GCSE Dance

Unit Support

• Unit 4: Choreography
General – applicable to both tasks

Aural Setting

The selection of appropriate accompaniment is integral to Unit 4. The criteria for assessment include “appropriate choice of aural setting” which is worth up to 5 marks.

Accompaniment should be considered alongside the starting point/stimulus and candidates need guidance. They often do not have access to anything but popular chart music and they need to know that this will probably disadvantage them, especially the less able who tend to dance out the words.

An increasing number of music resources are produced specifically to accompany choreography. These often incorporate a wide variety of dynamic and mood content. It may be useful to keep a collection and suggest candidates choose from these. Copyright-free material is downloadable from the web e.g. www.freeplaymusic.com but these tracks need to be used with caution.

You might like to consider:

- creating a bank of suitably edited music from which candidates can make a personal selection
- giving candidates access to IT and sound-editing software to edit music
- prohibiting the use of songs with words that do not relate to the chosen theme
- prohibiting the use of popular chart music which does not contain any dynamic variation
- ensuring there are connections between accompaniment and the concept/theme/idea
- suggesting candidates use a variety of different accompaniments including spoken word, natural sound, and found sounds
- suggesting candidates use music with dynamic variation and contrast - or that they edit pieces to include them
- keeping a master copy of all candidates’ music which remains permanently with the member of staff and is never loaned for rehearsals, etc.

Please note:

- it is a copyright requirement that a formal record (which must correctly and fully identify the source) is kept of any music used. Candidates must be able to cite their music sources
- candidates who use silence, not as a positive choice but simply because they have not bothered to find suitable music will be disadvantaged in this specification
- music which is manually faded at the end of a dance almost always results in a poor ending to the dance
- music with an even pace throughout makes choreographing highlights/climax more difficult
- music where the repetition of a musical phrase dominates restricts the potential for development
- joining more than two pieces of music is likely to result in a lack of unity in the time allocated for the choreography
- poor editing can spoil dances
- the editing of music may infringe copyright regulations.
Successful candidates:

- research their starting point/stimulus
- are given clear guidance on selecting a starting point or stimulus from the prescribed list (specification p 15)
- have had opportunities to explore and improvise around dance material
- have been taught how to choreograph
- give their work a title - it helps to refine and define the artistic intent
- ensure that the choreography adequately reflects the title and stimulus
- ensure that the choreography meets guidance on time limits
- are given appropriate teacher guidance and feedback throughout the choreographic process
- have opportunities to offer feedback and receive feedback from peers
- use the study of works from the list of prescribed professional works to enrich and inform their own work
- demonstrate understanding of how the use of action, space, dynamics and relationships are fundamental to the creation of good choreography
- are secure in the use of motifs and motif development and understand that a motif is not just one action or a position
- use a range of choreographic devices
- communicate artistic intent
- choreograph a good beginning and ending
- show understanding of how to use form to structure their work
- have had the opportunity to video their work as it progresses in order to analyse it to bring about improvement
- note down and record feedback
- choreograph a considered ending to the dance that doesn’t occur in mid-phrase or just stop rather than drawing to a clearly defined close
- use a dance vocabulary which shows originality
- make group dances which fully utilise the number of dancers in the piece
- work with initial motifs that contain sufficient material to allow for development.
Specific to Unit 4a Composition

Task: Three motifs from a professional work are the initial stimulus and the end product is a solo with a clear form and structure (1-1½ minutes).

What is important to note here is that the end product is a new piece of work and not a mini-version of the work that the motifs were selected from. The 3 motifs are a springboard for the creation of new work and they may or may not be included in their original form in the final piece.
Suggestions for selecting motifs

The focus for this task is the choreographic process not knowledge of the work although studying the work to learn the motifs will enhance understanding and provide first-hand practical experience of the work for future use e.g. in the written paper.

The outcome could be similar to the original professional work (e.g. a solo based on a Gobstopper character using the same music and costume) or could be quite different to the work (e.g. motifs from a more abstract or pure dance such as Overdrive, developed into a lyrical dance using classical music).

The teacher can make minor modifications to the motifs to make them more appropriate for age and ability, but the content should be clearly recognisable as being from the original professional work. An example would be in the Gobstopper dance – performing one barrel turning jump instead of two, or omitting the suggestive sexual content.

Motifs could be taken from different sections of the professional work but should engage with each other in some way e.g. three different sections of Overdrive could provide suitable complementary motifs but it would probably be inadvisable to try and work with motifs from three different characters in Nutcracker!.

It helps if students:

- are familiar with the work
- understand what a motif is
- can perform the chosen original motifs
- can analyse actions, dynamics and spatial design in the motif.

When viewing the professional work, look for the following:

- travelling phrases with clear pathways
- travelling phrases combined with gestures, turns and/or jumps
- phrases that include a change of level and floor-work
- phrases with clear body shapes and gestural pathways (air patterns)
- phrases with dynamic contrast or rhythmic pattern.

You are advised to:

- view the work first and identify three sections that contain contrasting movement material e.g. floor-work, travel and gesture
- avoid sections that focus entirely on contact work
- analyse the complexity of the material – can the candidates dance it successfully?
- does the material contain sufficient action, spatial and dynamic content that can be explored and developed?
- teacher preparation - reconstruct the motifs
- use diagrams to record the movement
- name the motifs – for rehearsal purposes
- students in pairs analyse each motif in terms of action, space and dynamics
- focus on one aspect each time you view e.g. pathways
- keep the extracts short
- reconstruct them with candidates to involve them in the process
- ensure each motif has a clear starting and finishing shape
- video candidates performing the motifs
- practice the motifs at the beginning of each session as part of the warm-up
- use teacher resource packs to identify motifs
- use commercial CD-Rom resources where the task of identifying potential key motifs has already been done.
Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gobstopper trio from <em>Nutcracker!</em></th>
<th>Overdrive Sections 10 &amp; 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Elbows, arm circling, head jerking</td>
<td>Section 10 - select two travelling phrases (including changes of direction, turns, jumps) performed by men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Morris dance hops into barrel turn and roll</td>
<td>Section 14 – men’s phrases (include floor-work and clear body shapes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sideways gallops, kicks and final jump.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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**Short choreographic tasks**

- take one motif and add in new material by dotting it throughout the original
- develop the motif by changing the spatial elements i.e. floor-work is developed into travelling; curved pathways are converted into linear pathways
- alter the speed or timing of one motif
- change the order of the action content
- add three moments of choreographed stillness
- develop a motif with a partner and change the size of the action content
- explore which movements in the motif can be reversed
- identify one action in a motif and use as the stimulus to create a transition phrase
- retaining the style of the motifs, explore the notion of entering and/or exiting the space
- explore ways to alter the dynamics of one motif
- develop one motif by making it bigger with more energy and more travel to introduce the idea of climax
- take two movements from each motif and create a new phrase.

**Ways of working**

- identify three motifs from a professional work
- show them to the students
- students make mind maps of the following:
  - their initial reaction to the dance section
  - what moment(s) stand out i.e. what do they remember clearly?
  - the style of dance
  - how are levels used?
  - where the dancers start
  - what type of pathways the dancers use.

When working with the motifs students can use the ideas on the mind map to help them shape their motifs into a short dance.
Ways of recording observations
- teacher records students’ observations on large pieces of paper
- student creates own mind map
- in pairs, create a mind map together
- share your observations with a peer
- in groups of four, create a mind map.

View three sections/motifs and whilst watching use one of the above strategies to compile a list of the:
- action content
- spatial aspects
- dynamic content.

Use this information to help you shape the motifs into a short dance.

Analysis and evaluation to bring about improvement (AO3)
- this is a process mark – assessed during the progress of the piece
- this mark is looking at “how” the student works
- this is the only task where this mark can be awarded
- the teacher has responsibility for assessing and awarding this mark
- the teacher has to provide evidence when awarding this mark
- the teacher will justify the mark awarded on the Candidate Record Form
- the teacher is assessing this under controlled assessment conditions (whilst the student is working on the task)
Specific to Unit 4b Choreography

Choosing a starting point/stimuli
“Candidates must select a starting point or stimulus from a prescribed list.”

What to dance about?
Candidates have to select their own starting point/stimulus from the prescribed list in the specification. It is the teacher’s role to prepare and guide them prior to their selection.

In order to do this the following suggestions/tasks may be helpful and demonstrate the different forms this guidance and preparation can take.

- teacher prepares a “starting point” mind map as an exemplar for students
- select a starting point / stimulus from the list e.g. text; ask students to list all the possible ideas that it inspires e.g. recipes, instructions, quotes, etc
- give groups of students different starting point / stimuli and ask them to create a mind map of all the possible movement ideas. Feed back to whole group.
- create a box of stimuli – a conch shell, a myth, a picture, a box, an origami pack, piece of music, newspaper headline, etc
- allow students to explore and improvise around a range of props, accessories or pieces of fabric
- teach a choreography task on each starting point in the list
- build up a library of students’ work that demonstrates successful and varied starting points
- create a picture bank of dance images/group shapes that show interest in use of dancers
- allow students to work on tasks that have different numerical groupings – solos, duos, trios, quartets and quintets
- play a piece of music and ask students to list all the images it makes them think of
- play it again and analyse the structure – is it repetitive? Predictable? Does it have variation in its dynamics and an interesting structure?

You may wish to use questioning to help the student assess whether the chosen idea offers sufficient scope for development:

- does the stimulus motivate you?
- does it offer enough variety of movement ideas?
- can you find appropriate accompaniment?
- what exactly do you want to say in your composition?
- will the theme be clear?
- what factors have influenced your choice of making a solo or a group piece?
- have you explored and researched your sources of inspiration?
- what style of dance would be most appropriate?
- do your motifs reflect/embody the stimulus?
Developing the work

A plan of the dance can be a useful development tool and an effective discussion tool, providing common ground from which teacher and student can discuss and evaluate the work.

The student might include in the plan/mind map:

- structure – what is the beginning, middle and end?
- choreographic devices – such as repetition, contrast, climax, logical sequence, etc
- spatial content – pathways, levels, directions, size of movements, etc
- dynamic content – to add variety and interest
- relationships – use of dancers, changes in relationships, etc.

As the dance nears completion, the teacher is responsible for guiding the student in refining and evaluating the work.

Use: video, teacher feedback, peer feedback, opportunities to perform.

Important Note:

- The whole choreography must be attributable to ONE individual candidate. It is NOT possible for a duo or group dance to be choreographed in which one candidate composes the first half and the other the second half. Nor is there any place for collaborative work. In these circumstances neither candidate can fulfill the criteria as neither can demonstrate sustained choreographic development from the beginning to the end of the dance
- A group is defined as consisting of a maximum of 5 candidates. If this number is exceeded, candidates’ marks will be compromised
- A solo choreography is a dance for one candidate alone. At no time in the dance should any other dancer enter the performance space. If they do, in terms of this specification, it becomes a group dance and must therefore be marked using the criteria as applicable to a group dance.