

Dance: Choreography Unit

SCQF: level 6 (9 SCQF credit points)

Unit code: J28E 76

Unit outline

The general aim of this Unit is to provide learners with the skills and knowledge required to plan and create a piece of choreography. Learners will develop their knowledge and understanding of choreographic structures, devices and spatial elements, and the relationships between these and theme/stimulus; then apply these in the development of their own group choreography. They will explore the use of theatre arts in choreography and through experience of the choreographic process, will develop creative, problem solving and evaluation skills.

Learners who complete this Unit will be able to:

- 1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of choreographic principles
- 2 Apply choreographic principles to create a piece of group choreography

This Unit is available as a free-standing Unit. The Unit Specification should be read in conjunction with the *Unit Support Notes*, which provide advice and guidance on delivery, assessment approaches and development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. Exemplification of the standards in this Unit is given in *Unit Assessment Support*, available on SQA's secure site.

Recommended entry

Entry to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. However learners would normally be expected to have attained the skills, knowledge and understanding required by one or more of the following or equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- ◆ free-standing Units in Dance at SCQF level 5

Equality and inclusion

This Unit Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence. For further information, please refer to the *Unit Support Notes*.

Standards

Outcomes and assessment standards

Outcome 1

The learner will:

- 1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of choreographic principles by:**
 - 1.1 Demonstrating knowledge and understanding of theme/stimulus, and choreographic structures, devices and spatial elements appropriate to a dance for a group
 - 1.2 Analysing the use of theatre arts in choreography
 - 1.3 Evaluating the impact of choreographic principles used in dance

Outcome 2

The learner will:

- 2 Apply choreographic principles to create a piece of group choreography by:**
 - 2.1 Investigating a theme or stimulus in detail
 - 2.2 Planning a group choreography using choreographic structure, devices and spatial elements
 - 2.3 Developing and presenting the group choreography
 - 2.4 Evaluating the choreographed dance in detail

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Assessors should use their professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, and understanding of their learners, to determine the most appropriate ways to generate evidence and the conditions and contexts in which they are used.

Evidence can be a combination of performance, written and/or oral evidence. Evidence may be presented for individual Outcomes or it may be gathered for the Unit as a whole by combining assessment holistically in one single activity. If the latter approach is used, it must be clear how the evidence covers each Outcome.

For this Unit, learners will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ knowledge and understanding of theme/stimulus and choreographic principles of structure, devices and spatial elements
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of theatre arts used in choreography
- ◆ the ability to investigate theme/stimulus and generate associated ideas to express in their choreography
- ◆ the ability to plan the use of choreographic structure, devices and spatial elements to reflect theme/stimulus
- ◆ the ability to develop and present a finished piece of choreography lasting a minimum of one minute 30 seconds and a maximum of two minutes for at least three dancers, excluding self
- ◆ evaluation and analysis of the use of choreographic principles and theatre arts in their own work and the work of others

Exemplification of assessment is provided in *Unit Assessment Support*. Advice and guidance on possible approaches to assessment is provided in the Unit Support Notes.

Development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

It is expected that learners will develop broad, generic skills through this Unit. The skills that learners will be expected to improve on and develop through the Unit are based on SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work* and drawn from the main skills areas listed below. These must be built into the Unit where there are appropriate opportunities.

1 Literacy

1.2 Listening and talking

3 Health and wellbeing

3.1 Personal learning

3.3 Physical wellbeing

4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship

4.3 Working with others

5 Thinking skills

5.3 Applying

5.4 Analysing and evaluating

5.5 Creating

Amplification of these is given in SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work*. The level of these skills should be at the same SCQF level of the Unit and be consistent with the SCQF level descriptor. Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work is given in the *Unit Support Notes*.

Appendix: Unit support notes

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance on approaches to delivering and assessing this Unit. They are intended for teachers and lecturers who are delivering this Unit. They should be read in conjunction with:

- ◆ the *Unit Specification*
- ◆ the *Unit Assessment Support packs*

Developing skills, knowledge and understanding

Teachers and lecturers are free to select the skills, knowledge, understanding and contexts which are most appropriate for delivery in their centres.

Approaches to learning and teaching

Teachers and lecturers should maintain current knowledge and understanding of recommended practices in the delivery and assessment for this subject area, to assure learning and teaching is advanced with modern approaches that will engage candidates and develop essential skills in choreography as they prepare for assessment at an appropriate time in delivery.

In the *Dance: Choreography* Unit there are two Outcomes to be achieved. Candidates could develop knowledge and understanding of choreographic principles by investigating the choreographic process to create their own piece of choreography from a theme/stimulus. Candidates should take part in choreographic workshops to develop their understanding of choreographic principles. Candidates are required to evaluate their own work and the work of others.

In order to build confidence at the start of the Unit, tasks could be carried out in small groups before candidates work independently to create a group choreography. They should have a range of choreographic skills and some interpersonal skills before choreographing with dancers. It is important that candidates create a plan with initial ideas for the use of choreographic principles before starting to create movements rather than incorporating structure, devices and spatial elements as an afterthought. A suggested list of Choreographic Principles includes:

Choreographic skills, structures, devices and spatial elements

- ◆ improvisation skills and creative interpretation of theme/stimulus through short movement material
- ◆ structure: in depth narrative, collage, ternary, rondo, theme and variation, episodic
- ◆ devices: motif development, simultaneous canon, cumulative canon, call and response, accumulation, retrograde, embellishment, instrumentation, fragmentation, and dynamic quality of movement
- ◆ spatial elements: pathways, shape, formations, staging, size, levels, proximities

Candidates should be encouraged to explore movements and create motifs that express their individual style and ideas or concept, rather than using steps from a particular style (eg ballet, hip hop or jazz). They could be led through activities that explore the basic elements of dance for example:

- ◆ actions - gesture, jump, turn, fall, stillness
- ◆ space - levels, pathways, proximities, formations
- ◆ time - beat, tempo, length, phrasing, increase or decrease speed
- ◆ dynamics - sharp, soft, fluid, strong, suspended, staccato

Motifs form the basis of a choreography to communicate the intentions of the piece through repeating and developing original movements to convey meanings/ideas or effects. Rather than continually inventing new movements for a dance, once a motif has been developed, variations can be used to develop it into a final piece of choreography to reinforce the theme. By varying the motif, choreographers make the dance unique to their style.

Candidates can vary and develop the motifs in a number of ways, including:

- ◆ using different parts of the body
- ◆ adding or changing direction
- ◆ changing the size
- ◆ changing the level
- ◆ increasing or decreasing the speed
- ◆ changing the dynamics or quality
- ◆ embellishment
- ◆ fragmentation
- ◆ substitution
- ◆ inversion

Developing movement from a stimulus

It is important that learning and teaching activities enable candidates to feel confident in applying and developing original movement ideas or concepts that communicate meaning from a stimulus that inspires the candidate's imagination. Often candidates are more comfortable putting together set technical steps therefore it is recommended that choreography workshops and tasks ignite candidate creativity and help them to understand what is meant by the use of stimulus, creative movement and ways to convey intentions through the use of choreographic principles appropriate to a group dance. Candidates should be given opportunities to explore and respond to a range of stimulus when teaching choreographic workshops, candidates could be given opportunities to use stimuli which could be visual, written and/or recorded. A suggested list of stimuli is included below:

- ◆ pictures
- ◆ music and sound
- ◆ photographs
- ◆ statue
- ◆ city or place
- ◆ individual words
- ◆ colours
- ◆ personal experience
- ◆ poem
- ◆ media article
- ◆ film/documentary
- ◆ pieces of professional choreography

Professional Choreography

It is essential that candidates are provided with opportunities to watch live and/or recorded professional choreographers' works in order to appreciate and analyse theme/stimulus in principles used to develop knowledge and understanding while inspiring the candidate's creative ideas. Learning and teaching may focus on the following:

- ◆ creativity and the choreographer's interpretation of theme/stimulus
- ◆ choreographer's skills adopted to create develop and present a piece of choreography
- ◆ impact of structure, devices and spatial elements
- ◆ impact of music and sound, theatre arts

Complex choreographic structure refers to how the sections are linked together in a piece of choreography. Sections are typically known as 'A', 'B' and 'C' to recognise the well-known

structures. Using choreographic structures can be a helpful way for candidates to put their ideas in order. They should use them in a way that is appropriate and helps to convey the choreographic intentions.

Candidates may find the following information useful.

Choreographic structure	Description
Ternary (A, B, A)	A conventional and satisfying form because going back to the beginning 'rounds it off'. The return to section A can be achieved by exact repetition of the initial section, or by reversing, highlighting parts, changing a few elements and changing the order of the elements. They must be closely linked, while section B forms the contrast.
In-depth narrative	The choreography will gradually reveal a story or idea. The movement content is sequentially arranged in to section A B C D E F and so on to advance and communicate the idea or story. To allow the story to flow naturally, the choreographer should give careful consideration to linking each section in a logical sequence. For a more complex use, there could be more than one narrative at the same time, and the choreography explores how they interlink or collide with each other.
Rondo (A, B, A, C, A, D, A)	This provides the choreographer with a verse and chorus framework that gives room for variation in the verses and development in the chorus. Variation can produce something new each time, but it must still have enough of the original to be considered a related part to the whole. Development can recall the original in many ways without changing the essence. This is a satisfying form to watch, as the viewer can quickly identify the chorus movement and enjoy its repetition — it becomes a 'joining-in' process.
Theme and variation	Theme and variation format can be described as a dance phrase or section of a dance with subsequent dance phrases or sections being variations of the original. This would be A, A1, A2, A3.
Collage	Collage is a choreographic form that consists of a series of movement phrases that are often unrelated but have been brought together to create a single dance with a beginning, a middle, and an end.
Episodic	A choreography with many sections linked by the theme. This structure is found in literature, through connected and progressive sections, chapters or episodes. Each section reveals more of the plot. It can provide a narrative story to follow throughout the dance; however, there are also dances in which an episodic structure is used but not to create a narrative. Christopher Bruce used episodic structure in <i>Sergeant Early's Dream</i> (1984). The different episodes in this work do not tell a story but present different scenes from one community.

Choreographic devices

There are many devices for developing a motif. Devices appropriate to SCQF level 5 include repetition, retrograde, unison, canon, mirroring, partner work, and contact improvisation.

Candidates might find the following information helpful.

Choreographic device	Description
Motif development	The original motif is developed into a fully unique dance or section of a dance.
Retrograde	Perform the motif or phrase backwards.
Inversion	Upside down (for example an arm movement that curves up and over will be inverted to down and under).
Instrumentation	Perform the movement with a different body part. For example, movement led by arm changes to leading with leg or elbow to knee.
Quality and force	Vary how the movement is performed — for example perform the same movement with soft, fluid quality or sharp, erratic tension. Vary the amount of force used when performing the movement. Do it with a great deal of strength, from beginning to end.
Embellishment	Adding extra flare and detail to movements or motif(s).
Fragmentation	Only use part of the movement phrase, that is the beginning or end only.
Reverting canon	Each dancer performs the entire movement phrase from beginning to end but are separated by a number of counts. This can be overlapping or non-overlapping.
Simultaneous canon	This involves dancers doing the same motif at the same time but starting at different points in the phrase. This creates an interesting look.
Cumulative canon	Each dancer joins in with the lead dancer at various stages during the phrase and all finish at the same time.
Call and response	This can be described as conversational: one person moves and the other person's movement responds to (answers) the movement of the initial mover.
Accumulation	This is a choreographic device that can be described by the following model: (1), (1, 2), (1, 2, 3), (1, 2, 3, 4), (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), if each number represents a distinct movement or dance phrase.
Juxtaposition	Two things being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect, for example dancers performing in contrasting levels.
Augmentation	Movements are made larger through space and time.

Spatial elements

Candidates might find the following information about spatial elements helpful.

Spatial elements	Description
Personal space	Space around you or on the spot.
General space	Around the room and/or performing space.
Levels	High, medium and low.
Planes	Use different planes to perform the same motif — vertical, horizontal, sagittal.
Direction	Forwards, backwards, sideways, up, down, diagonal.
Body shape/design	Wide, narrow, rounded, twisted, symmetrical, asymmetrical.
Size	Large or small. Proximity
Proximity	Near or far.
Pathways	Straight, curved, angular, circular.
Formation	The position and/or shape in which the dancers are placed on the stage.

Resources

Candidates may develop their learning further by reading, researching, watching live or recorded performances, taking part in dance classes. Please see the following information of companies and influential choreographers that would be useful resources for learning and teaching.

Websites and dance companies

- ◆ Ballet Boyz
- ◆ Courses Careers UK
- ◆ Creative Scotland
- ◆ Dance UK
- ◆ DV8
- ◆ Foundation for Community Dance
- ◆ London dance (dance companies, reviews, jobs)
- ◆ National Dance Resource Centre
- ◆ National Dance Teachers Association
- ◆ New York City Ballet
- ◆ Rambert
- ◆ Royal Ballet
- ◆ The Stage (newspaper for dance and theatre)
- ◆ Scottish Ballet
- ◆ Scottish Dance Theatre
- ◆ YDance
- ◆ Youth Dance England

Leading choreographers include:

Alvin Ailey, Richard Alston, George Balanchine, Ashley Banjo, Pina Bausch, Matthew Bourne, Christopher Bruce, Merce Cunningham, Siobhan Davies, Isadora Duncan, Bob Fosse, Itzik Galili, Martha Graham, Gregory Hines, Doris Humphrey, Shobana Jeyasingh, Akram Khan, Rudolf Laban, José Limón, Edouard Louk, Gillian Lynne, Ashley Page, Jasmin Vardimon.

Dance Teachers Associations also have websites which contain valuable information, as listed below:

- ◆ BATD — British Association for Teachers of Dance
- ◆ CDET — Council for Dance Education and Training
- ◆ ISTD — Imperial Society for Teachers of Dance
- ◆ IDTA — International Dance Teachers Association
- ◆ RAD — Royal Academy of Dancing
- ◆ SDTA — Scottish Dance Teachers Alliance
- ◆ SOBHD — Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing
- ◆ UKA — United Kingdom Alliance

Approaches to assessment and gathering evidence

Teachers/Lecturers should use their professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, and understanding of their candidates, to determine the most appropriate ways to generate evidence for the unit.

Evidence for the Dance: Choreography Unit is likely to include a combination of written, oral and/or recorded performance evidence. The work can be presented for assessment in a variety of formats, Evidence may be presented for individual outcomes or it may be gathered for the unit as a whole through combining assessment holistically in one single task. If the latter approach is used, it must be clear how the evidence covers each outcome. Some suggested methods of gathering evidence are detailed below.

Evidence for the *Dance: Choreography* Unit could be generated by filming small group performances in which candidates can demonstrate understanding of choreographic principles; this could be marked using an observation checklist in which details of the evidence are given. Alternatively, candidates may watch a professional performance or attend a live performance by a choreographer and analyse and evaluate the choreographic principles used, presenting their work in any suitable format. Research, plans and evaluation for their own choreography might be presented in a variety of formats including booklet, written, presentation or audio evidence.

A choreographic log or recorded evidence could also be generated which demonstrates the candidate's understanding of the impact of choreographic structure, devices and spatial elements for their work. A mood board could be used as evidence for candidates to review the impact of choreographic principles and theatre arts for a professional choreographer's work. Candidates must evaluate the choreographic process. This can meet the evidence requirements for Outcome 1 and 2 in the Dance: Choreography unit as well as helping candidates to develop their reflective practice which would help them progress forward onto the full course award in Higher Dance.

A suitable method of assessment could be short task-based practical performances led by the teacher/lecturer. These could be recorded in small groups, for evidence. Evidence needs to demonstrate an understanding of:

- ◆ theme/stimulus
- ◆ choreographic devices
- ◆ structures
- ◆ spatial elements
- ◆ theatre arts

Combining assessment within Units

As Units are delivered on a free-standing basis, teachers/lecturers will have more flexibility to develop approaches to delivering and assessing the Units as these will not need to be related to Course assessment. When assessment within the unit is holistic teachers and lecturers should take particular care to track the evidence for each individual outcome.

Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the assessment arrangements web page: www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Administrative information

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Superclass: LB

History of changes to National Unit Specification

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	Page 1 — Clarification of Unit outline to reflect changes made to Outcomes and Assessment Standards. Page 3 — Changes to Outcomes and Assessment Standards to clarify requirements and remove need for 'complex' principles. Clarification of Evidence Requirements to reflect changes made to Outcomes and Assessment Standards.	April 2014
3.0	Level changed from Higher to SCQF level 6.	September 2018
4.0	Unit code updated. Outcome 1: Assessment Standard 1.1 — references to 'spatial patterns' amended to 'spatial elements' for clarity. Outcome 2: Assessment Standard 2.2 — spatial elements added. Timing added to clarify the required duration of choreography.	September 2019
4.1	Unit support notes added.	June 2020

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