
A-LEVEL DANCE

7237/X Component 1: NEA Performance and Choreography
Report on the Examination

7237
June 2022

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Visits for examining this component

Centres are to be congratulated for their patience and ongoing communication in relation to the postal examination process this year. This was a unique occurrence, as next year live visits will once again be taking place allowing usual procedures to resume.

Examiners arrange visits directly with their allocated centres via the Examinations Officer. It is essential that the Dance teacher liaises with centre colleagues and their Examinations Officer to identify several convenient dates when space will be available before an assessment date is agreed with the AQA examiner. Examiners 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. It is extremely helpful when teachers are prompt in their response to the examiner and provide an email address, as this can be a quick and effective means of communication. Examinations Officers must be included in all correspondence. Once confirmed, the examination date may only be changed in **exceptional** circumstances.

Once the date and number of entries are confirmed with the examiner, he/she draws up a timetable for the examination and forwards this to the teacher. If changes are made to the number of entries, centres should notify the visiting examiner so that the examination day timetable can be kept accurate. When completing the timetable, the examiner will request the assessment of all solo performance tasks to take place first, followed by performances in a quartet and then finally all group choreographic responses. This order should be strictly adhered to and wherever possible the order of the students for all three elements of the assessment should **remain the same**. Quartets will only be viewed **once** by the examiner. If students have to perform more than once with different partners they will be assessed on the **first** viewing of the quartet.

Recording of assessed work

All student work must be recorded and given to examiners at the end of the examination. It is advised that centres retain a back-up copy of the work, to be stored with their Examinations office.

The rules outlining how to record NEA work can be found on:

[Notes and guidance: Requirements for recording and submitting performance and choreography evidence \(aqa.org.uk\)](https://www.aqa.org.uk/qualifications/alevel/dance/requirements-for-recording-and-submitting-performance-and-choreography-evidence)

Section A - Choreography AO2: 40 marks

Every year, all questions are devised with a view to developing not only the choreographic skills needed to complete the tasks, but also skills such as independent research, investigation, contextual understanding and the ability to make links to the theoretical content of the course. Careful preparation is vital and can also underpin the theoretical/written aspect of the course.

The three tasks, which change every year, are not designed to be stimuli but, as in the written examination, an opportunity to focus on, develop and present coherent ideas around a specific topic/theme. More than ever before, examiners this year were viewing responses which had not used the chosen task and where students had decided on their own theme(s). This makes assessing the work extremely difficult.

Each question is designed to allow students to thoughtfully consider the: selection of movement components; manipulation and structuring of material; use of the aural setting (and physical setting where appropriate) and use of dancers – all in relation to both the craft of choreography **and** the specific task set. In some centres it was clear that tutoring had taken place in order to keep the students on task. The role of the NEA advisers (one is allocated to each centre) is to help guide and reassure tutors re the different tasks each year. They can be contacted via e-mail if there are any queries as to the content of the three tasks.

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.

The necessary details required on the top of the programme note are as follows on this exemplar template:

A-level Dance 7237/X Component 1: Group choreography 2022	
Name of candidate:	
Centre number:	Candidate number:
Question number:	Duration of dance:
Name of music:	Name(s) of musicians(s):
Title of dance:	
Names of dancers:	
Programme note: 	

All three questions were attempted this year with question 1 being the most popular. Questions 2 and 3 had a similar number of student responses. Popularity of individual questions varied in individual centres. Occasionally a formulaic approach was adopted by the whole centre, which at times limited creative opportunities for some students.

Points relating to the choreography for each question

Question 01

This was the most popular of the three choreographic tasks and by its very nature had the most wide-ranging responses. However, a number of responses did stray too far from the task in order to concentrate on an exploration of personal issues or by making tenuous links to an array of subject matter not necessarily linked to the chosen signage.

The task had a visual starting point, with a choice between either public display and/or commercial signage. There was therefore scope for content (a detailed exploration of the visual aspects of the sign(s), eg form, colour, shape) and context (location, reason(s) for, function of the sign(s)). The approach to the presentation was also flexible, eg serious, abstract, humorous, collage, narrative. With this type of task the balance of the ideas presented is key, and especially in the duration of time allocated. When students decided to totally focus on the 'context' they tended to veer towards their own tenuous interpretations and not fully explore the source as a whole. The more sophisticated responses did attempt to weave both content and context into the final presentation.

Question 02

With this type of task, students are required to explore the imagery in relation to the whole poem as it was provided on the examination paper. Students can also therefore analyse and explore the poem's structure/meaning to help inform the content for their translation into a different medium. As with question 01, there were many ways to approach the presentation and it was pleasing to see some students tackle humour in a most engaging way. The less successful responses decided to take one aspect of the poem and develop ideas purely in relation to that one theme, eg loneliness, 'puzzle', moving the response away from the set task.

This task lent itself to different decisions in relation to number and use of dancers, duets being the most favoured. In some centres much thought had been given to the utilisation of the skills of the dancers available, enhancing the communication of the dance idea(s) in an efficient and effective way.

Question 03

Students once again could be flexible in their decision making re this task, in relation to which aspect(s) to choose. It was pleasing to note that this choice of task provided some of the most well-crafted, thoughtful and coherent responses.

Some students chose to ignore the 'pre-1532' part to the question and fully concentrated on events after this time, making the assessment of these pieces more difficult. Some students abstracted their research to such an extent that the outcomes became purely about modern-day themes rather than the context in which the themes were placed, eg a modern-day interpretation of 'war', 'celebration'. However, in some centres students had obviously conducted research in great detail, which provided a depth of exploration, eg not only showing 'sacrifice' as a theme but how the sacrifices took place and by whom. Aspects such as agriculture, art, architecture, geographical location, means of communication, religion, societal behaviour were all appropriately explored and presented. Because of the vast choice, some students chose too many aspects which affected their ability to structure and balance the response in a coherent way in the duration of time allowed.

Decisions re the choice/use of the other constituent features (aural setting, physical setting where appropriate and dancers) had an impact on the presentation and communication of the dance idea(s). It was pleasing to see that at times these constituent features had been carefully considered and utilised to enhance the overall presentation for this task.

Section B - Performance

Points relating to Question 04 AO1: 20 marks

As stated in previous years, in some centres outstanding work was presented and teachers are to be congratulated for their part in supporting students in preparation for this aspect of the examination. It was also exciting to see work that had obviously evolved out of an in-depth analysis of the characteristic features of a practitioner's movement style, the performance of this style and the context in which the style was presented.

The assessment of this question requires a student to apply specific knowledge and understanding of a practitioner to their practical performance. They are not merely being assessed on their own technical and performance skills. Students have the opportunity to link theory and practice, and present work which demonstrates clear insight into the movement style of a specified practitioner. The levels of response assessment criteria refer to 'in relation to a specified practitioner' throughout. The emphasis is on the skills and qualities needed to demonstrate understanding of a practitioner's movement style and the performance of that particular style - in terms of: physical/technical skills; spatial elements; dynamic elements and interpretative/performance skills.

As was the case in the 2019 series, it is exciting to note that examiners viewed a range of performances taken from all areas of study. The introduction of a list of named practitioners alongside the set work choreographers across five areas of study seems to have provided a breadth of choice for both female and male students - allowing the practical exploration of the theoretical content of the course to take place in a meaningful way. It was particularly pleasing to note that more centres and their students were investigating a wider range of practitioners and not just necessarily concentrating on one for the whole cohort.

However, teacher input is vital to ensure all criteria are met and that students are not left to veer towards their own style when generating movement material or present a misinterpretation of the practitioner's style. It is also an opportunity for the teacher to reinforce and expand on theoretical discussion and investigation. The degree of success relates to the extent to which the movement style of the practitioner was in evidence (and understood by the performer), and also the suitability of the practitioner's style for each student. In most centres, the appropriateness of the choreographic content of the solo allowed students the opportunity to display necessary skills and understanding linked to the assessment criteria. However, in some centres it was still apparent that some students had viewed this aspect of the examination as an opportunity to concentrate solely on the choreographic style of a practitioner alongside their own movement style rather than an exploration or analysis of the practitioner's movement style. This often led to work which had a similar theme to a chosen practitioner, but which contained little recognisable movement material and expressive qualities of that practitioner. This then became more difficult to assess.

The less effective performances were able to present relevant movement vocabulary, but with limited reflection of the practitioner's use of dynamics and space and relationship to the aural setting. Often focus and projection/expression were not fully consistent throughout or did not link to the chosen style. Sometimes the choice of aural accompaniment was inappropriate and did not

enhance the performance. Occasionally some students presented work linked to a specific dance style/genre, for example tap, ballet, possibly due to familiarity with the style/genre – however these presentations lacked understanding and exploration of the specified practitioner's actual movement style. At times it appeared students had selected three or four main phrases from a variety of repertoire and pieced them together with little understanding of their context and links to the practitioner's style.

A programme note is required for all students in the cohort in order for the examiner to attach it to the individual mark sheet and Candidate Record Form. This can be personalised for the individual student or be generic for the whole group. The compiling of the programme note can be an effective classroom task in preparation for the Component 2 written examination. It should be noted that the word limit for this performance task (**150 words**) is different to the group choreography tasks in section A.

For clarification, the selection of the practitioner from the compulsory area of study needs to relate to the movement style of the practitioner as demonstrated in his/her work for the company. For example, if the practitioner Siobhan Davies is chosen for the solo performance, the features of her movement style must reflect the features of her style as shown in the works created and performed by Rambert Dance company (formerly Ballet Rambert) 1966 – 2002, and not focus on stylistic features of her work with other companies.

Points relating to Question 05 AO1: 20 marks

The response to question 05 is an opportunity for students to be assessed in a different way to that of the solo performance. The emphasis of the assessment this year was, as in previous years, linked to a genre (as defined in the specification). This can be as broad as 'contemporary', 'jazz', 'ballet' or have more of a focus on a specific style, eg 'Alston', 'Fosse', 'Romantic'. If a specific style is chosen, it must be a different one to that performed for question 04.

Sometimes when a specific style within a genre was chosen, students found it difficult to succeed, as they were faced with complex, ambitious technical/choreographic challenges which may not necessarily suit their own style and/or the development of a dance in which all of the dancers could fully contribute to the final overall performance.

The more successful performances were created to enhance the individual skills of the student(s) and were well-rehearsed and polished in performance. They fully addressed the assessment criteria of: physical/technical skills; spatial control and awareness; timing, musicality and emphasis; focus, projection, and expression - all within the context of the number of dancers chosen and in relation to style/genre.

In the less successful performances timing had been considered but there was little evidence of musicality/emphasis and the communication of the dance idea(s) was not fully clear in the presentation from the performer(s). In some responses there was no consistency in relation to focus, projection and expression and accuracy, precision and control of the selected movement vocabulary.

This task does not need a theme but, in some cases, this really helped students to fully utilise their interpretative/performance skills. There is also no prescriptive list of choreographic devices (eg contact work) set which need to be included in the final performance.

As with the solo performance task, in normal circumstances the development of this aspect of assessment can commence in year one and can be used by teachers to aid them in the demonstration of the process of choreography and to develop the students' genuine understanding of group choreographic skills.

A programme note is required for all students in the cohort in order for the examiner to attach it to the individual mark sheet and Candidate Record Form. This can be personalised for the individual response or be generic for the whole group (if the same dance is being performed). The compiling of the programme note can be an effective classroom task in preparation for the Component 2 written examination. It should be noted that the word limit for this performance task (**150 words**) is different to the group choreography tasks in section A.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.