the use of the three movement components: action (eg set phrases, selection of own vocabulary), dynamic elements (eg to communicate intention/provide accents/phrasing/fluidity), spatial elements (personal and stage space) and how to manipulate and structure them through a range of devices.	Exploration of the use of the three movement components and how to manipulate and structure them through a range of devices.	Introduction to how to use sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poetry. Visual. Thematic. Through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops Lecturer input exploration/experimentation and development of own ideas. Introduction to the Mock assessment.	Mock assessment (end of term): group choreography (working in groups to create a response to the 2024 Component 1 paper).
Component 2: Critical Engagement 1 lesson	Course outline/subject specific terminology/assessment objectives (AOs) and levels of response/Baseline assessment and introduction to dance analysis (topic: SAQs and Essay about <i>Swansong</i> (Bruce, 1987))	Historical development of dance pre 20 th Century. Court dance. Origins of dance as a professional art form. Romantic Ballet. Classical Ballet.	Origins and development of 20 th century Ballet/Contemporary, linking to the development of Ballet Rambert, including The Ballets Russes, Forerunners and Pioneers of American Modern Dance and the development of British ballet, with a particular focus on Marie Rambert/Ballet Rambert.	Development of Ballet Rambert 1966 – 1974. An introduction to Bruce (roles and early career).

A1 Dance	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun/Jul
Component 1: Performance (Solo and Quartet) 1 lesson	Development of understanding and application of technical/performance/interpretative skills used in Component 1 assessment.	Development of understanding and application of technical/performance/interpretative skills used in Component 1 assessment.	Development of ensemble skills (linked to work in choreography lessons).	Development of ensemble skills (linked to work in choreography lessons).	Exploration of the rehearsal process (strategies/use of feedback). Assessment of ensemble skills (within the context of a quartet).	Exploration of the rehearsal process (strategies/use of feedback). Assessment of soloist skills linked to solo choreography.
Component 1: Group Choreography 1 lesson	Feedback from December Assessment. About-cap/further investigation into how to translate ideas into material (could link to theoretical investigation, eg using words defiance, stoicism as starting points, which link to study of <i>Ghost Dances</i> (1981), then looking at other choreographers, eg in the optional AOs).	Exploration of the use of aural setting in choreography (could link to theoretical investigation, with links to Bruce, eg his use of lyrics, mood/atmosphere, location, then looking at other choreographers, eg in the optional AOs).	Introduction to quartet choreography about: contact work, choreographic devices and structuring, style (also preparation for year 2 group choreography) eg one session could link with North's use of devices in <i>Death and the Maiden</i> (1980), eg use of motif development, unison, canon, counterpoint, binary structure.	Development of quartet choreography (looking at examples from the named practitioners repertoire).	Assessment of quartet choreography. Introduction to solo task.	Development of ideas for solo choreography task. Assessment (end of term). Could link to the development of a solo linked to a named practitioner.
Component 2: Critical Engagement 1 lesson	Bruce: role, understanding of choreographic and movement styles, with specific reference to works, 1966 – 1987. Development of company, 1974 – 1987.	Bruce: role, understanding of choreographic and movement styles, with specific reference to works, 1966 – 2002. Development of company 1994 – 2002.	North: understanding of choreographic and movement styles, with specific reference to at least two works.	Revision/mock exam /feedback.	Richard Alston: understanding of choreographic and movement styles, with specific reference to at least two works.	Richard Alston: understanding of choreographic and movement styles, with specific reference to at least two works. Summary of Assessment objectives (AOs)

A2 Dance: delivery of topics example

A2 Dance	Sep	Oct	Nov	December
Component 1: Performance (Solo and Quartet)	Delivery of Bruce solo.	1 st interim assessment of Bruce solo; introduction of Alston solo.	Delivery of Alston solo.	2 nd interim assessment of Component 1 solo assessment.
Component 1: Group Choreography	Receipt of paper from AQA. Initial research (outside of the classroom).	Development of research (homework). Initial tutorials about choice of question.	Further tutorial support about choice and decision making (aural setting, dancers).	Studio exploration and development of initial choreographic material.
Component 2: Critical Engagement 1 lesson	Introduction to the Compulsory Set Work and the commencement of a detailed analysis.	Continuation of the detailed analysis of <i>Rooster</i> .	Continuation of the detailed analysis of <i>Rooster</i> .	Continuation of the detailed analysis of <i>Rooster</i> .

A2 Dance	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Component 1: Performance (Solo and Quartet)	Revisit of year 1 material for quartet and rehearsal.	Revisit of year 1 material for quartet and rehearsal of both tasks.	Rehearsal for end point: Component 1 assessment (March 2024).		
Component 1: Group Choreography	Tutorial guidance and development of ideas within studio environment.	Tutorial guidance and development/refinement of ideas within studio environment.	Rehearsal for end point: Component 1 assessment (March 2024).		
Component 2: Critical Engagement 1 lesson	Consolidation of learning of set work/revision. A2 written Mock exam. Introduction to the optional area of study and set work.	Delivery of contextual understanding of the Optional Area of Study and analysis of the Set Work.	Delivery of contextual understanding of the Optional Area of Study and analysis of the Set Work. All three lessons dedicated to covering this part of the specification post 7237/X exam.	All three lessons dedicated to covering this part of the spec.	All three lessons dedicated to covering this part of the specification. Component 2 Exam. End of May.