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# GCSE DANCE

8236/C Performance and Choreography  
Report on the Examination

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8236/C  
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## General

This year saw a return to a normal exam series and teachers should be congratulated on their ability to adapt to all the changes they have experienced over the last four years. Whilst there were some students whose work was incomplete due to illness or injury the majority of submissions included two set phrases, a duet/trio performance and either a solo or group choreography. Reverting back to the original minimum time requirements for both the duet/trio performance task and choreography has been a challenge but it is clear that teachers have worked hard to ensure their students work met the NEA requirements. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of rubric infringements this year.

Generally the standard of marking this year was more accurate and there were some centres with very close marking which was pleasing to see indicating a rise in teacher confidence in marking. It was clear which centres had used Teacher Online Standardisation (TOLS) and could apply the standard.

Where marking was out of tolerance this was often limited to individual students and not across the whole sample. In some centres marking remained in tolerance however this was often due to one task being marked leniently and one marked severely which then balanced out across the total mark. Some centres had appeared to rank order their cohort but not in relation to the standard which resulted in the work of their highest student not matching the higher mark bands or the AQA standard. It is important for centres to understand how regression works and to appreciate the importance of consistency in marking standards across an entire cohort. When an individual student is not marked correctly this can have an adverse effect on the whole 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.

TOLS includes a variety of work and mark ranges. Moving forward the selected work will reflect the current NEA requirements. TOLS is available at any time and it provides the opportunity for teachers to get instant feedback on their marking compared to the AQA standard and should be viewed prior to undertaking assessments. Centres are reminded that internal standardisation is compulsory.

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 can provide advice and support throughout the academic year on delivering Component 1: Performance and Choreography.

## Performance

### Set Phrases

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

Most centres met the specification requirements and students performed two set phrases. The most popular submissions were Breathe and Shift followed closely by Flux. Scoop was less evident. There was an improvement in the accuracy of the set phrases however there are still centres that have common errors across the phrases that are unique to them. As students are

required to demonstrate their ability to accurately reproduce the choreographic content of the set phrases centres are advised to revisit the set phrase videos and notes, available on the AQA website.

It was pleasing to see fewer incomplete set phrase performances with most students fully attempting both phrases. For some centres there was an imbalance between the two phrases with students who were clearly more confident in one of the phrases than the other. Centres are reminded that as moderation is postal each set phrase can be filmed and assessed separately which means once one has been banked centres can give their full attention to the second phrase. There is no requirement to film and assess both set phrases on the same day.

Demonstration of **physical skills** was good this year and the more competent students were able to use the phrases to showcase a range of physical skills in performance. Development of extension in the lower body and through the feet would in turn improve the accuracy of the action content.

For **technical skills** there was an improvement in accuracy, however, timing and action inaccuracies were evident in some submissions. The moments of hold in the phrases are often not acknowledged which then has an effect on the accuracy of the style content. Generally, the spatial content was accurate and when differences occurred this was usually incorrect use of directions. For some students too much emphasis on the dynamics impacted the accuracy of the style.

Demonstration of **expressive skills** was good and many students were able to access full marks even when the phrase(s) were inaccurate. Those that performed with an understanding of projection, facial expression and focus were more successful and those students that delivered an energised performance were a joy to watch.

Teachers are reminded that they are permitted to count the student in with up to **8 counts** to support them and ensure a more confident start to their performances.

### **Infringements in Set Phrase Performance**

Centres are reminded that if a student does not evidence both set phrases then they cannot be awarded a mental skills mark. The mark for mental skills and attributes can only be awarded to each student if they provide creditable evidence for two set phrases and a duet/trio performance. Students should be informed that they are not allowed to be unduly prompted, copy someone else off-camera or perform alongside another dancer during the performance.

### **Adapted set phrases**

It was really positive to see how many successful applications were made for set phrase adaptations this year. Centres can apply to AQA for Access Arrangements to one or both set phrases which are specific adjustments for individual students, based on evidence of need and normal way of working.

Access Arrangements allow students with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment of the set phrases. A reasonable adjustment for a particular student will be unique to that individual and therefore must be reviewed and approved by AQA to ensure that any adaptations to the content of the set phrases do not affect the integrity of the assessment. Please note that set phrase adaptations must be approved before assessment of the

set phrase(s) takes place. The set phrase adaptation form can be found under Assessment Resources on the GCSE Dance page.

### **Duet / Trio Performance**

Generally, the marking of the duet/trio performance task improved and where it was lenient this was predominately across the physical and technical skills criteria. Work which lacked challenge and did not include a wide range of physical skills had sometimes been marked too leniently. It is important to understand that students cannot access the higher mark bands if the content of the task does not have sufficient complexity and therefore does not allow students to evidence a range of physical skills.

It was encouraging to see a greater variety of dance styles this year. Some centres chose a dance style as the choreographic intent or the signature style of a specific practitioner eg Fosse. Generally, it was clear to see how material from the two set phrases had been used within the work, however, this was done with varying degrees of success. Centres are reminded that it is a specification requirement to develop the action, dynamic and spatial elements of the remaining two phrases to generate dance content for the duet/trio performance task.

The duet/trio performance task is centre based and when the piece was teacher and/or practitioner led and created in collaboration with the students it was more suitable for assessment. A lot of centres had opted for differentiated duet/trio performances and these worked well in challenging the more able students. Equally these tailor-made pieces had clearly been crafted with the students skills in mind and this approach supported the less able students by giving them content they could safely and accurately execute. When the duet/trio task did not sufficiently challenge the more able it usually lacked speed and pace to evidence stamina and challenging action content to showcase a range of physical skills.

Where centres had chosen a very clear choreographic intent students were able to achieve well in expressive skills. Where the choreographic intent was not clear or the dance had multiple themes and ideas the demonstration of expressive skills and communication of choreographic intent was less successful.

For this task, the choice of aural setting did not always provide sufficient contrast and variety nor allow the opportunity for students to demonstrate an understanding of musicality.

### **Safe practice in performance**

The majority of students demonstrated a good understanding of a range of safe working practices. There were still occasions where students wore jewellery or inappropriate footwear causing them to slip. Students need to be made aware that these choices can impact assessment. For example if their hair obscures their vision then this could also affect the assessment of expressive skills such as facial expression.

### **The teacher's programme note**

Centres generally provided clear and succinct programme notes for the duet/trio performance task which clearly articulated the choreographic intent. Some centres did not identify the two set

phrases that had been used in the creation of the piece or cite the title and musician/artist for the aural setting used. Including this information is a requirement of the specification.

### **Infringements in Performance**

Centres took care to ensure that their students work met the minimum time duration of three minutes for the duet/trio task. Some of the work fell slightly short of the minimum time duration but met the 3.5 minutes for the overall performance. In a dance that is three minutes long, it is essential that when the work is filmed the student remains in clear view. If a dancer goes out of camera shot this cannot be included in the time as the assessor is not able to see them. There were some dances where students entered and exited the performance space multiple times reducing the time they were on screen to under three minutes which could lead to a timing infringement for the student. 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. Regardless of the length of the duet/trio task, the assessed dancer should be visible in the performance for a minimum of three minutes.

Centres are reminded that if a student does not evidence a duet/trio performance then they cannot award a mental skills mark.

### **Mental skills**

The marking of mental skills was mostly accurate. Some centres awarded marks for the process as indicated by the supporting comments on candidate record forms. These comments referred to rehearsal, response to feedback, attitude, application of skills and planning of rehearsals. The mental skills mark is awarded for the demonstration of confidence, commitment, movement memory and concentration during performance of the set phrases and duet/trio task and not for mental skills evidenced during the process. For clarification, see the Mental skills and attributes during performance grid in the specification.

### **Choreography**

It was pleasing to note that many students had clearly engaged with the stimulus paper and there was evidence of thorough research. There was a good mix of solo and group choreography work. The choice of stimulus was more balanced than in previous years and overall students seemed to prefer the stimuli of a photograph or image of a face, frozen water or sleep. There were some interesting responses to the stimulus of an item or object you could sit on or lie on and instructions on a leaflet or packet however these were not so popular with less able students.

Some of the more focused and specific choreographic intents which were well realised included:

- Victorian fan etiquette.
- BEFAST (information on recognising a stroke).
- Prosopagnosia – a condition where a person cannot recall faces.
- Process of machine learning.
- Last molecule of liquid to freeze.
- How school rules have the power to dominate over some individuals.

Some choreographies had very tenuous links to their chosen stimulus or had no link to the stimulus at all. 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 for teachers to steer students towards more innovative and creative responses.

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 time duration.

Selection and use of action content was slightly more creative this year and those students who had fully explored movement material to reflect their choreographic intent produced work that was more interesting and innovative. Students that used pre learnt action content that did not consistently support their dance idea fared less well. Students often find selecting a wide range of dynamic content difficult but again this year some achieved better in this criteria and their dynamic choices brought the work to life.

Spatial content was used well by most students, including lower ability students. Those students who had thought carefully about how spatial content could support their choreographic intent demonstrated more interesting and creative uses of the space. Not all group choreographies used the full range of dance relationships and where these were comprehensively explored the work that was produced was complex and inspiring.

Those students who understood the importance of a clear and considered ending which drew their dance to a satisfying conclusion were able to access the higher bands in this criteria. Dances that finished abruptly or in the middle of a musical phrase were less considered and this impacted the structure mark. There were many students who stated their chosen structure in detail in their programme note, however, this was not always evident in the work. Further development of effective transition material would provide the work with more cohesion and unity.

Work cannot achieve a high mark for selection and use of choreographic devices if there is no evidence of contrast, highlights or climax and often this was not helped by the choice of accompaniment. Students that had really considered and included a climax often choreographed a more effective dance. Manipulation of number ranged from being exceptional to simplistic and in some dances, it was not clear why the number of dancers had been selected. Where students had opted for group choreographies there was a real divide in how the number of dancers were used ranging from little or no manipulation of number to work that showed a clear understanding of its effective use as a choreographic device. In addition, there was a trend in some group choreographies towards dominating the work with prolonged solos which impacted the assessment of dance relationship content and manipulation of number. Motif development was used with varying levels of success and where it was manipulated and developed it was effective in supporting the choreographic intent and the structure of the work.

Aural setting choices were varied and in some cases very creative choices were evident when students had created their own music/sound to reflect their choreographic intent. In these examples there were opportunities to demonstrate a range of contrasting dynamic qualities which complimented the overall structure of the work. Some students used their aural setting exceptionally well from beginning to end identifying and using the accents, highlights or the different layers in the sound. Those students that used the changes in the aural setting to match sections in their dance demonstrated a clear understanding of how the sound could support the structure of their choreography.

Popular songs and instrumental versions of popular songs did not always provide sufficient contrast, variety and structure. More successful choices were those that contained musical features such as rhythmic interest, accents and a climax that could be used to reflect the choreographic content. When students had used music with lyrics, the movement content tended to reflect the lyrics of the song rather than the stated choreographic intent. Song is listed under aural settings in the specification and can be an appropriate choice if the lyrics support the dance idea consistently and are not just a tenuous link. There were times when the sound stopped abruptly and did not match the ending of the dance or just kept going after the movement had finished. When this happened, it inevitably impacted the structure of the work and therefore the mark for structuring devices and form. Some students used multiple tracks with varying success in terms of editing. Sometimes these worked well, however, some did not enhance the choreography and were distracting and disjointed resulting in an aural setting that lacked unity.

### **Infringements in Choreography**

Centres had clearly worked hard to ensure that submissions met the minimum time durations. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that students are aware that all of the following are infringements that could lead to a penalty. These include but are not limited to:

- not meeting the minimum time duration requirements
- having more than five dancers in their choreography
- two or more students sharing responsibility for a choreography
- students submitting work that was not their own or copied from another source

### **Student Choreography Programme Note**

This year a lot of care had been taken in both the content and presentation of the choreography programme note. The most successful programme notes were kept short and succinct and within the 120 - 150 word recommendation. Programme notes which included the 'journey' from the chosen stimulus to the choreographic intent were very useful. Those that provided an insight into how the choreographic intent was realised and highlighted important features within the work aided the assessment of the work.

It was not always clear in the programme note, how students had arrived at their choreographic intent from the stimulus. It was helpful when students identified the structure of their dance in their programme note and also linked any description of movement content to the choreographic intent.

Some programme notes did not cite the artist/musician or include aural setting citations. Occasionally, work was not given a title and some did not identify the specific stimulus eg instructions, face or object that they used. Often programme notes were confusing to read as the choreographic intent was not clear or there were multiple choreographic intents, ideas and themes. Programme notes where the student described their dance with little or no reference to the choreographic intent were not helpful to the moderator.

It is entirely permissible for the teacher to support their students with the creation and content of their programme note. This is an important document that gives both the teacher and the moderator an insight into exactly what the student wishes to communicate and what they want the assessor to understand when they view the work.

Centres are reminded that it is a requirement to include the following in the choreography programme note:

- the choice of the set assessment stimulus to which the student responded, and the specific stimulus (eg poem, painting etc) that the student used
- a description of how the choreographic intent of the work eg the idea(s), theme(s), mood(s), meaning(s) and/or style/style fusion(s) of the dance was achieved
- citations of title and musician/artist for any aural accompaniment used.

### **Administration and presentation of materials for moderation**

There was a marked difference between centres in the quality of the assessment materials submitted this year. Where centres had followed the AQA guidelines for recording and submitting video evidence, they were exceptionally organised which helped the moderation process run smoothly and ensured that students' work was easily accessible and identifiable. Many centres were diligent in ensuring that all paperwork was fully and accurately completed and that student marks were totalled correctly on both the Candidate Record Forms and Centre Marks Submission. The majority of USBs were encrypted with the AQA password and were fully labelled. Some centres used their own password and also included the password in with the materials which did not comply with GDPR regulations. Only a small number of USBs were not correctly encrypted. Some centres placed students work in task folders rather than in individual named student folders. This inevitably extended the moderation process.

Delays to the moderation process were generally caused by technical issues such as not using the AQA password or encryption method, corrupted videos, incorrect videos, or including more than one video of a task in a student folder. The moderator must assess exactly the same footage that the centre assessed. Duplicates of tasks complicate the process and add extra work as the moderator had to contact the centre to clarify which video the centre originally assessed. Delays were also caused by absence of programme notes, absence of Candidate Record Forms, absence of the Centre Declaration Sheet or incorrect addition of student marks. Generally, centres were quick to respond to requests for documentation or to address administrative errors.

It is the teacher's responsibility to check that their assessment materials are correct, fit for purpose and accessible. Centres are reminded that the Performance Duration Declaration form should be emailed directly to AQA as per the instructions on the form and not included in the assessment materials. This document is not required by the moderator.

The filming quality was often excellent and of a very high quality. Occasionally videos were out of focus and some centres used footage where the lighting was low which hindered the assessment. Most centres kept all students in shot and were not filmed from too far away. When students were introduced on camera and then moved to their starting position, it was very easy to identify them throughout the performance. In some centres, students were given distinctive colours to wear for the duet/trio performance piece which was most helpful to the moderator. A few centres filmed against a black background with their students wearing black which made it difficult to see the dancer clearly.

There is no requirement to write supporting comments on the Candidate Record Forms. If a centre wishes to add any supporting notes to explain how marks were awarded, there is a comments box at the end of each section of the CRF, however, centres are advised that there is no requirement to

write copious detailed notes. If comments are added then succinct notes which simply give an indication of how the centre arrived at the mark are the most useful.

Finally, the moderation team would like to thank those centres who ensured that their sample arrived with the moderator on time and that their assessment materials were easy to access and fit for purpose. The moderation team would also like to acknowledge and thank those centres who swiftly resolved any administration or USB access issues which in turn helped to keep the moderation process smooth and less stressful for all involved.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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