



Common questions about National 5 and Higher Dance

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National 5

Question paper

What does the question paper involve?

The question paper has three sections:

- ◆ section 1: evaluating personal performance
- ◆ section 2: knowledge and understanding of a chosen dance style
- ◆ section 3: evaluation of professional choreography

Questions sample the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment listed in the [National 5 Dance Course Specification](#).

Section 1

What is expected of a candidate response for development methods?

Candidates should understand the development methods they have used to enhance both their technical and performance skills. There are many methods candidates can apply, for example:

- ◆ self-evaluation
- ◆ peer-evaluation
- ◆ watching a model performer
- ◆ taking additional technique classes
- ◆ stretching programme
- ◆ balance exercises
- ◆ technical exercises
- ◆ practising using mirrors

Section 2

What does the term 'style-specific dance steps' mean?

Candidates should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key steps and characteristics of the dance style they have selected. You should encourage them to include style-specific steps in their responses, rather than generic dance steps that can be performed in many dance styles. When candidates are describing style-specific steps, it is important that the step can be executed correctly from the description.

Sections 2 and/or 3

If a candidate does not answer the introduction question or questions that have no allocated marks, can they still gain marks in the questions that follow?

The introduction to sections 2 and 3 helps the marker understand the candidate's thinking. This is particularly important for section 3, as choreography is very subjective, and personal opinions may vary on the theme and/or intention. If a candidate does not give a response to the introduction question or questions, the marker still marks the candidate's subsequent responses. You should encourage candidates to answer the introduction questions and include introduction questions in practice papers or exam revision, so candidates are familiar with this format.

Section 3 What should be included in a candidate response on spatial elements?

We changed the terminology from 'use of space' to 'spatial elements' for a consistent approach between National 5 and Higher. Spatial elements include all the different ways a choreographer has used the space, including:

- ◆ formations
- ◆ levels
- ◆ directions
- ◆ proximities
- ◆ pathways
- ◆ spatial patterns
- ◆ floor plans

Candidates should understand the spatial elements that have been applied in the piece, and the relationship to the choreographic intention.

Recognising positive achievement

Is there a way of recognising positive achievement for a candidate who does not achieve the National 5 Dance course?

There is not a National 4 Dance course, however, candidates who do not achieve the National 5 course can still achieve the following freestanding units at SCQF level 5:

- ◆ Dance: Choreography unit at SCQF level 5
- ◆ Dance: Technical Skills unit at SCQF level 5

Alternatively, the [National Progression Award in Dance at SCQF level 4](#) may be an appropriate option.

Higher

Question paper

What does the question paper involve?

The question paper has two sections:

- ◆ section 1: dance appreciation in context
- ◆ section 2: study of a professional choreography

Questions sample the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment listed in the [Higher Dance Course Specification](#).

Are candidates expected to answer questions on historical influences for two dance styles?

No. Candidates should have secure knowledge and understanding of the influence of historical, social and cultural developments in **one** selected dance style. This should include in-depth knowledge about:

- ◆ influential choreographers
- ◆ historical events
- ◆ race
- ◆ gender
- ◆ or any cultural influences that have helped to develop the selected dance style

However, in section 1, candidates should be able to compare two contrasting dance styles in terms of key characteristics, steps, performance style and technical requirements.

Section 1

Do candidates have to write about the same styles they used for the solo performances?

No. Candidates can choose what styles they want to write about. They may have a particular strength in a dance style that they have chosen to perform for the solo performance. They may also be studying a different style, depending on the style the teacher is delivering.

However, if candidates are using the same style, we consider this to be good practice, as it helps them gain a greater knowledge and understanding of the selected dance styles, but it is not a requirement of the course.

Both levels

Visiting assessment

What is the assessment model for National 5 and Higher Dance performance and practical activity?

Detailed information about the assessment is in the [National 5 Dance Course Specification](#) and the [Higher Dance Course Specification](#) which you can find on SQA's website. The following bullet points are a summary of the visiting assessment procedure:

- ◆ SQA appoints a Visiting Assessor (VA) and one day is allocated to each centre for the visit.
- ◆ The centre selects a sample of 12 candidates, representing a range of abilities, and dance styles.
- ◆ The designated centre assessor marks the choreography review in advance of the VA visit. This provisional mark is written on the candidate mark sheet.
- ◆ The VA and the centre assessor collaboratively assess 12 candidates. This establishes the standard, and the agreed marks for the sample are final.
- ◆ The choreography review is part of the visiting assessment day, a quiet private space is needed for this.
- ◆ If a candidate chooses to deliver a verbal presentation for the choreography review, this can be recorded, and the designated centre assessor must mark this in advance of the day.
- ◆ If the choreography review is presented live, centre staff must inform the VA in advance of visiting assessment that additional time is required to review the live verbal presentation.
- ◆ If there are more than 12 candidates, the centre assessor assesses the remaining candidates within two weeks of the visit.
- ◆ If a candidate is absent for the duration of your two-week period, you must contact SQA's Assessment Arrangements Team for advice at aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

You can find information to support this process within the following documents found on SQA's website:

- ◆ [Coursework assessment task for National 5 Dance - practical activity](#) and [performance](#)
- ◆ [Coursework assessment task for Higher Dance - practical activity](#) and [performance](#)

Is the visiting assessment process the same as verification?

No. The visiting assessment process is quite different from verification. Visiting assessment is for the external assessment of certain course components — for National 5 and Higher Dance these are the performance and the practical activity. Marks are assigned to each of these components by the VA. This counts towards the overall grade for the course. Every centre is visited each year — this is different from verification which samples centres from year to year. Verification is about confirming the internal assessment decisions made by centres.

Can candidates perform a piece that they have learnt outside the classroom?

No. The solo must be taught in the centre and cannot be a dance learnt at a private dance school, for example a grade or competition dance. Candidates must learn the technique and classwork being delivered throughout the course, including learning one tutor-choreographed solo for National 5 and two tutor-choreographed solos for Higher. If a candidate performs to a higher standard in an alternative style and achieves more marks for assessment, then the centre could commission and work alongside another dance teacher. Solos must be tutor-choreographed and delivered in the centre, therefore it is the centre's responsibility to verify the style and solo to ensure it meets the requirements and the demands of the level being presented.

Should candidates perform in front of dance mirrors for the live assessment?

No. If using a dance studio, it is good practice to either perform away from (or cover) the mirrors, as this often impacts the candidate's mark if they perform towards the mirrors rather than to the assessors. Candidates must have the opportunity to practice away from the mirrors in advance of the assessment visit, to ensure they are familiar with the space and environment.

What should candidates wear for their solo performances on the visiting assessment day?

The VA must be able to clearly see candidates' bodies so that correct alignment and posture is visible.

If a candidate makes a mistake, can they start the solo assessment again?

No, this is a one-off SQA practical assessment for the solo performance and restarts are not permitted. Once the performer starts the dance, they must continue and pick the routine back up if they make a mistake. It is good practice to adopt this approach for any prelims or mock assessments.

Do candidates need to be present for the choreography section of the practical activity?

Yes. The candidate must introduce their own choreography and introduce the dancers who are going to be involved in the choreography. The introduction should cover the use of themes, structure and devices. This should be no longer than 2 minutes.

National 5

- ◆ A dance for two people, excluding self, lasting a minimum of 1 minute and 30 seconds and a maximum of 2 minutes.

Higher

- ◆ A solo or group choreography for a minimum of three dancers, excluding self, lasting a minimum of 2 minutes and a maximum of 3 minutes

If a candidate is having difficulties with a dancer, can they perform in their own choreography?

No, it is a course requirement that candidates take on a choreographer role only to allow them to reflect on the process and produce a coherent piece that reflect the intentions. Every effort should be made to select appropriate dancers. It may be necessary to change dancers during the course when it is not working out.

It is **only** permissible for a candidate to perform in their own choreography when one of the candidate's dancers is absent **on the day** of their exam. These instances should be raised with the SQA visiting examining teams in advance of the visit and discussed with the VA at the beginning of the assessment day.

How should the choreography review be presented?

The choreography review can be presented in a variety of formats, including oral presentations, written reports, videos, or a combination of these approaches.

Centres should allocate time for the VA and the designated centre assessor to discuss, and mark written evidence, mood boards, and to watch recordings.

Should candidate performances be recorded?

Yes. Although this is not mandatory, we recommend centres record performances on the day of the VA's visit. This ensures that they can use the [exceptional circumstances consideration service](#) or the [appeals service](#), if necessary.

You can find more information about [recording performances during visiting assessment](#) on the Dance pages of SQA's website.

My centre does not have good filming equipment can I use a personal device to film?

No. Under no circumstances should a centre film on a teacher or candidates' personal device such as a phone or iPad. This is assessment evidence and should be treated the same as any other evidence that would be stored securely and not shared with candidates.

After the visiting assessment event can I share the marks with the candidates?

No, this is assessment evidence, so the marks should not be shared or discussed by anyone other than the visiting assessor and centre assessor. The copies of marksheets and EX6 registers should be stored securely and breakdowns **must not** be shared until the candidates have received their results.

For Higher, does each candidate perform both their technical solo and choreography consecutively?

No. The solos should be grouped together according to dance style. Following all solo performances, the candidates return to introduce and present their choreography.

For Higher, how can candidates use lighting in a non-theatre environment?

A candidate can use torches, up-lighting, or lamps. They must use two theatre arts chosen from lighting, set, props, theatrical make-up and costume in their choreography.

General

Course assessment

How is the National 5 and Higher courses assessed?

The course assessment has three components:

- ◆ Question paper
- ◆ Practical activity
- ◆ Performance

You can find details of how each component is assessed and marked in the 'Course assessment' section of the [National 5 Dance Course Specification](#) and the [Higher Dance Course Specification](#).

Question paper

Can I send SQA my prelim papers for checking before my candidates sit it?

SQA does not check prelim papers. You should use the course specification, specimen question paper, past papers and marking instructions to help you generate appropriate questions and exam preparation material. These can be found on the [National 5 Dance](#) and [Higher Dance](#) web pages.

SQA's specimen question paper or past paper should not be used in its entirety, as these are already in the public domain. We recommend that you use a number of past papers or centre devised questions to form a section, rather than use a section in its entirety for a practice paper.

When preparing candidates for the question paper, is there a preferred structure for answering?

There is no set structure for answering questions. However, candidates must be familiar with the following command words to fully understand the demands of each question within the question paper:

- ◆ National 5 — describe, explain and evaluate
- ◆ Higher — describe, explain, evaluate, analyse, compare and discuss

The question paper is marked holistically, therefore you should encourage candidates to provide detailed responses for written tasks and practice papers, as this will prepare them.

What content should I cover for question paper?

The skills, knowledge and understanding required for the question paper are listed in the 'Course content' section in the [National 5 Dance Course Specification](#) and the [Higher Dance Course Specification](#). Question papers sample from this content each year.

Do candidates have to watch the full professional choreography before evaluating it?

Yes. We expect candidates to watch a full dance production created for stage that includes the key choreographic principles listed in each course specification. This allows them to answer in detail, and justify in relation to the intentions, as follows:

- ◆ National 5 — explain, describe and evaluate
- ◆ Higher — describe, explain, evaluate and analyse

Centres must select an appropriate professional choreography to study. If the piece selected does not have appropriate choreographic content, candidates may not be able to access the full range of marks.

Is there a recommended list of professional choreographies to use for the question paper?

Yes. We have published a list of recommended professional choreographies to ensure that candidates meet the standards expected at each level. You can find this list in 'Appendix 5' of the [National 5 Dance Course Specification](#) and 'Appendix 3' of the [Higher Dance Course Specification](#).

Scaling

What is scaling?

To help calculate a candidate's overall mark in a course that has scaled components, SQA has a [scaling calculator](#).

If you have any queries, contact our Data Services Team using the [MyCentre enquiry form](#).

You will find general questions and answers about National Qualifications on our website at www.sqa.org.uk/faq.