



Course report 2022

Subject	Dance
Level	Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	490
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	27.3	Cumulative percentage	27.3	Number of candidates	135	Minimum mark required	66
B	Percentage	25.4	Cumulative percentage	52.7	Number of candidates	125	Minimum mark required	56
C	Percentage	23.8	Cumulative percentage	76.5	Number of candidates	115	Minimum mark required	46
D	Percentage	14.4	Cumulative percentage	90.9	Number of candidates	75	Minimum mark required	36
No award	Percentage	8.8	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	45	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of [SQA's website](https://sqa.my/).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Overall, centres were well prepared for visiting assessment with all documentation and candidate mark sheets complete and ready for use. This, in turn, streamlined assessment time and helped make the process run smoothly for the candidates. Most centres selected candidates to demonstrate a range of abilities from across the marking bands for visiting assessment, when there were more than 12 candidates. However, a few centres did not manage to meet the national standards for practical components. The question paper continues to add validity and credibility to the course.

Question paper

The full range of marks were accessed by candidates for each question.

The question paper allowed candidates to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding developed throughout the course. Generally, candidates understood the requirements for both sections of the paper, however many did not provide enough detail to access all marks available for each question or were not able to apply their knowledge to the command word given in the question. Throughout the question paper, many candidates did not understand the command words.

Section 1: dance appreciation in context

Candidates found this section of the question paper the most challenging. This section is worth 24 marks and samples a larger proportion of content than section 2.

A significant number of candidates do not understand the dance terminology used for the Higher dance course and these candidates were disadvantaged because of this. It is essential that candidates understand all technical and performance skills to fully recognise and interpret the requirements of questions.

Section 2: study of a professional choreography

This section is worth 16 marks and candidate performance in this section was greatly affected by the choreography they studied and chose to answer on. Choreographies with a strong narrative and a wealth of movement material, choreographic principles, theatre arts, and teaching resources to support delivery, allowed the candidates to answer more successfully. Examples of these include Swansong (1987) and Ghost Dances (1981) both choreographed by Christopher Bruce and Revelations (1960) choreographed by Alvin Ailey. Some centres had not studied choreographies in their entirety, or they had studied choreographies that had been created for a TV show or competition: this made it difficult for candidates to access marks.

Practical activity

The practical activity component performed as expected.

The collaborative marking model of a sample of 12 candidates was well received by all centres and positive feedback was received. Centres presented candidates with a range of abilities and a wide range of marks were accessed giving a clear indication that national standards are mainly understood.

Choreography

Visiting assessors marked a range of both solo and group choreographies this year. It was evident during 2022 visiting assessment, that many candidates found it challenging to present choreographies that demonstrate originality and creativity to communicate the intentions of the piece. Many candidates used technical dance steps that had no meaning in relation to the theme or included acting rather than creative gestural movements. This impacts the marking bands that candidates can access, as each choreographic principle assessed within the assessment criteria links to the intentions of the choreography.

Choreography review

The assessment evidence for the choreography review was, for the most part presented as a written report. Centres are required to mark the choreography reviews prior to the assessment event, and this provides more time for professional dialogue between the visiting assessor and the centre's assessor. This assessment process is well received by all centres and found to be beneficial to the smooth running of the day.

Many visiting assessors advised that centres clearly understand the requirements of the review and many candidates were able to access the top band of marks for this section of the component.

Performance

This component performed largely as expected.

Centres presented candidates with a range of abilities, and a wide range of marks were accessed.

Most centres were able to meet the demands of performance through suitably choreographed dances that were appropriately challenging and performed well by candidates. In some centres, the solos presented for the performance component lacked technical challenge for this level, and the choreography did not allow candidates to demonstrate dynamic contrast within the solo. Sometimes the choreography included too many stylised movements and often did not meet the requirements as the candidate would not start at the beginning of the song or would spend 20 to 30 seconds performing simple movements.

The collaborative marking model of a sample of 12 candidates was well received by all centres. Visiting assessment for the performance and practical activity was both a successful and positive experience for centres.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in:

Question paper

Candidates who had a clear understanding of the command words and were able to apply their acquired knowledge to answering the question, performed well in both sections of the question paper. They had good depth of knowledge and mostly wrote a summative statement that would relate the answer back to the question. This helped to keep their answer focused and concise.

Section 1

Some candidates answered question 4 very well using clear, comparative language and demonstrating a clear and sound understanding of the terminology.

Question 5 asked candidates to 'describe the origins and developments of one dance style'. This question performed best in the question paper and was perceived as being straightforward. It is the question where the majority of candidates were able to access some marks. However, the depth of knowledge was often lacking as candidates demonstrated surface knowledge but were unable to provide the clarity and detail needed to access the higher mark bands.

Many of the candidate responses had clearly been rote learnt. The 'C'-type candidates accessed marks here.

Section 2

Candidates generally performed better in this section of the paper depending on the professional choreography they had studied. Marker feedback suggests that the main pieces that candidates had studied and allowed them to access the full range of marks were Swansong, Revelations and Ghost Dances. It was felt that this was because of the strong narratives running through this type of piece as well as a wealth of movement material, choreographic principles, theatre arts and teaching resources to support the delivery. Other pieces that were chosen were less accessible, especially if they had not been studied in their entirety or had been created for a TV show or competition and therefore the candidates did not have as much content to write about. However, there were far fewer centres this year that had studied pieces that did not meet the requirements for the course.

In this section the 'A' and 'B' type candidates, were able to analyse, they appeared to be more confident with the content required to answer the questions.

Question 6(b) was answered well by many candidates, with a spread of marks across this mark bands. Candidates that achieved the top mark band in this question were able to explain the use of motif development to communicate the intentions clearly and in detail. Some candidates spoke about devices as opposed to motif development and how the movement within the motif had been developed. Many candidates answered part (a) within their response to part (b) and so did not achieve all the available marks. Some candidates wrote about spatial elements.

Practical activity

Choreography

Centres presented candidates with a range of abilities and a wide range of marks were accessed. There was clear evidence that some centres had worked hard to help candidates gain the skills to be more creative and informed in their use of original movement; especially when they had progressed through National 5 before embarking on Higher.

In some centres, it was clear that candidates had participated in a range of choreographic workshops that helped to develop their knowledge and understanding of choreographic principles. Candidates achieving the top bands for the movement in their choreography had a clear knowledge of their theme and had spent time creating and developing a motif which embodied their theme and conveyed their intentions.

Many candidates demonstrated excellent creativity in their choice of music and sound to enhance their choreographic intentions. Some candidates had clearly spent a lot of time selecting and editing spoken word and found sound and music to accompany their work. This clearly enhanced their choreography and helped the candidates to distinguish between the different sections within their chosen choreographic structure.

Some candidates were very creative when applying two chosen theatre arts to enhance the mood/atmosphere of their choreography and convey their choreographic intentions. Candidates achieved full marks for this element through creative use of resources such as costume and theatrical make-up or by using props or set.

Choreography review

Most candidates produced a written report. Some reports were supplemented with a mood/stimulus board. It was clear that when a positive learning journey was experienced, discussion and reflection during the choreography review was meaningful.

Some candidates were able to articulate their creative ideas in a concise and organised manner.

Task 1(c), 2(a) and 2(b) were generally answered well. In task 1(c), candidates that described a complex structure and clearly, and in detail, explained how their choice related to their choreographic intentions accessed full marks. A mere description of each section did not allow candidates to access the upper bands. In task 2(a) and 2(b) candidates were confident describing their choice of music and specific theatre arts and explaining their relationship to the intentions of their choreography.

Performance

There was evidence that tutor-choreographed dances provided greater depth and challenge, allowing candidates the opportunity to access the full range of marks.

There was evidence in many centres that time had been taken to ensure the required technique (the foundations of performance) were put in place before focus was given to personal performance. This resulted in candidates being able to concentrate on the performance quality of their movement, as they were equipped with the required technical skills for Higher Dance.

It was evident that a number of centres had worked hard to develop and improve candidates' performance quality. This ensured that candidates were able to access the full range of marks.

The majority of candidates were well prepared for their chosen solo assessment and were able to concentrate and focus, ensuring they produced the best performance possible. Jazz, contemporary and commercial were the most common styles of dance presented at Higher level, although it is also commendable that centres are utilising a wider range of styles to ensure that candidates are demonstrating the most appropriate style for their learning.

There is still a range in levels of presentations, and this is largely dependent on the skills and experience of the presenting centre. However, presentations and skills are improving each year.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Section 1

This was the section of the paper that candidates found most challenging. There is a lot of content for candidates to cover for this section of the paper. Candidates wrote a lot of information, but they were unable to apply it to answering the question.

Many candidates struggled to respond appropriately to either the command word or provide in-depth answers to demonstrate clear knowledge and understanding of specific areas. Candidates responded using all the information they knew rather than explicitly answering the questions asked. They demonstrated an inability to align their knowledge with what the question asked therefore the marks were not accessed by candidates. This highlighted a lack of understanding of the command words as well as a lack of practice at answering questions prior to the exam. It appeared that possibly due to the infancy of the paper that candidates had rote learned answers, which linked back to past paper questions. It was then challenging for the candidates to link their answers to the command words in the 2022 question paper. This method of answering questions could also highlight that candidates may not be reading the full question before responding.

Question 1 was perceived as being accessible, but candidates jumped in with a pre-learnt response and described their development method and gave very limited explanation of the impact that this had, if any. This question was the most poorly answered in the question paper as many candidates gave a detailed account of what their development method was, but they failed to write about the impact that the development method had on their overall performance which is what the question was asking for. Past papers asked candidates to describe the development method used to maintain or develop a technical or performance skill, therefore candidates have practiced and learnt responses to these questions and applied the learnt response. This meant that there was very limited information that was relevant to the question. Those that did access marks were often gaining low marks due to limited knowledge about the impact of improving technical skills therefore, responses were basic.

Candidates that accessed the higher mark bands had strong knowledge and understanding of dance technique, this was further supported by their answers throughout section 1, linking to technique. Within this question there was a lack of knowledge of the impact on performance that improving a technical skill would have. Candidates highlighted their weakness however the explanation lacked impact and depth which prevented them achieving higher marks.

Question 2 demonstrated that candidates did not have a good understanding of posture and alignment. Those that were able to link this to safe dance practice often did so in a basic way such as stating poor posture and alignment meant that they would get injured or fall. Some candidates also referenced warm-up and cool down, attire, or mirrors but did not link these to posture and alignment and safe dance practice. This is another example where candidates may have come into the exam with pre-prepared answers and then written those answers to the questions without applying them to the command word.

Question 3 was answered well as an explain question, but responses often lacked the required comparative language that is essential in a compare question. Therefore, it was clear that they had learnt content and answers from past papers and then not applied the knowledge to the command word. Candidates had straightforward knowledge and understanding of the requirements for flexibility in each of their chosen dance styles. Many talked about flexibility in general rather than how it impacted on their performance. Some candidates answered this question very well and made direct comparisons between their use of flexibility in each dance style.

Question 4 demonstrated a lack of understanding of musicality. Musicality is in the mandatory content and has previously been assessed in the National 5 question paper. It is awarded marks in the practical performance component; therefore, it is terminology that candidates should be familiar with. Many candidates refer to timing rather than musicality. Furthermore, candidates lacked the ability to evaluate their use of musicality — they gave a description or explanation of their use of timing. Candidates used descriptive language instead of comparative language to answer the question therefore could not access the marks. This may be reflective of a lack of preparation for the question paper.

Question 5 — Candidates' descriptions were often not detailed enough to allow access to the higher mark bands, they would write eight basic paragraphs and they were then allocated marks for straightforward or limited responses as it lacked the detail and clarity for higher mark bands.

Section 2

Overall, this was the stronger of the two sections with candidates' prior knowledge being more evident. However, it was felt that the additional support notes that were taken into the exam might have been detrimental to the candidates as they may have relied only on their notes. The notes did not provide the candidates with enough information and detail to fully answer the questions. Therefore, responses were often basic and mere description rather than explanation, evaluative or analytical. This was particularly evident in question 6, which asked them to 'analyse the choreographer's use of structure to communicate intentions' as candidates did not have the required depth of knowledge to access marks in this question with many candidates simply describing the structure.

In Question 6(a) candidates did not perform as expected as many candidates had a lack of understanding of what a motif was or more specifically what it was within the piece they had studied. Many candidates described the movement and the intentions, but they did not make a clear link between these and explain in what way the movement within the motif communicated and showed the intentions. Responses lacked clarity and this link between the movement and the intentions would have helped to provide this. Candidates who accessed higher marks continually linked their points back to the choreographer's intentions using linking words such as 'this conveyed', 'portraying', 'highlighting'.

Question 7 was answered well as an explain question rather than an evaluate question. However, answers lacked evaluative language therefore candidates were often unable to access any marks.

Candidates performed poorly in Question 8. Candidates lacked the depth of knowledge and understanding of the structure within the choreography to write about this in enough detail to analyse it. Candidates may have used all of the information gathered on the additional support notes without thinking critically and applying their own knowledge.

Practical activity

Choreography

Choreographies were weaker this year than in previous years. In some centres, candidates' use of set steps within choreography proved very limiting when awarding marks for creativity. Candidates are not able to access the higher mark bands if their choreographies are lacking in complexity. At Higher level it must have an established motif to allow candidates to access all available marks, candidates should be encouraged to create at least a 16-count motif, which embodies the essence of the theme; motif development; make use of a complex choreographic structure; and use complex devices.

While candidates are using a choreographic structure and choreographic devices within their choreographies, many are opting to use a simple structure and simple devices, therefore they are not able to access any marks for structure and a maximum of 3/12 for choreographic devices. The marking criteria at this level requires the use of complex structure and devices.

Choreographic review

Candidates performed poorly in tasks 1(a), 1b and 3 with many candidates scoring very low marks for these elements.

In task 1(a) candidates were not able to access the top mark bands in this task because they were missing areas of the criteria. There was a lack of understanding of what motif development is, and motif as a whole also caused issues. Both of these areas of knowledge are impacting on candidates' marks in the choreographic review, practical choreography and the question paper. Without the knowledge and understanding they are unable to apply the knowledge in both practical and theoretical contexts.

Task 1(b) requires candidates to use a third piece of research to influence and support their choice of spatial elements. More clarity and detail are needed when candidates are describing the relationship between their choices, research and the intentions of their choreography.

Task 3 requires candidates to evaluate a choreographic skill and the impact this has on the finished dance. While most candidates were able to provide ideas and information about one choreographic skill, they are not always justifying it with at least two specific examples. Many candidates are not providing clear evaluation linking the skill identified and the impact this has on the finished choreography.

Performance

In some centres, the tutor-choreographed technical solos presented for examination had limited technical content and the style-specific steps created by the tutor lacked challenge and breadth.

Contemporary dance was one of the weakest styles presented for assessment this year, in terms of the technical content.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

It is important that centres prepare candidates for the question paper by encouraging appropriate use of dance terminology. This will ensure candidates understand the questions and can apply their knowledge.

Centres should ensure candidates understand the command words and practise answering questions where they are required to interpret the command words and apply their knowledge appropriately. Exam technique should also be taught to candidates. They should refer back to the question with summative statements to keep responses focused and on task.

Section 1

It was evident in the 2022 paper that many candidates did not fully understand the requirements of the command words. As well as covering course content it is essential that learning and teaching prepares candidates with the relevant guidance and study skills to fully equip them for the demands of the question paper. It is vital that candidates are familiar with the following command words: analyse, compare, describe, discuss, evaluate, and explain, to fully understand the demands of each question in the Higher Dance question paper.

Dance terminology should be used throughout practical technique classes. Candidates should be aware of the contribution technical and performance skills have on their overall performance. Candidates should analyse their own performance so that they can identify their own strengths and areas for development. Appropriate development methods should then be used throughout classes to help candidates have a clear knowledge of the process involved to maintain and improve both technical and performance skills. Candidates should then be able to explain the impact that the development method had on the technical skill and the overall performance. If they have been through the process they should then have the knowledge to write about it and its impact in an exam.

Candidates should have knowledge of dance-specific exercises that help to develop both technical and performance skills. It is imperative that candidates provide responses that are dance-specific in section 1.

Centres should encourage evaluation skills during practical and classroom sessions. This will help candidates develop evaluative language. They should be able to evaluate their technical and performance skills in relation to self, peers and model performers.

Some of the language used by candidates when describing the history of particular dance styles had elements of racial terminology which must be addressed by centres when delivering this element of the course.

Section 2

It is important that centres select an appropriate professional choreography to study for section 2 and study it in its entirety. Candidates need to study and evaluate the use of theme, structure, devices, space, and theatre arts. Some candidates could not access the

full range of marks because the professional work selected did not have enough choreographic content for candidates to discuss.

SQA has provided Understandings Standards materials to cover the question paper content with a focus on command words. There is a question that is very similar to question 7 in the 2022 question paper on the Understanding Standards audio presentation that teachers would benefit from accessing.

To prepare fully for section 2 of the question paper candidates are expected to watch a full dance production created for stage that includes the key choreographic principles listed in the course specification. This allows candidates to fully explain, describe, evaluate, discuss, and analyse the choreography in detail and justify in relation to the theme and/or intentions.

For candidates to meet the requirements of the question paper, the selected choreography must be the work of an influential choreographer and include an appropriate theme and/or stimulus, motif and selected movements, spatial elements, structure, motif development and choreographic devices, music and/or sound, theatre arts including lighting, set, props, theatrical make-up, and costume.

As a minimum requirement, the professional choreography must include lighting and costume. The Higher Dance Course Support Notes (appendix 1 of the course specification) contains further advice and guidance on appropriate professional choreographies.

Practical activity

Choreography

Centres should ensure that the foundations for developing creative movement are in place before allowing candidates to embark on choreography.

Centres should spend time establishing what an initial motif is and how its development is key to the theme or stimulus. Understanding that a motif is more than a single movement, and how to fully utilise and develop it within their work, would also be beneficial for candidates.

Centres should focus on using a complex structure and complex devices appropriate to a theme for three or more people.

Focus given to the creative journey and the development of movements, devices, spatial elements, and structure throughout the year is key to providing the foundations for creating original movements that reflects the choreographic intentions.

Centres should discourage long, drawn-out storytelling and concentrate on developing original movement with a clear focus.

Two theatre arts must also be creatively applied to enhance their choreographic intentions. Choreographies are lacking theatre arts, many teachers say that this is due to lack of facilities, however there are a lot of examples on Understanding Standards website that highlight theatre arts being used creatively without relying on lighting.

Candidates should not be performing in their own choreographies. If an issue arises in advance of the assessment event, the centre assessor or SQA coordinator must contact SQA to receive advice before the live assessment event.

Choreography review

Centres should present the choreographic review to candidates with a methodical structure that encourages logical thinking. When candidates present their thoughts in a disorganised manner, they often miss significant opportunities to gain marks. The assessor may see that the candidate has an understanding of the area to be discussed from the choreography produced but cannot allocate marks because this paragraph has been omitted from the final review.

When candidates were unable to follow a methodical structure in the choreography review, it was challenging to follow their thoughts in an organised manner. Centres are encouraged to help candidates structure the order of their paragraphs. This is only the second year that the review has been in this format and therefore it is clear that this is an area where candidates need further support.

For task 1(a/b), centres should encourage candidates to use a professional piece of choreography as one of the research sources to inspire either the use of movement material, choreographic devices or spatial elements. When asking candidates to find a new, third source of research for the spatial elements (task1b) this could be a professional piece of choreography, as it allows them to understand how to make the links between what they watch and what they do within their own choreographies.

Centres should note that for the Higher Dance course, 'choreographic skills' means skills that a choreographer has and can develop which help them throughout the process of creating their own choreography such as leadership, creativity, time management, communication and organisation. These are the types of choreographic skills that candidates should be evaluating.

Performance

Centres should ensure that candidates have a strong technical foundation to build upon before they start learning set dances.

Centres should ensure that they spend time developing a strong performance quality, appropriate to the chosen dance styles. Centres should consider the best way to support this development; it should not be the sole responsibility of the candidate.

To control anxiety for the assessment, some candidates would benefit from more opportunities to perform their solo dances before the final assessment day.

Centre assessors should choose an appropriate environment for the live assessment, as it is important that candidates have had time to practise in the space before to the live assessment event. If using a dance studio, it is good practice to either perform away from or cover the mirrors as this often impacts the candidate's mark if they perform towards the mirrors rather than to the assessors.

Resources available on the SQA Understanding Standards secure site are beneficial to ensure centres are creating solos of the appropriate standard for this level.

It is vital candidates are given the opportunity to demonstrate their technical skills as appropriate to the dance style to reach the national standards for Higher Dance. Some centres could work with candidates to develop a greater understanding of the essence of contemporary dance. This could, in some cases, have provided more opportunities for candidates to observe professional dance works that would give a greater insight into the performance of key style specific steps, characteristics and features that are essential in contemporary dance performance.

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2022 Awarding—Methodology Report](#).