Dance Choreography and Performance
Course Code: DNC315115

2015 saw a significant increase in the number of students enrolling in level three Dance, unfortunately only 62 students managed to complete the course. Writing three folios and creating two dance works requires discipline, commitment and skill and for many students this can prove to be too challenging. Devising a scope and sequence, therefore, that allows students to manage their time efficiently and effectively to meet the rigorous demands of this course, should be a priority for us as dance teachers in 2016. In my role as Chief Marking Examiner I would still like to acknowledge the efforts of each dance teacher and their hard working support staff who ensured once again that those students who did present work for external assessment were provided with the opportunity to showcase their work. All venues were well prepared and the practical examinations ran smoothly.

On a positive note there was a definite improvement in students’ critical appraisal folios. Analysing two dance works gave students more opportunity to discuss the pieces in greater detail and demonstrate their understanding of the dance works of others. It was pleasing to note that many students had viewed a combination of both live performances and videoed works giving them further opportunity to compare and contrast diverse dance works. It should be noted however, that some students still do not address the question adequately. The folio guidelines not only present two very distinct questions but also provide a specific outline as to how the folio should be set out and answered. Some folios were sent with personalised cover pages, name of college/school and formatted incorrectly. It beggars belief that these errors are made as all students should be provided with a copy of the guidelines as part of our formal teaching practice, as per TASC guidelines. Folios should be sighted and read three times by teachers and if students fail to adhere to these expectations teachers have a responsibility to indicate this on the folio cover page provided by TASC. Candidates aiming to achieve external ‘A’ ratings on folios must follow the folio guidelines and address all aspects of the question. A minimum word count is provided for candidates with weaker literacy skills and candidates should aim to reach the top end of the word count.

In contrast, the choreographic reflection folios were generally disappointing, primarily because candidates did not answer the question correctly. The guidelines specifically ask for students to focus on dot points 2 and 3 and unfortunately in many cases these were only briefly mentioned or not mentioned at all. The top end of the word count was increased to give more capable students a greater opportunity to discuss the process of their choreography and reflect on their choices. This appeared to work well for the stronger candidates. It is however, frustrating to see that those students assessed externally in the ‘C’- and ‘D’ range are marked too generously internally. If a student is a ‘B’ internally then clearly their folios should reflect this. Over inflated internal ratings, unfortunately, continue to be a problem. It is important to acknowledge that in the current educational context we are all responsible for teaching literacy and in particular ensuring students in our course have an understanding of the appropriate academic writing conventions. Candidates however should be encouraged to draft their folios in conjunction with the development of their choreography to avoid hurried and incomplete folios.

On a more positive note in the majority of cases candidates made excellent decisions around the themes they chose to explore when devising their dance pieces. Emotional stimuli arguably reflect the age group of the candidates but in most cases the stereotypical movements associated with many of these themes were not evident. In some centres there were a number of students whose creativity, technique and performance skills were outstanding and reflected the time and effort spent devising their work. Music selections also improved significantly, as did choices made concerning clothing/costuming. It was refreshing to see dancers perform their pieces unhindered by elaborate costumes that ultimately distract from the movement and shape of the performers. It was pleasing to note that production tools also played a lesser role in all centres and this allowed each examiner to accurately assess candidate’s work.

One area of concern in all centres was the lack of development and experimentation evident in the choice of transition movements. In too many cases, especially during group pieces, dancers either transitioned from one section to another or changed groupings by simply walking. This obvious lack of development highlights a need...
to encourage students to explore a range of locomotor movement options to address this concern. As teachers we are well aware of the challenges that students face completing their dance works and in many cases excellent movement material was marred by pedestrian and clumsy transitions. Something candidates can consider and work to improve on in 2016.

Despite the concerns there were undoubtedly many highlights in 2015. Beautiful dance works that showcased choreographic excellence, stunning technique and sophisticated movement interpretations of ideas at times left the examining panel in awe. We must however aim to improve in a number of areas so that all students who enrol in Dance Choreography and Performance complete the course. The challenges that occur in combined 2/3 classes undeniable hinder our ability as teachers to control the many variables and despite our best efforts we must also be realistic in understanding that not every candidate completing the course reaches the required standard on all criteria.

In 2016 we should continue to commit to developing and participating in the strong professional learning community we have begun to establish. As many of us work in isolation, networking is of great importance as we strive to improve and develop the subject. It has been exciting to welcome new faces to the Dance teaching community and together we need a collective approach to growing numbers and ensuring the best possible student outcomes.