



# 2021 VCE Dance written external assessment report

## General comments

The 2021 Dance written examination reflected the *VCE Dance Study Design 2019–2024*. The current study design accreditation period has been extended from the end of 2023 to the end of 2024.

The examination questions were based on the key knowledge and key skills that underpin the outcomes in Units 3 and 4. Students were required to demonstrate their understanding of choreographic principles and the prescribed works studied throughout both units.

The examination consisted of seven questions and all questions were compulsory. Questions 1, 2 and 3 related to students' solo dances and learnt works. Questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 related to dance works selected from the prescribed list of dance works published annually in the *VCAA Bulletin*. The list changes each year; therefore, it is important to carefully check the list at the start of each year before deciding on the selection of works to be studied. Responses indicated that students had studied appropriate works from the current prescribed list.

Responses that scored highly were comprehensive and demonstrated consistent use of accurate and appropriate dance terminology. They answered the question using detailed knowledge and an understanding of the key knowledge and skills relevant to each question.

Low-scoring responses demonstrated a limited understanding of the key concept(s) involved and/or showed limited knowledge of appropriate dance terminology. Further revision of VCE Dance terminology leading up to the examination would enable a stronger application of relevant terminology.

Students are advised to read each question carefully to ensure they understand what is being asked. They should use their reading time to identify the key terms and concepts the question is focusing on, and also ensure that they understand all aspects of the question so they can respond accordingly. Diagrams were awarded marks only if they provided additional information to written responses. Some students crossed out information that was correct, rendering it unable to receive marks, while some students' handwriting made it difficult to understand their responses. It is important to make note of the marks allocated to each question.

Further revision of general examination techniques will assist students. Past written examination reports and sample examination material (available on the VCE Dance examination page of the VCAA website) may be useful in assisting with a student's examination preparation. Students are advised that this material serves only as a sample and that the number and type of questions for each year may vary.

## Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers, or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

### Question 1

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	6	9	26	27	32	2.7

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 3, Outcome 2, 'Choreography, performance and analysis of a skills-based solo dance work'. Specifically, it related to the key skill 'Use the choreographic process'.

As outlined in the terminology section of the Dance study design, the choreographic process is a set of creative activities used by students as choreographers, defined as improvisation, selection, arrangement, refinement and evaluation. Responses needed to refer to one of these defined activities to receive marks.

High-scoring responses identified one of the defined activities and linked the use of this activity to the successful realisation of the skills-based solo dance work.

Low-scoring responses incorrectly identified a choreographic process and/or gave a detailed definition or description of a correct choreographic process with no link to the realisation of the solo dance work.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Improvisation: To begin the choreographic process I began improvising, this allowed me to get a feel for the dance and the type of movement vocabulary of the piece. Improvising a range and variety of steps helped the creative process and the realisation of my skills-based solo. It provided me with a selection of movements and phrases which could be pieced together to create the solo.*

### Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	2	10	19	18	21	28	4.2

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 4, Outcome 2, 'Choreography, performance and dance-making analysis'. Specifically, it related to the:

- key knowledge 'approaches to realising a solo dance work that communicates an intention through rehearsal, preparation for performance and performance'
- key skill 'rehearse, prepare to perform and perform a solo dance work using appropriate processes'.

As outlined in the terminology section of the study design, 'preparing for performance' involves activities undertaken just prior to performing. This is separate from the processes of choreographing, rehearsing and performing the solo dance work.

High-scoring responses correctly identified two different pre-performance activities, including but not limited to undertaking a warm-up, visualising the whole solo, getting into character through thinking about the

intention or getting into costume/make-up/hair, marking through the solo and marking out positions in the space. These responses then linked the activities to the communication of the intention by explaining how each activity assisted the student to enhance the communication of the intention of their solo.

Low-scoring responses incorrectly identified pre-performance activities, instead referring to other activities such as rehearsal or performance activities; and/or explained what the pre-performance activity was but didn't link it to how it is used to enhance the communication of their intention.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

*Visualisation: A dancer may like to close their eyes and visualise the intention or the character that they wish to embody. Visualisation may also help to ease the nerves of the dancer to help them to only focus on communicating the intention.*

*Warm up: A dancer may take part in a warm-up consisting of cardio and dynamic stretching in order to efficiently oxygenate muscles around the body and prepare the body for physical exertion. This will help the dancer to communicate the intention as they will better be prepared to physically execute the movement to be able to communicate the aspect of the intention.*

## Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	4	3	8	7	12	15	14	12	24	5.3

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 3, Outcome 3, 'Dance technique, performance and analysis of a learnt dance work'. Specifically, it related to the:

- key knowledge 'learning, rehearsing and performing a learnt dance work'
- key knowledge 'group formations in the dance work used to communicate the intention'
- key skill 'learning, rehearsing and performing a learnt dance work'
- key skill 'move with an awareness of others to reproduce group formations accurately and expressively'.

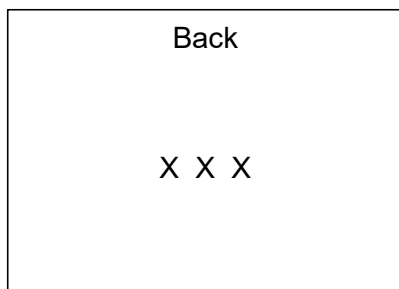
In the terminology section of the study design, group formations are listed under group structures, referring to symmetrical and asymmetrical group formations. Formations are also more widely discussed in reference to the general position of dancers on the stage. Any descriptive terms used to describe the use of group formations were awarded marks, whether they were symmetrical and/or asymmetrical or terms including but not limited to diagonal, circle, triangle and straight lines.

High-scoring responses included a description of two different group formations used in the learnt dance work. They referenced either symmetrical/asymmetrical group formations and/or detailed the shape of the placement of dancers on the stage. They outlined the intention of the learnt dance work and then detailed how the formation they had described communicated the intention or an aspect of the intention of the learnt dance work. These responses often included diagrams to support the written information.

Low-scoring responses:

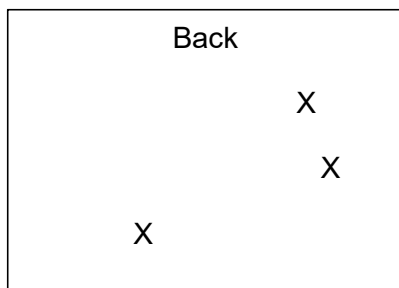
- did not identify a correct group formation
- referred to group structures (e.g. canon, contrast, unison) or movement vocabulary without describing the placement of dancers on the stage
- provided a detailed description of the group formation but did not link it to the intention
- provided a detailed description of the intention without reference to the group formations
- were based on a prescribed group dance work rather than a learnt dance work.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.



#### *Symmetrical group formation*

*In the beginning section of the group dance the choreographer used a symmetrical group formation to convey a sense of solidarity, as we all stood together in harmony. The symmetrical formation also helped to convey a sense of balance and equality as we all stood together. The formation included one dancer alone in front, but she was supported by dancers behind her on both sides, again conveying solidarity.*



#### *Asymmetrical group formation*

*In the developing section the choreographer placed the dancers in an asymmetrical formation where they were not particularly in lines, but rather we were randomly placed. This formation helped to express the solidarity being broken, as we were no longer together and united in a balanced formation. The formation also helped to create a sense of imbalance and unease as we were now split from each other.*

## Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	2	1	6	6	11	10	15	16	33	5.9

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 3, Outcome 1, 'Dance perspectives'. Specifically, it related to the:

- key knowledge 'the intention of the selected dance works'
- key knowledge 'the form of the selected dance works'
- key knowledge 'the movements, phrases and sections used to express the intention'
- key skill 'describe and discuss the intention of each selected work'
- key skill 'describe and discuss how the movement vocabulary is used to communicate the intention in the selected dance works'.

Students were required to select and identify one solo dance work from the prescribed list, and then identify one aspect of the intention of the selected dance work.

High-scoring responses identified a specific plausible aspect of the intention and gave a detailed description of two different phrases of movement that both related to the same aspect of the intention. The descriptions of the phrases of movement vocabulary were detailed and included specific movements written in the order they were performed. The responses clearly identified a link between the phrase of movement vocabulary described and how it communicated the chosen aspect of the intention of the dance work.

Low-scoring responses:

- outlined an intention that was not plausible
- described an individual movement or motif rather than a phrase of movement
- described a section of the dance work rather than a phrase of movement
- gave a detailed description of the movement phrase with no link to the intention
- gave a detailed description of the intention with no link to the movement phrase
- gave a very broad intention that made it difficult to link to the movement phrase
- linked the two different movement phrases to different aspects of the intention.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Title of solo dance work: White Rabbit Solo*

*Aspect of the intention: to depict the White Rabbit's frantic preparation for the Knave of Hearts' trial*

*Phrase 1: At the commencement of the solo work, the White Rabbit travels extensively around the stage. He first walks hurriedly to the centre before climbing the stairs, then retreating, before pacing around in a circular motion. This fast-paced travelling communicates his fluster regarding the upcoming trial. Gestural movements are also applied such as him scratching his ear erratically, wiping the lectern, and brushing the pillars with his tail. These movements further affirm his angst and stress. The phrase concludes with a moment of stillness, as the alarm is visible in his eyes, to convey that he is distraught and nervous for the trial.*

*Phrase 2: Midway through the solo, the White Rabbit's movements accelerate as he elevates consistently, executing small bunny hops and a bound jeté. This increase in height metaphorically represents his nerves rising further as the trial looms closer. The rabbit then turns with a fluent attitude pirouette, in an attempt to calm himself before falling to the ground with a spiral, and then a moment of stillness as he attempts collecting his emotions. Unable to contain his angst and fidgets, he then elevates again, bunny hopping off of the ground, communicating that the rabbit is incapable of containing his stress levels and growing increasingly twitchy and frantic as the trial approaches.*

## Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	6	1	2	3	3	4	4	3	4	5	6	4	6	6	5	4	6	5	6	2	14	11.7

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 3, Outcome 1, 'Dance perspectives'. Specifically, it related to the:

- key knowledge 'the intention of the selected dance works'
- key knowledge 'ways that the elements of movement are manipulated to communicate the intention of the selected dance works'
- key knowledge 'the form of the selected dance works'
- key knowledge 'the movements, phrases and sections used to express the intention'
- key skill 'describe and discuss the intention of each selected work'
- key skill 'describe and discuss how the movement vocabulary is used to communicate the intention in the selected dance works'.

Students were required to select and identify one solo dance work from the prescribed list that was different from the solo they discussed in Question 4, and then identify one aspect of spatial organisation used in the selected dance work. In the terminology section of the study design, the elements of movement include time, space and energy, and the qualities or elements of space include spatial organisation – namely direction, dimension, level and focus. Students were required to refer to one of those elements of spatial organisation.

High-scoring responses identified a correct element of spatial organisation. They used detailed descriptions of movement vocabulary to discuss how the chosen element of spatial organisation was manipulated to communicate the intention of the dance work. These responses often included multiple examples with a description of the spatial organisation and a link to the intention. They included detailed descriptions of all three parts of the question – movement, spatial organisation and intention – with clear links that described how the three parts related to or impacted on each other.

As the question specified that examples must come from ‘throughout the dance’, responses needed to refer to two or more different sections of the dance.

Low-scoring responses:

- did not identify a correct element of spatial organisation
- linked the spatial organisation with the intention but did not give movement vocabulary examples
- discussed spatial organisation and movement vocabulary, but did not link them to the intention
- gave an outline of the intention and then described movement vocabulary without linking them
- had one or more examples of movement vocabulary from the same section of the dance work.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Title of solo dance work: Take me to church*

*Element of spatial organisation: Level*

*Level refers to the height that a movement is executed at, whether it be high, medium, or low. The intention of Jade Hale Christofi’s ‘Take me to church’ was to depict Sergei Polunin’s victories and defeats throughout his renowned dance career. ‘Level’ assists in communicating this to the audience. At the commencement of the solo, Sergei is positioned low on the ground, lying on his back. This communicates his first struggles early on in life, including being financially disadvantaged as domestic adversities such as his parents divorcing. Sergei executes a series of slow paced movements on the ground, by arching his back and kneeling while desperately gesturing up to the sky. He then rolls onto his stomach before dragging his legs underneath himself. The level remains low, representing continuously the pain that he is enduring. Following this however, the level is manipulated as he gradually elevates to a standing position. There is a moment of stillness to communicate his change from defeat to victory, as he is now succeeding in life, being the youngest person to be promoted to soloist at the Royal Ballet Company.*

*Sergei’s level continuously elevates as he travels extensively in the space, performing high jetés and athletic jumps along with quick paced, accelerating turns. He additionally executes high arabesques and penches, further affirming his victories and vary in emotions as he is now succeeding and achieving triumph in life, conveyed through his now high level. Following this however, Sergei’s level is then manipulated again as he retreats to the ground, depicting that he is now struggling again, resigning from the Royal Ballet Company and experiencing drug addiction. The change from high level to now low again depicts this, as it is made clear that he is struggling and defeated. He once again executes gestural movements such as reaching outwards and grabbing his head to convey his pain. Sergei then rolls on his back, and placing one leg in retiré, claws his hand across his side and drags it across his chest. The continual falling as he rolls on the ground at a slow pace is then followed by another moment of stillness, all whilst he remains at this low level to communicate his defeat.*

*However, this is then manipulated, as he rises to medium, kneeling on his knees and arching his back to the sky slowly. This demonstrates that he is prepared to recover and in a position to move on from the adversities, ready to succeed and triumph again. The level is then manipulated even further again as he*



*risers to a high level once again, executing more elevated turning jetés, and long turning sequences, alongside more développée extensions. The high and elevated movements communicate that he has once again returned to victory, and overcome his struggles. He travels through the space freely and continues to jump, performing athletic combinations including scissons and grand jetés once again. This all remains at a high level to convey his success and recovery. Consequently, the use of the element of spatial organisation 'level', is used to visually depict and communicate Sergei's ongoing and varying victories and defeats throughout his life and dance career, which was Jade Hale Christofi's intention for 'Take me to church'.*

## Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	10	1	3	2	3	2	5	6	4	6	5	3	6	5	6	5	6	5	5	2	9	10.7

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 3, Outcome 1, 'Dance perspectives'. Specifically, it related to the:

- key knowledge 'ways that the elements of spatial organisation are manipulated to communicate the intention and used in the relationships between the dancers'
- key skill 'analyse the ways that group structures, spatial arrangements and the elements of spatial organisation are manipulated to communicate the intention'.

Students were required to select and identify one group dance work from the prescribed list and then identify one aspect of spatial organisation used in the selected dance work. Spatial organisation includes the elements of direction, dimension, level and focus. Students were required to refer to the same element of spatial organisation that they discussed in Question 5.

High-scoring responses identified a correct element of spatial organisation. They used detailed descriptions of movement vocabulary to discuss how the chosen element of spatial organisation was manipulated to communicate the intention of the dance work. These responses often included multiple examples with a description of the spatial organisation and a link to the intention. They included detailed descriptions of all three parts of the question – movement, spatial organisation and intention – with clear links that described how the three parts related to or impacted on each other.

As the question specified that examples must come from 'throughout the dance', responses needed to refer to two or more different sections of the dance.

Low-scoring responses:

- did not identify a correct element of spatial organisation
- linked the spatial organisation with the intention but did not give movement vocabulary examples
- discussed spatial organisation and movement vocabulary, but did not link them to the intention
- gave an outline of the intention and then described movement vocabulary without linking them
- had one or more examples of movement vocabulary from the same section of the dance work.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Title of group dance work: West Side Story (Prologue)*

*Element of spatial organisation: Level*

*The element of spatial organisation 'level' refers to the height that a movement is executed, whether it be high, medium, or low. The prologue of Jerome Robbins 'West Side Story' was intended to communicate the ongoing rivalry between two New York street gangs, the 'Jets' and the 'Sharks'. Level is applied to depict this recurring fight in Prologue, because when one of the respective gangs are winning the battle they are situated high, however when they are being defeated they are situated low in contrast. At the*

*commencement of the dance work, The Jets dominate the streets and dance at a high level, as they gallop while repeating their continuous gestural clicks. They execute an elevated développ   in second, rising upwards at a high level to show that they are succeeding within the rivalry.*

*This continues as they perform a series of turns on the street, before pausing with stillness at a medium, crouched level as they encounter their opponent, a Shark. This manipulation and decrease in level communicates that the gang is now shocked and slightly defeated as a rival has appeared. However, realising they outnumber him, they regain confidence, rising to a high level again as they mock him and travel around him, before exiting. The Shark is then joined by two of his gang members and they travel through an alleyway at a medium level. They step-ball-change before adding a chass   turn as their pace quickens. This level displays the Sharks' stealth and caution as they proceed through the streets, attempting to locate the Jets as their confidence increases, but also realising that they are outnumbered. Later in the dance, a Jets member and a sharks member fight with pair choreography, and the constantly changing level is used to convey who is momentarily winning the fight. The Jet first throws the shark to the ground, causing him to be at a low level while he remains high, showing that he is in victory. However, he then jumps onto the Shark, whilst bringing him to a low level also, he is still situated higher than the Shark because he is above him.*

*However the shark then elevates, flipping on top of the jet, swapping their levels as he is now above him and consequently winning. This continues as they both elevate off the ground, and the Jet then kicks the shark, causing him to crouch in pain at a medium level in a squat. This leaves the Jet remaining standing at a high level, communicating that his gang is momentarily dominating the rivalry. This level increases even higher as the jet then cheerfully departs with his gang and they accelerate travelling extensively through the streets with elevated turns with their arms positioned in fifth, all remaining at a high level to affirm their victory. However, this is until the Sharks arrive again and the previous pattern is repeated. Three Sharks approach with the recurring 'clicking' gesture and elevate over the Jets, frog leaping over them. This leaves the Jets still at a high level as they are standing, however the sharks are suspended over their heads in the air therefore are at an even higher level, communicating that they are in the lead.*

*Consequently, the use of the element of spatial organisation 'level', is used to communicate the intention of Jerome Robbins' 'Prologue', as it shows the rivalry between the two gangs, because when the sharks are in the lead they are positioned high whilst the Jets are low and defeated, and vice versa.*

## Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average
%	6	4	5	3	5	6	8	9	8	5	8	9	9	5	10	7.9

This question assessed students' knowledge and understanding of the content in Unit 4, Outcome 1, 'Dance perspectives'. Specifically, it related to the:

- key knowledge 'the movement vocabulary of the selected group dance work'
- key knowledge 'influences on choices made by the choreographer relating to the movement vocabulary and the intention'
- key skill 'discuss influences on choices made by the choreographer in relation to the intention and movement vocabulary of the selected group dance work'.

High-scoring responses gave detailed descriptions of two plausible influences on the group dance work and discussed how these influences impacted on the movement vocabulary. They gave detailed descriptions of the movement vocabulary examples and clearly linked the chosen influence to the movement example, explaining how the movement was impacted. These responses were often split into two parts: one influence with a movement vocabulary example; then the second influence with a movement vocabulary example. Students could use two different movement vocabulary examples, or they could use the same movement



vocabulary example twice, as long as they indicated how the movement was impacted on by both chosen influences.

As the question required two influences, responses that included only one influence could not achieve full marks.

Low-scoring responses:

- identified influences that were not plausible
- gave a lot of detail about the influences but did not link it to the movement vocabulary
- gave multiple movement examples related to the same influence
- described movement vocabulary examples without linking them to any influences
- discussed the intention instead of describing movement vocabulary.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Title of group dance work: West Side Story (Prologue)*

*In the 1960s, many people were immigrating from Puerto Rico to America in search of jobs, particularly in Manhattan, causing racial tension between white Americans and Puerto Rican immigrants. This influenced Jerome Robbins in 'Prologue' as he shows racial tension and rivalry between the white American Jets and the Puerto Rican Sharks in West side Manhattan in the 1960s as they fight over territory.*

*In section B, two American Jets walk behind a Puerto Rican Shark, following him as Robbins shows rivalry between the two gangs. the three dancers stop in a V shape facing each other, the two jets stand together leaning on each other, as they stared down the shark, showing the tension an rivalry between the two gangs. In section C, three sharks stand next to each other in an alleyway, three jets run up and jump over the top of them as the rivalry and racial tension between the two gangs is shown through movement vocabulary. Robbins wanted to communicate real life issues in his peace, influenced by the Puerto Rican and white American rivalry in the 1960s, seen in Prologue through the rivalry, power shifts and racial tension between the white American Jets and Puerto Rican Sharks.*

*Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet influenced Robbins to create prologue. Romeo and Juliet was a classic story which stayed relevant and stood the test of time, Robbins wanted to create a work that stayed relevant and stood the test of time. Romeo and Juliet showed a war between families, which influenced Robbins to show a war between gangs, relevant at the time.*

*The rivalry, influenced by Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, is shown through two gangs, the Jets and Sharks. In section B, three Sharks approach two Jets stealing a lemon, the sharks look them down, showing the war between two gangs influenced by Romeo and Juliet. The Sharks take the lemon and move their hand sideways, signalling the Jets to walk away, showing their tension, influenced by Romeo and Juliet. The Sharks follow the Jets, showing the war between two gangs inspired by the warring families. The group reaches the other Jets who take the lemon from the Sharks, showing the classic, realistic story of war between gangs inspired by Romeo and Juliet. The Jets move their arm to the side, signalling for the Sharks to walk away, showing the wall between the gangs influenced by Romeo and Juliet. West Side Story and Prologue stood the test of time, like Romeo and Juliet, still being performed in the modern day.*