



GCSE

DANCE

8236/C: Performance and Choreography
Report on the Examination

8236
June 2022

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2022 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.
AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General

It is accepted that teaching Dance in a pandemic has its challenges but GCSE Dance teachers have proved themselves to be incredibly adaptable and should be praised for ensuring that their student's work was filmed and assessed despite the impact of Covid-19. Although there has been some exceptional work presented this year, it is also acknowledged that some work for both performance and choreography has shown a lack of creativity which can be attributed to reduced studio time.

Generally, marking has been lenient across the solo/duet/trio performance task and choreography resulting in centres being outside of tolerance causing marks to be adjusted through regression. It is very important for centres to understand how regression works and to appreciate the importance of consistency in marking standards across an entire cohort. Information about moderation of internal assessments and an explanation of how adjustments to marks are made can be found on the AQA website or via this link: <https://store.aqa.org.uk/admin/library/MODERATION.PDF> Teachers are strongly advised to review this.

Teacher Online Standardisation is a developing resource and includes exemplars of a wide range of work and mark ranges across all tasks. It is available at any time and it provides an opportunity for teachers to get instant feedback on their marking compared to the AQA standard and should be viewed prior to undertaking assessments. Considerable work has been implemented on improving the quality of feedback provided to centres and, along with a return to a more consistent delivery of practical work, it is expected that teacher confidence in marking will continue to develop.

There was a reduction in the number of rubric infringements this year and teachers are to be congratulated on the considerable efforts they made to ensure that their student's work met the new requirements for the 2022 series and in particular minimum time durations for both performance and choreography. Centres are reminded that these changes were for 2022 only and that for 2023 we are returning to a 'normal' exam series. For clarification future submissions from 2023 onwards will be:

Performance

- Two set phrases
- Duet/trio performance (three minutes in a dance which is a maximum of five minutes in duration)

Choreography

- Solo or group choreography – a solo (two to two and a half minutes) or a group dance for two to five dancers (three to three and a half minutes)

Many teachers were pro-active in contacting their NEA Advisers regarding the suitability of work and guidance on administrative procedures for submitting coursework. All centres are reminded that they have an allocated NEA adviser who is an experienced Senior Associate who can provide advice and support throughout the academic year on delivering NEA.

Performance

Solo Set Phrase Performance

The marking of the set phrases was mostly accurate. Where marking was slightly lenient was particularly evident in the awarding of marks for technical skills.

The most popular submissions were Shift and Breathe. It was pleasing to see centres where personal choices were made with different students performing different phrases that best showcased their individual strengths. There was also an increase in the number of students who delivered the whole phrase. It was clear that centres often had the same common errors in the phrases which were unique to the centre. Accuracy of timing content was a particular area of concern this year and centres are advised to revisit the set phrase videos and notes, available on the AQA website.

Demonstration of **physical skills** was good this year and the most able students were able to use the phrase to showcase their physical ability. In **technical skills**, there were more inaccuracies this year. There was some variation in accuracy of action content with some presentations including additional actions. Notably for Breathe, there appears to be a trend towards overarching the back on the 'breathe' moment which did impact the accuracy of some physical and technical skills.

Generally spatial content was accurate however timing, dynamic and style content needs further consideration. It must be noted that there were some students who successfully incorporated their own stylistic quality into their performance without compromising the given style content.

Demonstration of **expressive skills** was good and it was pleasing to see some students achieved full marks here even when the phrase included inaccuracies. Students that performed with an emphasis on projection, facial expression and an understanding of the use of focus were more successful in this criteria compared to those that only applied the use of focus to their performances. It was also very rewarding to see a lot more students performing with higher levels of energy than in previous years.

Teachers are reminded that they are permitted to count the student in with up to 8 counts which is supportive and ensures a more confident start to the performance.

Infringements in Solo Phrase Performance

Almost all centres met the specification requirements this year by presenting the set phrase performance as a solo. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the requirements of the specification are met. Students should be informed that they are not allowed to be unduly prompted by the teacher during the performance, allowed to copy someone else off-camera or perform alongside another dancer. There were still instances where the set phrase was performed to music and not to a metronome beat of 105 BPM.

Adapted set phrase

Centres may apply to AQA for Access Arrangements to one or both set phrases which are specific adjustments for specific students, based on evidence of need and normal way of working. This year there were many centres that successfully applied for a set phrase adaptation.

Access Arrangements allow students with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment of the set phrases without changing the demands of the assessment. A reasonable adjustment for a particular person will be unique to that individual and therefore must be reviewed and approved by a senior examiner to ensure that any adaptations to the content of the set phrases does not affect the integrity of the assessment. Please note that any set phrase adaptations must be approved before assessment of the set phrase(s) takes place.

Solo / Duet / Trio Performance

Generally the marking of the solo/duet/trio performance task was lenient across all three criteria. Due to the changes to the NEA requirements for 2022, many centres chose the option of a solo performance piece. Some centres made the decision not to work to the reduced timings for a group piece and in some cases this did not advantage the students. Generally, it was clear to see how the two set phrases had been used within the dance performance. However, there were some pieces where this was done with varying degrees of success and some where the phrases had not been used at all to develop material to realise a stated choreographic intent. The action, dynamic and spatial elements of the two phrases not used for assessment must be developed to generate dance content for the duet/trio performance task. Centres are reminded that this is a specification requirement. Centres that used dance styles such as tap found it difficult to develop the set phrase material seamlessly into the work.

Centres that decided upon a very clear choreographic intent benefitted students as they were able to use the full range of expressive skills including musicality, projection, facial expression and sensitivity to other dancers to clearly engage with the choreographic intent. Many centres chose to differentiate the task which allowed students to demonstrate their individual skills and tasks that provided sufficient complexity and challenge often proved more beneficial to the students resulting in work that was both exciting and physically demanding. Some pieces lacked challenge and in these instances the centre's marking was too lenient as the range of skills that were demonstrated was not sufficient enough to access the higher mark bands. At times, some students demonstrated exceptional or highly developed physical skills in their own choreography but this was not evident in their performance task due to the lack of challenge. Often where the task did not sufficiently challenge the more able, they were most commonly lacking in pace to evidence stamina and challenging action content, to evidence flexibility, control and alignment. Where students had choreographed the dance themselves, the work often lacked sophistication and enough opportunities to demonstrate a rich and varied range of physical, technical and expressive skills. As stated in the specification the choreographic intent for the duet/trio performance task should be determined by the teacher/practitioner but this does not preclude students from contributing to the choreographic process.

Safe practice in performance

There were students whose hair obscured their vision which in some cases made it difficult to assess their expressive skills. Some students wore jewellery or slippery or inappropriate footwear which did not allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of safe dance practice.

The teacher's programme note

The teacher's programme note is an essential document that supports the assessment of the task. Generally, programme notes were succinct and well-presented and stated a clear choreographic

intent. It is a requirement to state the set phrases used in the development of the task and to cite the title and musician/artist for any aural setting used. There were some centres that omitted this information.

Infringements in Performance

Most centres created work that met the minimum time duration for 2022. For 2023, the NEA requirements revert back to normal so it will be extremely important next year to ensure that the work meets the minimum time durations as stated in the specification.

Teachers are reminded that in order to award a mental skills mark the student must provide evidence of both a set phrase(s) performance and for 2023 a duet/trio performance. To ensure that the student meets the total performance time, it is essential that when the work is filmed the student remains in clear view. If students go off camera, that time cannot be included in the total performance time and this might lead to a timing infringement for the student, so it is vital to ensure that this does not happen. If there is insufficient depth of field to keep all students in view for the whole time, the performance would need to be filmed several times following a different student each time.

Mental skills

Generally the marking of mental skills was accurate. The mental skills mark should be awarded for the demonstration of confidence, commitment, movement memory and concentration during the two performance tasks and not for rehearsal and response to feedback during the process. For clarification, see the Mental skills and attributes during performance grid in the specification.

Choreography

Most students submitted a choreography in response to the assessment task paper. The choreography assessment task paper is published online in September of the year of assessment and provides a choice of starting points for each student to create their own solo or group choreography. Students are required to respond creatively to the task list and so those that had not thoroughly researched or considered their chosen stimulus and decided on a literal and clichéd response tended to fair less well. The most successful students created work that had fully explored their chosen stimulus through various choreographic processes to arrive at an original and creative choreographic intention. Some of the more interesting choreographic intents which were well-realised included: extreme weather, a day in a surgeon's life, cell migration, humankind on its last legs and the parasitic dodder plant. This year, a large number of responses were very negative and focused on emotions, hiding oneself, anxiety, a struggle, being yourself and loss and grief. There were many examples of work created from the idea of a hypothetical mask rather than citing a specific mask worn on the face and mental health was a very popular choice of choreographic intent. It is important to remember that teachers can be instrumental in guiding their students in their journey from their chosen stimulus to their final choreographic intent. Teachers may provide guidance to students on the suitability of the response, particularly if it means they will not meet the requirements of the marking criteria. So whilst the student is wholly responsible for the creation of their choreography, it is perfectly permissible to steer students towards more innovative, positive and uplifting dance ideas that are creative and interesting. Those students who were supported in this way often produced work that had a clear and succinct choreographic intent that could be fully realised within the minimum and maximum time duration.

There were a lot of solo choreographies this year which was probably in response to restricted working practices due to the pandemic and in many centres the whole cohort produced solo choreography. A lot of students chose a mask or the poem however this was not as many as expected as students also chose to explore the photo, migration or the earth's atmosphere so there was a good range of responses.

Action content was generally less creative this year and more predictable. Often the choice of action did not fully relate to the stated choreographic intent and many included actions content from their performance piece or recognisable material from the set phrases. The performance of some choreographies was exceptional and demonstrated some very technically challenging content. Often these choreographies were marked highly even though the action content did not relate to the stated choreographic intent. It is important to remember that the choreography task is about selecting bespoke action content that consistently supports the dance idea and it is the duet/trio performance task that provides an opportunity to showcase individual's physical skills. There were many examples of literal and moderately creative outcomes where the action content did not clearly support the choreographic intent and was not developed using a range of devices. The more successful work was from students who kept their choreographic intent upmost in their minds all the way through the process and selected bespoke action content which supported their dance idea from the beginning through to the end. Students often find selecting a wide range of dynamic content difficult but this year, in some cases, students achieved better in this criteria for their use of dynamic content rather than their use of action content.

Space was used well by most students, even the lower ability, with clear use of levels, direction and pathways. Size of movement continues to be less well developed and some spatial designs lacked consideration. Group choreographies demonstrated a good understanding of the use of relationships but often these were lacking in sophistication which is another legacy of the pandemic and its impact on delivery. Where relationship content was used in a sophisticated manner and consistently supported the dance idea; the resulting work was exciting and a joy to watch.

In structure and form the inclusion of a clear and considered ending enabled students to achieve the higher bands compared to others who finished abruptly or with less consideration to their choreographic intention. Successful choreographies incorporated an ending that brought the dance to a clear conclusion and had a greater connection to the aural setting. Consideration of the best way to conclude a dance resulted in work that had a clear shape and a feeling of logical sequence and unity. Transition material would benefit from further development but when used effectively gave the work cohesion.

Choreographic devices were generally used quite well in terms of motif and development and repetition. Contrast, highlights and climax were used less, and manipulation of number ranged from being exceptional to simplistic where it was not clear why the number of dancers had been chosen or used. Work that had a really considered climax that clearly supported the dance idea resulted in a higher mark in this criteria.

Aural setting was varied and in some cases very creative choices were evident where students had created their own music/sound to reflect the choreographic intent. In these examples there were opportunities to demonstrate a range of contrasting dynamic qualities and the choice also helped compliment the overall structure of their work. The criteria for aural setting awards marks for both the choice and how the music was used to realise the dance idea. Some students used their aural setting exceptionally well from beginning to end and used accents, highlights or the different layers in the music. Effective choreographies used the changes in the music to match sections in the

dance which helped demonstrate the structure of their choreography. Less able students did not always match their choreographic content to their aural setting which resulted in work that appeared to exist alongside the sound rather than work in partnership. There was some work where the music just stopped at the end or mid phrase which did not work with or support the ending of the dance. Some students used multiple pieces of music and, whilst this can be successful, equally too many tracks in a short work or if the editing is unsympathetic, it can often spoil the unity of the work. There were some students who used music genres with little contrast or variety and which bore no relationship to the dance idea and lacked any structural interest that could be utilised to reflect the choreographic intention. It was clear from some of the work seen that those students who carefully considered their aural setting choice and made some analysis of its unique qualities which was then reflected in the choreographic content fared well in this criteria.

As would be expected there were very few site sensitive choreographies this year. When choosing a site sensitive location it seems that some choices were linked to the stimulus but not to the actual choreographic intent so, as a result, did not fully support the dance idea. An example of a more successful choice was the use of a prison cell located in a museum for a choreography based on Death Row.

Infringements in Choreography

Most centres ensured that the work met the minimum time durations for 2022. For 2023, the NEA requirements revert back to normal so it will be extremely important next year to ensure that the work meets the minimum time durations as stated in the specification. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that students are aware that all of the following are infringements that could lead to penalties. These include but are not limited to; not meeting the minimum duration requirements; having more than five dancers in the choreography; two or more students sharing a choreography; submitting work without a choreography programme note and claiming you have choreographed something yourself when someone else has done it.

Student Programme Notes

The majority of the choreography programme notes were well presented and informative and offered the assessor a clear insight into the work they were going to view. The most successful choreography programme notes were succinct and included an explanation of the 'journey' from the chosen stimulus to the choreographic intent. Where centres provided the programme notes in both digital and hard copy format, this was much appreciated by the moderator.

Some programme notes were very minimal and did not support the assessment of the work as they contained no articulation of the choreographic choices beyond a title and a brief overview of the choreographic intent.

Some programme notes did not provide a description, citation or image of the specific stimulus used. This is a requirement which explained in section 4.2.1.2 of the specification. This requirement is also clearly stated on the Component 1 Choreography assessment task paper.

Some programme notes were overly long, and did not succinctly identify the choreographic intent and how it was communicated through the work. The programme note should be approximately 120-150 words as stated in the specification section 4.2.1.2.

Administration and Presentation of materials for moderation

Moderators were very grateful to those centres that took great care to submit their moderation materials on time. Where teachers had followed the AQA guidelines for recording and submitting video evidence the work was exceptionally well-organised which helped the moderation process run smoothly. Clear identification of students was also appreciated when moderating the duet/trio performance.

Centres are respectfully reminded of the importance of checking that the marks on the Candidate Record Forms match those entered on the electronic Centre Mark Submission and that all the work of the sampled students is in the correct student folder and that all paperwork is fully completed to avoid any unnecessary additional administration for moderators. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that they have backup copies of all NEA coursework and that AQA no longer accept work on DVD.

The majority of USB's were encrypted with the AQA password and fully labelled which was most helpful to the moderator. In accordance with guidance from AQA, student work should be filed in named student folders and not grouped by task. A few centres included multiple files for each task, so it was not clear which video should be used for assessment. This meant additional work for the moderator in contacting the centre to clarify which version was the assessed one.

Some common issues with administration included:

- The Centre Declaration Sheet being omitted or not signed.
- Incomplete Candidate Record Forms with missing student or teacher signatures.
- Missing programme notes for either performance, choreography or both.
- Incorrect addition on the Candidate Record Forms.
- Discrepancies between marks recorded on the Candidate Record Form and the marks entered onto eSubs.
- Incomplete evidence or the wrong video for students who had completed the tasks.

Some of the filming quality was excellent and of very high quality. A few centres did submit work where the quality was poor and hindered clear observation of the work. This inevitably disadvantaged students. Issues included lack of sound, poor choices of camera angles, shaky or blurry recordings, dancers being cut off, filming from too far away or too close so sections are missed, clipping the start/end of dances, strong stage lighting or low intensity lighting obscuring facial expressions and students wearing black clothes performing against a black background which made it difficult to see movement clearly.

The comments box at the end of each section of the CRF should be used to detail any supporting notes to explain the marks awarded however centres are advised that there is no requirement to write copious detailed notes and that all moderators need are succinct notes which simply give an indication of how the centre arrived at the mark.

The moderation team would like to thank those centres who made a considerable effort to ensure that their moderation materials were easy to access and fit for purpose and would also like to thank the majority of centres who ensured that their sample arrived with the moderator on time which allowed them to organise their time efficiently in what is a very busy period.

Lastly, the moderation team would like to acknowledge and thank those centres who worked so hard to swiftly resolve any issues which in turn helped to keep the moderation process smooth and less stressful.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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