



Course report 2024

National 5 Dance

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 766

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 823

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	253	Percentage	30.7	Cumulative percentage	30.7	Minimum mark required	70
B	Number of candidates	220	Percentage	26.7	Cumulative percentage	57.5	Minimum mark required	60
C	Number of candidates	168	Percentage	20.4	Cumulative percentage	77.9	Minimum mark required	50
D	Number of candidates	112	Percentage	13.6	Cumulative percentage	91.5	Minimum mark required	40
No award	Number of candidates	70	Percentage	8.5	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

All course components performed as expected. However, many candidates found the question paper challenging and did not perform well in this component, as discussed in this report.

Most centres were well prepared for visiting assessment, with all documentation and candidate mark sheets complete and ready for use. This streamlined assessment time and allowed the process to run smoothly for candidates. However, a few centres did not have the paperwork completed before the visiting assessor arrived. This delayed the start of the assessment and hindered the smooth running of the day for the candidates.

It is also important that the centre assessor records the candidate's marks on the mark sheet in advance of the assessment event. Most centres selected candidates to demonstrate a range of abilities from across the marking bands for visiting assessment when there were more than 12 candidates. However, a few centres did not manage to meet the national standards for practical components.

Question paper

Generally, candidates understood the requirements for all three sections in terms of subject content. The full marking range was accessed for all questions, with fewer no responses than in previous years.

The question paper was fair and accessible, it sampled a range of content from the course specification, with many key skills included, which candidates should be familiar with. Many candidates did not perform well because they misunderstood the demand of command words and were unable to articulate the skills learnt in a practical setting and translate this into a written response. Some candidates demonstrated a lack of subject knowledge and misunderstood key skills such as self-expression and use of turnout, which is fundamental to the delivery of both performance and the question paper components.

The most popular dance style chosen for section 2 of the question paper was jazz, with a few centres using contemporary and ballet. The question paper provided appropriate balance with a range of 'A' and 'C'-type questions, with each section progressing in difficulty of command word and subject content.

For section 3, it was pleasing to see most centres selecting a professional dance that allowed candidates to analyse the use of key choreographic principles and relate these to the intentions of the piece. However, a few centres continue to select choreographies created for musicals or competitions, or select one section of a full professional piece, therefore, some candidates were unable to provide the detail required and were disadvantaged.

Practical activity

The practical activity component performed as expected.

Choreography

The collaborative marking model of a sample of 12 candidates was well received by centres. Centres presented candidates with a range of abilities, and a wide range of marks were accessed, giving a clear indication that national standards are understood.

Choreography review

The assessment evidence for the choreography review was, for the most part, presented as a written report. Centres must mark the reviews prior to the assessment event, providing more time for professional dialogue between the visiting assessor and the centre's assessor. The updated mark sheets with a column for the centre assessor's marks supported this process.

If candidates create a presentation for assessment, this should be filmed in advance of the visit, and marked by the centre assessor before the visiting assessment takes place. This assessment process was well received by all centres and beneficial to the smooth running of the day.

Performance

The performance component performed as expected. Jazz was the most common dance style presented for assessment, followed by contemporary, commercial, Hip Hop and lyrical across all centres.

The collaborative marking model for National 5 Dance visiting assessment was a successful and positive experience for many centres. Centres presented candidates with a range of abilities and a wide range of marks were accessed, with many candidates accessing the top band of marks. This demonstrates that the level of technical ability and performance quality has remained consistent across centres and gives a clear indication that national standards are understood for this component.

Most experienced centres were able to meet the demands of performance through suitably choreographed dances that demonstrated accurate levels of challenge for National 5 level and allowed candidates to achieve the marking criteria. However, in some centres the tutor-choreographed solo presented for assessment had limited technical content and the style-specific steps lacked challenge and breadth, which lacked complexity for this level and therefore did not allow candidates to access the full range of marks available. In this instance the choreography included too many stylised movements and at times the choreography did not present opportunities for candidates to demonstrate contrasting dynamics or utilise the performance space.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Section 1

Question 1(b): Candidates had secure knowledge and understanding of the use of self-expression. Most candidates performed well for this question and were able to provide a detailed response when referring to their own solo performance.

Question 2: Many candidates had secure knowledge and understanding of stamina, the few candidates that did not access marks for this area of content did not make a judgment or use evaluative language within the response.

Question 3(a): Many candidates were able to describe an appropriate exercise, which they used to improve or maintain their use of turnout. It was clear that many candidates are being guided through the process of reviewing their skills and applying methods to help improve their dance technique.

Section 2

Question 5: An improvement was evident in this area of content as most candidates were able to provide details on the type of music, instruments, accents, and highlights to identify their selected dance style.

Question 6: Candidates had secure knowledge and understanding of the origin of their selected dance style, with many providing more detail than required for the 2-mark allocation.

Section 3

Question 8(b): Many candidates were able to demonstrate good understanding of the ways in which the lighting helped to communicate the intentions, even if they found it challenging to describe the lighting used in the piece.

Practical activity

Choreography

Many candidates were able to present a choreography for two people, which was polished and well-rehearsed for the assessment event, which included a clear structure and three devices. Some candidates selected interesting themes and were able to incorporate creative and original movements which continually developed throughout the pieces, therefore enhancing the intentions and allowing them to access the top band of marks.

Choreography review

Many candidates perform well for the choreographic review, taking the time to research thoroughly and provide detail on their choice of choreographic principles and link this to theme and intentions to access the top band of marks.

Performance

Some candidates had worked hard to develop the teacher and lecturer taught solo, as some were able to add their own flair to the performance and demonstrate musicality, varying dynamics, and self-expression with confidence. This ensured that candidates were able to access the full range of marks. Most candidates were well prepared for their chosen solo assessment and were able to concentrate and focus, ensuring they presented their best performance.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Section 1

Question 1(a): Many candidates misinterpreted this question and responded with a generic description of a model performer rather than giving detail on a model performer they had watched.

Question 3(b): Many candidates did not fully understand this area of content as they could not underpin the impact of turnout on their own performance. This is disappointing as many will have accessed the full 5 marks for demonstrating their use of turnout in the performance component. It was evident that some candidates may not have been taken through an integrated approach to course delivery that links the technical skills with the theory content for section 1 and this approach would benefit the candidates.

Section 2

Question 4: Candidates had secure knowledge and understanding of key characteristics, however, most described rather than explained so could not access the marks available.

Question 7: Many candidates were able to provide detail on key movements, however, few managed to link these to the developments and the ways in which they are performed in the present day. Candidates responded like it was a style-specific steps question, rather than what the question had asked.

Section 3

Question 8(a): Theatre arts has been sampled many times; however, this was the first time a question specifically focused on lighting. A lack of technical knowledge was evident with most candidates only describing colour or spotlights. It is vital that candidates can explain the lighting and give a reason for its use, and are familiar with key terminology, to allow them to respond with the detail required for National 5 level.

Question 9: This question was challenging for some candidates that had not watched a full professional dance work. It is vital that candidates are given the opportunity to watch a full professional production to allow candidates to fully understand the structure used and articulate this in a detailed response for National 5 level.

Question 10: Most candidates did not make a judgement or use evaluative language and therefore they could not access any marks.

Practical activity

Choreography

Some candidates found it challenging to present choreographies that demonstrate originality and creativity to communicate the intentions of the piece. Some candidates used technical dance steps and acro tricks that have no meaning in relation to the theme or included acting rather than creative gestural movements. This impacts the marking bands that candidates can access, as each choreographic principles assessed within the assessment criteria links to the intentions of the choreography.

Choreography review

Some candidates did not achieve all the marks available for the evaluation within the choreography review, as they would describe one choreographic skill and then give an example for a different skill — such as describing leadership then giving examples relating to communication skills. There should be two examples of the one choreographic skill described for both their strengths and areas of development.

Many candidates did not access the development marks for both the structure and music tasks, as this must be a developed explanation of the use and reason for it to help communicate the intentions, marks cannot be accessed for further description.

Performance

Many candidates accessed the middle band of marks for technical skills, with only a few accessing all the marks available for application of technique.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Many candidates misunderstood key dance terminology from the course, which impacts their ability to achieve the marks available for the question paper. The gap between the candidates performing well and those finding it challenging to meet the national standard seems to be growing, which indicates the difficulties for some candidates who have no prior learning before embarking on the National 5 Dance course.

It is also vital that teachers and lecturers encourage the use of appropriate dance terminology, as this will ensure that candidates understand the demand of questions and help them to articulate their knowledge.

It would be beneficial if teachers and lecturers spent time during course delivery reviewing the use of all technical and performance skills to ensure that candidates can demonstrate their knowledge with confidence through detailed written responses. Many candidates were able to access the top band of marks for Dance performance, however, they then found it challenging to transfer this knowledge to section 1 of the question paper. They were unable to articulate the fundamental skills, such as self-expression, stamina, and use of turn out. Technical and performance skills can be taught through an integrated approach to learning in both the practical and classroom settings, to ensure that candidates fully understand all the key skills in the National 5 Dance course.

It seems some candidates may have learned rote responses for Section 2, which meant they did not engage with the question asked and were unable to access marks.

The overall performance for section 3 was poor in the 2024 paper, it is important that candidates study the professional work early in the course, to ensure they are familiar with the work and confident with the movement material and choreographic principles used in the piece.

To prepare fully for the question paper, it is expected that candidates will watch a full dance production created for stage that includes the key choreographic principles listed in the course specification. This allows candidates to fully explain, describe and evaluate the choreography in detail, and justify it in relation to the theme and/or intentions. This is particularly important when analysing the use of structure and theatre arts.

An integrated approach to course delivery is vital for candidates, linking practical content with theory, this will benefit candidates and strengthens their understanding of the key skills that crossover all course components. Please refer to the [National 5 Dance Course Specification](#) for further guidance. Candidates must be familiar with the following command words:

- ◆ describe
- ◆ explain
- ◆ evaluate

This helps them to fully understand the demands of each question in the question paper.

It is important to highlight that all course content for the question paper is listed in the mandatory content in the course specification, and teachers and lecturers must be familiar with this document.

Practical activity

Choreography

It was evident when visiting some centres that many candidates had not experienced experimental learning through choreography workshops. This approach to course delivery is essential to equip candidates for the practical activity component, before starting on their own choreography to ensure they fully understand how to develop creative movements and apply appropriate devices and spatial elements to their own work. If candidates explore the use of spatial elements within a structured creative choreography or improvisation workshop, this will aid their application of spatial elements for their own work and avoid the use of predictable spatial elements such as side-by-side facing down stage.

Some candidates also demonstrated a lack of understanding of structure as they often selected narrative when another structure would have been more appropriate to the selected theme or intentions. It is beneficial to explore the use of structures and devices through choreography workshops to aid candidates' understanding and allow for them to plan for the most appropriate structure for their own work.

Candidates **should not perform in their own choreography**. If an issue arises in advance of the assessment event, the centre assessor or SQA coordinator must contact SQA to receive advice before the live assessment. This is not something that should be negotiated with the visiting assessor on the day of the assessment.

Choreography review

It aids the marking process when candidates follow a methodical structure, therefore we encourage teachers and lecturers to help candidates structure the order of their paragraphs, with a methodical structure that encourages logical thinking. When describing devices and structure, candidates will not be able to access marks for giving a definition only. Teachers and lecturers should strengthen candidates' understanding of this, and the use of command words, as this supports course delivery across components. Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to explore each device and explain the impact of its use within their own choreography, rather than giving generic definitions. Candidates will not access marks within the review if they describe the use of levels as a device.

Performance

It is vital that candidates experience regular technique classes, with set exercises which cover all the technical skills within the marking criteria, to develop the fundamental skills required for assessment. Many candidates were accessing the lower band of marks for technical accuracy, centring, control, and use of turnout. These skills should be worked on throughout the course and cannot be taught only through learning the technical solo.

The standard of solo content for jazz, commercial, hip hop and contemporary still varies across centres, with a lack of suitable technical content and challenge appropriate for National 5 level in some centres. This is particularly evident for jazz, with some centres presenting a jazz solo that lacked technical content and incorporated too many stylised movements, therefore, impacting the candidate's ability to achieve the full marking criteria. Please refer to the material on the [Understanding Standards site](#) for guidance on appropriate challenge for the National 5 Dance Performance.

Some centre assessors were not familiar with the styles and genres being presented, with increasing levels of confusion about what style some centres are delivering. For example, some centres state they are presenting contemporary when it is lyrical, or hip hop when it is commercial, therefore, allocating marks for technical accuracy and performance skills that are appropriate to that style can become challenging and requires more professional dialogue at the assessment event.

To help control nerves, many candidates would benefit from more opportunities to perform the dance as a solo before the final assessment day. Centre assessors should choose an appropriate environment for the live assessment, as it is important that candidates have had time to practise in the assessment space before the live assessment event. If using a dance studio, it is good practice to either perform away from, or cover, the mirrors. If candidates perform towards the mirrors, rather than the assessors, this can impact their mark.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in [March 2024](#) and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).