
AS

DANCE

Component 1 – Performance and choreography
Report on the Examination

7236/X
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General

The externally set task list for Component 1 is published on AQA secure key materials (<https://extranet.aqa.org.uk>) on **15 September** in the academic year of assessment. It is therefore the responsibility of the school/college to ensure that students receive the correct externally set task list for the year in which they are certificating.

Visits for examining this component

Examiners arrange visits directly with their allocated schools/colleges. It is essential that the dance teacher liaise with school/college colleagues and the Examinations Officer to identify several convenient dates when space will be available, before agreeing an assessment date with the examiner. Examiners arrange their schedules at the beginning of the spring term, meeting schools/colleges' preferences as far as possible. The examiner will not necessarily have any details re 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. 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, schools/colleges should notify the visiting examiner so that the examination day timetable can be kept accurate. When completing the timetable the examiner will request to assess all solo choreographic tasks first and then performances in duet/trios. This order should be strictly adhered to and wherever possible the order of the students for both elements of the assessment should ideally **remain the same**. Duets/trios will only be viewed **once** by the examiner.

Recording of assessed work

The rules outlining how to record NEA work can be found on <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/dance/as-and-a-level/dance-7236/assessment-resources>

Section A - Solo Choreography and Solo Performance

As with the legacy specification, all practical questions are devised to allow for the assessment of not only the choreographic and performances skills needed to complete the tasks but also the development of 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 underpin and inform the theoretical/written aspect of the course. The questions are not designed to be a stimulus but, as in the written assessment, provide an opportunity to focus on, develop and present coherent outcomes around a **specific** topic/theme.

All three questions were attempted this year with question 2 being the most popular, followed by question 1 and finally question 3. Popularity of individual questions in schools/colleges varied. However, it was noted by examiners that, occasionally in some schools/colleges all students chose the same question and had, what appeared to be, a formulaic approach to the response. **This did not always advantage the cohort.**

The length of the programme note for the solo choreography has a maximum word limit of **300 words**. This should allow students the opportunity to explain their individual interpretation and approach to the chosen task. Having a word limit encourages students to develop a succinct writing style and therefore should **not** be disregarded.

Points relating to the choreography for each question

Question 1

This type of question provides an opportunity for students to explore a visual source which will be informed by research and analysis, thus allowing for freedom and flexibility in interpretation and how the choreography is ultimately structured. Students were given the option of choosing 'one or more' air sculptures - most chose one sculpture but there were instances where more than one sculpture was researched, characteristic features analysed and explored to inform a more holistic presentation of Daniel Wurtzel's work.

The more successful dances demonstrated evidence of clear analysis and understanding of both the process and final outcome of the air sculpture(s), effectively weaving ideas regarding, for example, the process used by the sculptor, the unpredictable nature of the 'performance' and the forms themselves. Texture, materials, the use of fans, spatial and dynamic elements were carefully explored through the selection and manipulation of the movement components and there were some extremely thoughtful and considered responses viewed. The aural setting was thoughtfully chosen to enhance mood and/or atmosphere.

The less successful solos did not fully explore the visual source. These responses tended to be a superficial investigation and analysis of the sculpture(s) with little attention to materials, use of space, dynamic variation, shape or texture. The presentations tended to be heavily reliant on repetition and structure was incoherent.

Question 2

This was the most popular question in section A and attracted a wide range of choreographic responses, usually from the students who also seemed to enjoy utilising their expressive and dramatic skills in performance. Students were given the option of choosing 'one or more' of the four temperaments and therefore responses varied from a concentration on one temperament to addressing all four, though the exploration of two temperaments was by far the most popular.

The more successful dances could demonstrate an extremely clear understanding of the temperament(s), usually aided by a detailed programme note. Key characteristics had been explored and selected to provide appropriate contrast and variation in the choice and manipulation of the movement components, and when more than one temperament had been chosen, careful consideration of transitions and development of ideas was very much in evidence.

Some students chose to locate their findings about temperaments within a narrative context (either historical or fictional scenarios/figures), others chose to purely concentrate on the characteristic features of each temperament. Both approaches were valid. However, when using the first approach, sometimes the focus of the question was lost and students became

sidetracked with the superficial presentation of fictional characters or scenarios.

Less successful dances did not seem to be able to present an exploration of the nuances of each temperament through choreography, especially when attempting to explore more than one temperament. When students chose similar aspects of the temperament(s) to explore, clarity was lost both in terms of structure and coherence. In these cases research and investigation seemed limited, thus also making the outcome limited in its exploration of the source.

Question 3

This type of question requires the student to translate findings from source research and investigation into an informed and coherent practical presentation. The different types of 21st century pollution researched included, for example oil, water, noise, land, air, light and mind. Different approaches were used to present such findings and subsequent effects/repercussions, for example from the point of view of the 'victim', the environment or the cause of the pollution. The more successful dances utilised the research in an effective way and created a powerful, thoughtful and sometimes provoking statement about the source. All the constituent features were manipulated in a complex way, with a clear sense of development in the content and progression in the structure.

The less successful dances revealed a lack of understanding of the source which resulted in the use of repetitive content and a limited demonstration of manipulation of movement material through choreographic devices. Transitions needed more consideration which would have aided logical structure and development of ideas.

Points relating to the performance of the solo

In many schools/colleges, there were some outstanding performances of the choreographed solo with students demonstrating a highly articulate level of technical skill, spatial and dynamic control and use of interpretative skills. It was obvious that time had been allocated to develop these skills alongside the choreographic process.

In general, the less efficient performances revealed insufficient technical training to achieve an appropriate standard at AS level. These students appeared at ease with more static and gestural work but found precision and control of bodily skill when travelling and getting to and from the floor difficult. Spatial and dynamic control was in evidence but, at times, needed more attention.

The development of focus, projection, musicality and dynamic emphasis should be an important aspect of any practical assessment preparation and should have equal importance alongside the development of the choreography.

The standard of dress and awareness of safe practice were appropriate in most schools/colleges. Sometimes, when props were used by students, insufficient rehearsal meant that the use of the prop affected the demonstration of control during the performance.

Section B - Performance within a duet/trio

Question 4

Within the new AS specification the assessment of the **duet/trio task is clearly linked to an exploration of key characteristics of style within a genre or genres**. Unfortunately, this new focus of the task was **ignored in some schools/colleges**.

The task can provide students an introduction into the analysis of style and how to present the analysis in both practical and written presentations (performance and programme note).

In schools/colleges where the task was considered in an appropriate way, there were different approaches taken to the creation of the duet/trios:

- links to professional work being studied within either the compulsory or optional area of study chosen
- dance material used which had emerged from a workshop environment and developed by the teacher, students or both
- original work by the student(s)
- original work created by the teacher specifically for the cohort
- the whole of the cohort performing the same dance (which allowed for interchangeable roles)
- the whole of the cohort performing the same dance with individual variation for each duet/trio
- every duet/trio completely different within the school/college.

Students achieving lower marks showed some or all of the following:

- a lack of confidence
- insufficient rehearsal
- content which revealed their weaknesses rather than their strengths
- choreography which did not allow them to respond fully to the criteria.

High achievement was seen in schools/colleges where individual strengths of students had been considered, and where a considerable amount of time had been given to the rehearsal process and the understanding of the assessment criteria.

The submission of a programme note which outlined the students' analysis of style was important in order to inform the examiner. Some schools/colleges had not recognised the need to refer to the exploration of the key characteristics of style and programme notes became sidetracked with references to theme and/or choreographic intention. The programme note can be written in collaboration with the teacher and therefore could be carried out as a written exercise within the theoretical aspect of the course. **A programme note for all students must be submitted, even when a generic programme note has been used by all candidates.**

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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