

# **Notes and guidance: Practical guidance for non-exam assessment**

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## Introduction

Non-exam assessment (NEA) is coursework that is marked by teachers and sent to AQA for moderation. Teachers assess the work and submit their marks by 7 May. This mark submission deadline is the same each year. It is a JCQ requirement that students must be told the mark given by their teacher for a centre-assessed component, so time needs to be built in to accommodate this. Schools and colleges are required to have a process in place should their students wish to appeal their internally assessed marks. This process must be completed before submitting marks to AQA. More guidance is available on the non-exam assessment page of the [JCQ website](#).

After the centre has marked the work and a moderator from AQA has checked a sample of the marking the final 'marking strategy' is determined by AQA and there are two possible outcomes. Either the moderator supports the centres marking or AQA will adjust the marks to bring them in line with the AQA standard. A detailed explanation of how this is applied can be found on the [AQA website](#).

Early in the course the majority of teachers focus on developing physical, technical and expressive skills whilst building towards introducing the set phrases. There is also an emphasis on working in different groupings to identify those students who work well together so that this can be considered when creating the duet/trio performance task. Many teachers use the first year of the course to widen their student's movement vocabulary whilst exploring different choreographic approaches and embedding safe working practice as outlined in the specification. Working collaboratively on choreography tasks helps to build confidence and working holistically using the professional works as a resource is often favoured by teachers as a way to introduce the Anthology. Moderation for this specification allows for flexibility in the assessment of the NEA tasks. There is no longer a need to assess all of the NEA tasks on one day. This means that you can assess and bank the work as you complete and film each task. This reduces stress on both teachers and students and is particularly supportive of those students who lack confidence and whose movement memory is less developed. So, in essence the first year of the course is all about developing skills and the second year is focussed on assessment.

A complete NEA submission will include:

- a solo performance of two set phrases
- a duet/trio performance
- a solo or a group choreography.

## Performance

The total duration of a student's performance must be no less than three and a half minutes. So, what does this actually mean? It means that a student must perform for three minutes in a duet/trio performance and perform thirty seconds of content across two set phrases. This might mean that both phrases are incomplete. However, if the combined performance time for both phrases is at least thirty seconds this along with the three-minute duet/trio task would result in the student meeting the overall time of three and a half minutes.

## Set Phrases

Each student must perform the two selected phrases as a soloist in a live performance so performing alongside another dancer would be a breach of the specification. In addition, the two phrases do not have to be performed one after the other and so can be assessed at different points in the year of certification.

Students are required to demonstrate their ability to accurately reproduce the choreographic content of the set phrases. The set phrase notes are the definitive version with particular reference to the timing content. The video is particularly useful for students to see a demonstration of the entirety of the set phrases and can be used to look at specific elements such as the dynamics, style and phrasing. The performer on the video is a professional dancer and so is not representative of the AQA standard. Teacher online standardisation (T-OLS) is available and exemplifies the standard.

When teaching the phrases encourage students to use as much space as possible and when travelling recommend staying low, long and grounded. Highlight the importance of getting the timing right, as this feeds into the accuracy of other technical skills such as the style and dynamic content. Avoid over emphasizing the sharp and abrupt dynamics as this can impact on the style but instead find the contrasting dynamics and always honour the pauses and moments of 'hold'. Identify where each phrase has opportunities for demonstrating expressive skills such as projection. Explain that the metronome is not an aural setting but is a tool to help them with the timing. As a comparison acapella singers do not perform to music but are skilled in using their voices to bring the song they are singing to life. Similarly, here with the phrases the dancer is using their body to create the moments of ebb and flow and dynamic interest that will make the performance engaging. Encouraging students to move across the metronome beat will help to avoid the delivery becoming laboured.

All of the indicative content on the assessment grids should be looked at holistically when assessing the set phrases. Minor discrepancies will not affect the marking however if there are a lot of accumulative inaccuracies across the phrases or there is a discrepancy that affects a large part of the phrase this will be reflected in the mark for technical skills as these are awarded for accuracy. Both phrases should be assessed separately and then the marks aggregated across the two performances. This is straight forward when both performances are similar but more difficult when one performance is stronger than the other. When this happens, the assessor must use their professional judgement to decide if there is sufficient evidence of the indicative content to place the work in a mark band. Sometimes you may feel that the work just tips into a band. At the end of the performance section of the CRF there is a comments box for you to add supporting notes in terms of the marks awarded especially if there was an imbalance in performance level between the two set phrases. To maintain balance across the two phrases the ability to bank the work becomes key as there is no requirement to film and assess both set phrases on the same day. This allows teachers to focus on the first phrase and once it has been recorded, they can then give their full attention to the second phrase.

## Set Phrase adaptations

For those students who have special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries teachers can apply for a set phrase adaptation. Each application is considered individually, and the needs of the student and their 'normal way of working' is central to the process. Set phrase adaptations must be approved before assessment of the set phrase(s) takes place so early applications are advised for those students who teachers identify as eligible for an adaptation. The adaptation [form](#) is easy to complete and can be found on the GCSE Dance page under Assessment Resources.

All requests must:

- include supporting medical documentation or evidence as without this the application cannot be processed
- be received and approved by the deadline published in the document available on the [JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments web page](#)

## Duet/Trio performance task

Each student must perform for a minimum of three minutes in a dance which is a maximum of five minutes in duration. This means that the student should be visible and dancing for a minimum of three minutes and teachers that choose to include exits and entrances need to factor in the time the student is off screen as this could result in a time penalty being applied. It would also be wise to avoid having dancers hold a position for an extended period during the performance as this does not allow them the opportunity to evidence any of the indicative content against which they are assessed.

As a centre-based task the teacher is responsible for the artistic vision for the duet/trio performance task. This is not a choreography task for the students however they are not excluded from collaborating in the creation of the work. In fact, many teachers take the opportunity to use the duet/trio task to model good practice in choreography. They often lead students through the choreographic process starting with thorough research to arrive at a clear choreographic intent. This in turn helps students to understand clearly what they are communicating during the performance. Working practically through choreographic processes helps prepare the student for the choreography task and supports their knowledge and understanding which they will apply in both section A and B of the written paper. Involvement in the creation of the task also ensures they have some ownership of the work.

The action, dynamic and spatial elements of the remaining two set phrases from the choice of four set by AQA must be developed to generate dance content for the duet/trio performance and to realise the chosen choreographic intent. It is not essential for the phrases in their original form to be included in whole or in part in the resulting duet/trio, but they could be if this helps to realise the chosen choreographic intent. The set phrases can be developed and so may not look quite like the original material. However, when material from the set phrases is used the assessor can usually determine which two phrases provided the genesis for the work. The task set should be sufficiently challenging for the more able dancers so they can access the higher marks and suitable for the less able students so they are not exposed and given material that they cannot deliver safely or accurately. Most teachers include differentiation within the work to ensure that all their students can access the criteria successfully.

Once both tasks have been assessed the mental skills mark is awarded. Students are assessed on their mental skills and attributes during the set phrases and the duet/trio performance. his mark is awarded for skills evidenced during performance and not for process.

The mental skills and attributes assessed during performance are:

- movement memory
- commitment
- concentration
- confidence

There are four marks available but there is no formula for arriving at a mark. The assessor should look across all the performances holistically and decide whether the application is limited, sound, highly developed or exceptional. If there is an imbalance between the performances, then the teacher should use their professional judgement to decide which band the mark is in.

To clarify mental skills are not awarded for the following:

- systematic repetition
- mental rehearsal
- rehearsal discipline
- planning of rehearsal
- response to feedback
- capacity to improve.

### Choreography

For choreography the requirement is to choreograph one complete dance. When responding to their chosen stimulus it is the student's decision whether they decide to realise their choreographic intent through the creation of solo or a group dance. A group dance is for two to five dancers. The choreography stimulus paper is released on the **15 September** and is published on Centre Services. The paper is released on the **same date** each year. The stimulus paper is a springboard to creativity and students should avoid choosing their dance idea before the paper is released. The questions provide the stimulus or starting point for an idea for the choreography. The student can interpret the stimulus in whatever way they choose providing the 'journey' from stimulus to outcome is made clear in the programme note.

Students are required to undertake research as part of the task (3.2 Choreography: Choreographic Processes: researching) and this includes researching the stimulus itself to better understand the nature of what it is asking. Students should therefore be encouraged to seek definitions of terms used within the choreography paper and engage in dialogue with the teacher and their peers in order to be able to fully justify their ideas and responses in terms of suitability. In this way they will be able to engage fully with the requirements of the specification and gain a deeper level of insight into the original stimulus, which will in turn encourage a more creative response to the task. Once the teacher is happy with the level of research the student has undertaken, it would then be up to them to decide if it was appropriate for the student to continue with the idea or not and advise them accordingly. It is the teacher's responsibility to provide guidance as to the suitability of the choice or decision.

Students should aim to meet the minimum time durations which are two minutes for a solo and three minutes for a group dance. There is no time penalty applied to work that exceeds the maximum time duration.

The start and end of a dance is determined by the beginning/ending of the aural setting or movement (or sometimes the physical setting). Where there is the possibility of ambiguity the choreography programme note should make it clear which of these indicates the start and/or end of the dance and the artistic rationale for this. If the programme note does not make these artistic decisions clear, the judgements on timings will be determined by AQA.

If there is more than one dancer in a choreography, then it is not a solo. There are occasions where students wish to use other dancers as part of their dance but only use them briefly within the work. If there are other performers (whether they move or not) they must be considered as part of the assessment and the work will be assessed as a group piece against the criteria for a group choreography. If the work is dominated by a lengthy solo the dance will be imbalanced and the assessment of dance relationships, unison and canon, manipulation of number and structuring devices and form could be impacted.

Successful choreographies:

- are creative with bespoke action content
- have a very clear choreographic intent
- demonstrate a purposeful link to the stimulus through the choreography
- address the choreographic intent in all five criteria
- use all of the subject content across the five criteria to realise the choreographic intent
- address all of the five criteria equally
- select and use an aural setting that consistently supports the choreographic intent.

### Marking to the AQA national standard

Teacher online standardisation (T-OLS) is a means to communicate the marking standards by providing an example of how the mark scheme can be applied to students work. The dancers featured on T-OLS demonstrate an exemplification of work, which achieves the standard for individual criteria marks. T-OLS is accessible through [Centre services](#) which is on the AQA website and requires a username and password. If you do not already have access, please contact the Exams Officer at your centre as they can arrange access for you. Please note that T-OLS is not intended to provide examples of teaching and learning methodology, nor to offer CPD on course delivery.

Teachers responsible for the assessment of students must ensure that they are marking to the AQA national standard. Before commencing marking, teachers are strongly advised to standardise through the T-OLS system. In T-OLS, you can see sample work that has been marked by the lead moderator, then mark it yourself to get instant feedback on how you compare to the standard.

In order to make use of this free resource:

- log in to Centre Services (if you don't have a login, see our Centre Services help page)
- Select **Pre-exams** tab, then **Teacher Online Standardisation** from the list of services (this will take you to the e-AQA log on page until mid-September)
- select **Level > Subject > Component** in the online standardisation system, then familiarise yourself with the information
- select **View Assessment Criteria** to study the assessment criteria, then move on to view examples and moderator's comments explaining each one (where available).
- mark a sample piece of work – recording your marks and notes on the mark sheet as you go – and then submit for instant feedback
- study your feedback and compare your marks to the lead moderator's. Repeat for all the available pieces of work.

You can view and work through the materials at your own pace. T-OLS is available all year round so can be accessed at any time.

### Using Levels of Response Assessment grids

Guidance on how to use the levels of response assessment grids is provided in section 4.5 of the specification. Teachers are strongly advised to familiarise themselves with these instructions before commencing marking.

The mark band descriptors of the qualities expected are articulated in the levels of response mark schemes, which must be used when determining a mark. Students should achieve the criteria marks by demonstration of their ability aligned with the appropriate level descriptor. Students may reach the same overall mark for a performance through a different balance of individual criteria marks than that observed in the work exemplified on T-OLS. It is essential that assessors use the assessment grids in conjunction with the exemplification of the standard seen on T-OLS, to determine how to best award each criterion mark.

### Scheme of Assessment

For further detail about the required conditions for assessment, teachers are strongly advised to review sections 3.1, 3.2 and 4.2 of the GCSE Dance specification. The [Technical Guidance](#) for Component 1 document is also useful and can be found on the GCSE Dance Teaching resources page.

Failure to comply with required conditions as detailed in the specification could disadvantage candidates.

### How to award marks for work that does not meet the specification requirements

There are times when, for whatever reason, a student may not be able to complete all parts of their NEA coursework. The table below indicates how the work should be marked and mirrors the way the work is marked at moderation. Ensuring that both the teacher and the moderator are applying the same rubrics can prevent a centre being out of tolerance.

## Assessment task 1: Performance

Task	Circumstance	Marking
Set phrases	The student does not attempt both set phrases.	Mark 0 for set phrases. Mark 0 for mental skills. Award a mark for duet/trio performance if it is attempted.
Set phrases	The student does not perform as a soloist or is being prompted by someone or something off camera.	Mark 0 for set phrases. Mark 0 for mental skills. Award a mark for duet/trio performance if it is attempted.
Duet/trio performance	The student does not evidence a duet/trio performance.	Mark 0 for duet/trio performance. Mark 0 for mental skills. Award a mark for set phrases providing they are both attempted.
Set phrase and duet/trio performance	The student does not meet the minimum total time requirement of three and a half minutes for all performances.	Mark all work as normal and record the time on the Performance Duration Declaration Form.
Choreography	The student does not evidence a choreography.	Mark 0 for choreography.
Choreography	The student's solo choreography does not meet the minimum time requirement of two minutes.	Mark all work as normal and record the time on the Performance Duration Declaration Form.
Choreography	The students group choreography does not meet the minimum time requirement of three minutes.	Mark all work as normal and record the time on the Performance Duration Declaration Form.



## Moderation material checklist

You should:

- include one digital copy of a signed centre declaration sheet.
- include a signed and fully completed digital candidate record form for each sample student.
- include the duet/trio programme note. Where the programme note is identical for all candidates only one should be provided. Where candidates have different programme notes a copy of the relevant note should be tagged (associated) to each sample candidate.
- include a choreography programme note for each sample student. These should be tagged (associated) to each sample student.
- ensure there is only **one** version of each task for each sample student.
- include (as a 'centre document') the contact details of the teacher or person (Exams officer) who can be contacted directly if there are any issues with the materials.
- keep a backup copy of all the materials you send.
- email the performance duration declaration form to [neadeclaration@aqa.org.uk](mailto:neadeclaration@aqa.org.uk) and do not upload with your sample as this form is not required by the moderator.

Where you are using the same recording (for example in the duet/trio performance task where several students are being assessed) you must ensure that you tag (associate) the uploaded file to all the relevant candidates.

Please make sure you have read and are familiar with the document Recording and submitting video evidence, available from the [GCSE Dance assessment resources](#).

Every centre must complete a **Performance Duration Declaration Form** available on the AQA website. If a student's performance or choreography does not meet the required duration a penalty will be applied by AQA to the mark. The size of the penalty depends on the severity of the timing infringement. It may also result in schools or colleges being investigated for maladministration. Although this form is for recording any performance or choreography work which is under the minimum time requirement you should also use it if any of your students have no work to submit or refuse to perform. In these instances, you should include them and just mark the 'length of performance' field as zero. Then make sure that this is also recorded on the candidate record form.

All centres are allocated a Non-Examined Assessment Adviser who is an experienced teacher and/or moderator. They provide guidance and support throughout the academic year on delivering the NEA Component 1: Performance and Choreography. 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](mailto:aqadance@aqa.org.uk). Advisers can only respond via email and are not able to have a phone conversation. The team pride themselves on responding quickly with detailed and supportive answers. Your Adviser will not be your moderator and will not be an Advisor for A-level 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 Exams officer to contact AQA or you can email [eos@aqa.org.uk](mailto:eos@aqa.org.uk) and they will put you in contact with the appropriate person

### Further guidance

#### Music with lyrics

Students can use songs with lyrics if their choice is consistent in supporting the dance idea throughout the whole dance and is not just a tenuous link. An appropriate aural setting should offer mood and atmosphere, contrast and variety, a useful structure and have a relationship to the theme/idea and therefore inform the choreographic intent.

#### Sharing the marking criteria

Students should be aware of the criteria used to assess their work. They can then understand what they need to do to move up through the levels of the assessment grids. It is perfectly acceptable to share these with your cohort or create a simplified student-friendly version of the assessment grids to help them understand how the marks are awarded.

#### Choreography

The student is not required to perform in their choreographed dance but may do so if they wish. The choreography task can be danced by another dancer/dancer(s) as long as they are under 19 years of age at the time of assessment. The teacher must however be entirely confident that it is the students own work and has not been created by the other dancer(s). They may only perform the piece and must not play any part in the creation of the choreography. This is the case whether it is a solo or a group choreography. The teacher responsible for assessment must be able to authenticate the work as at that of the student and sign to certify this on the Candidate Record Form.

#### Programme note

If the programme note exceeds the word limit Moderators do not penalise students. The choreography programme note is a vital document that aids assessment and moderators are instructed to read the whole programme note regardless of its length. It is helpful if students stick to the word count guidance of 120-150 words. The programme note should give the assessor a glimpse into a room full of surprises rather than a full-scale tour of the premises.

#### Filming evidence

It's advisable to film work throughout the course for all of your students.

### Filming angles

Filming from the front is the ideal, but AQA do understand that some teachers will find it impossible given the depth of field required and the fact that there may not be a suitable space where students can perform safely. It may be possible to film focusing on one student who is being assessed and following that student throughout in a reasonably wide angle wherever possible, then record again for the next student etc. It is important to view the footage to check that it is fit for assessment purposes.

### Mirrors

There is no requirement to cover mirrors. You may wish to consider covering the mirrors if you feel the students are put off by their reflection. If you do film in front of mirrors, then you should check that the footage is suitable for assessment. Filming in front of mirrors sometimes can result in images of multiple dancers making the assessment process confusing for the assessor.

### Site-sensitive choreography

Providing you are able to film it clearly for assessment and providing it is recorded with a single camera from an audience perspective from start to finish and is unedited. The work can be site sensitive but it cannot be filmed in multiple locations and edited into a finished version.

### Footwear, costumes and props

#### Footwear to perform the set phrases and the duet/trio/solo performance

Students can wear appropriate dance footwear to perform the set phrases and/or the duet/trio performance providing the use of the chosen footwear does not compromise the health and safety aspects of the performance. In terms of ballet shoes, jazz shoes or foot thongs, consideration should be given to safe working practices (during performance) and the type of floor covering you are working on.

#### Costumes for the duet/trio performance

There are no restrictions on uniform/costume in the specification so students can wear a costume for either the duet/trio performance. However, if costume is used teachers should remind their students of safe working practices as listed in section 3.1 of the specification. This includes appropriate dancewear, including footwear, hairstyle and absence of jewellery.

#### Duets and trios and performing the same performance piece

Students do not have to perform the same performance piece. You can either differentiate the work or you can submit different dances for the duet/trio performance task depending on the strengths of your cohort. The different dances can have the same or different choreographic intents.

### Use of props in duet/trio performance

Students can use a prop in this task or have items of set/staging.

### Use of props in choreography

Students can use a prop in either their solo or group choreography. If they do decide to use a prop, then its use should be central to communicating the choreographic intent.

### Costumes for choreography

Costume is perfectly acceptable and is a centre choice. The wearing of costume is not included in the assessment criteria so there will be no marks awarded for its choice and / or use.

Further support is available from [aqadance@aqa.org.uk](mailto:aqadance@aqa.org.uk)

You can sign up to [subject news and updates](#).

Or you can join us at one of our Curriculum Connect meetings which are free and offer an opportunity for teachers to ask questions in an open and friendly forum. Booking information is on the GCSE Dance page under Professional Development.