

ASSESSMENT REPORT 2020

DANCE CHOREOGRAPHY AND PERFORMANCE – DNC315120

Overview

2020 presented Dance teachers and students with a number of significant challenges. The interruptions to face-to-face teaching and the lack of immediate feedback in the latter part of Term One interfered with students' learning, in particular tracking their progress and their ability to successfully grasp the intricacies of the choreographic process. In order to successfully complete the course, students had to then direct their focus to presenting a longer solo work to showcase their choreographic skills and performance capabilities. Removing the group piece from the external examination requirements might have seemed easier at first, but it was evident that the majority of candidates struggled to create a piece that demonstrated the level of sophistication and understanding essential for an A rating. Folio writing again proved to be an area of concern. Many candidates did not answer the question/s satisfactorily, with a number of students either failing to address **all** the dot points or address each part of the question in a logical manner. Several candidates also failed to reach the word count.

Statewide numbers remained similar to 2019 and it is pleasing to see numbers continue to grow in the South. A number of new teachers also joined the team and already two new teachers will be delivering the course in 2021. Hopefully we have an uninterrupted year and students have the opportunity to experience the course in its entirety.

Practical Component

Once again, a variety of themes and concepts were explored by candidates in their solo pieces. Overall, the standard of performance skills was high statewide, and we saw some outstanding technical dancers. While this is pleasing, many candidates relied too heavily on their technical ability, rather than focusing on devising movement to communicate their intentions. The main focus for each student should be, as stated in the syllabus document, to generate movement in response to an abstract concept, or idea that reflects an understanding of dance making techniques. Too often the intention was communicated via the candidate's music selection together with dramatic performance skills. As a result, many did not score well on Criterion 7. Ideally a piece should be able to be performed in silence and the intention still be clear. Similarly, students need to provide evidence of the elements of construction by manipulating, ordering and linking movement phrases and sections to produce a sophisticated and unified form to express their choreographic intent clearly if an A rating is to be achieved for Criterion 8. Arguably, choreographing a group piece can provide a candidate with more opportunities to demonstrate these elements, however in 2020 this was not possible. It is also worth keeping in mind that the examining panel sees each performance piece once, therefore the connection to the intention statement needs to be clear.

Vague and/or complex intentions are difficult to express in a solo dance work and the general consensus at each exam centre was that in many cases students created movement that did not fully support their chosen themes. It cannot be stressed enough that a solo/group piece must communicate an intention via the movement. Dramatic changes in music, lyrics and props should complement rather than dominate each dance piece.

Folios

Overall, there was a disappointing decline in the standard of the Critical Analysis folios. Covid-19 interruptions may have hindered students' ability to produce their best work, particularly in terms of watching and analysing professional dance pieces or attending live performances. While this is worth considering, it is imperative that the two works chosen for analysis give students the opportunity to analyse and discuss the dot points featured in the question options. Many students referred to dance works that were too short, featured minimal movement material, or were short snippets from longer works. Many longer works have stand-alone sections, for example *Appartement* and *Ochres*, and these sections are perfect for analysis and comparison. However, some students selected music videos and what can best be described as sub-sections from longer works that went for only a few minutes. The assessment panel highly recommend that students choose two pieces, that are not only contrasting in nature, but provide an opportunity to showcase their analytical skills and their understanding of the choreographic choices made by the choreographer.

Choreographic reflection folios were again disappointing. The question states quite clearly that students need to focus on the process of composition (movement vocabulary, choreographic devices, structural devices, and form) and artistic problem-solving. There continues to be confusion around what is meant by the term 'artistic problem solving' and lengthy paragraphs written about production elements including music choice, costumes, and complex lighting designs. The question also asks about intention and stimulus but again students tend to write too much about the five themes they thought about before 'suddenly deciding' on their final theme. We are currently working on a new version of the question to solve this problem and give students a better guide to what they should be writing about when they reflect on their choreography.