

This year celebrates the 30th anniversary of AQA GCSE Dance.
Tori Drew, Dance in Education Manager, charted the development.

Happy Birthday GCSE Dance

1980s/1990s

1988

In 1986 GCSEs were introduced and two years later the first GCSE in dance was produced by the Northern Examination Association.

- Practical 50%
- Coursework based on the student's progress
- Performance in a duo or group dance
- Composition of a solo
- Project areas
- A practical and written demonstration from two chosen project areas given by the board: e.g. Notation, 20th century dance (e.g. Diaghilev), a dance style (e.g. jazz) and Staging the dance and Theme of own choice.
- Written 20% (2-hour paper)
- Candidates were given 30 minutes to view an unseen piece twice on video and answer questions on what they had seen.



Above: *Infra* (2008) by Wayne McGregor
Right: *Petrushka* (1911) by Mikhail Fokine

1992

In 1992 the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) merged with Northern Examining Associate to form Northern Examinations Assessment Board (NEAB).



Top: *Romeo and Juliet* (1965) by Kenneth MacMillan

1994

Composition was moved into its own unit and the coursework assessment was removed. The Set Study is a choice between teachers own choreography (that must have included two phrases from the board) or to use the board's full study. In early days notation of the set study was supplied for the teachers.



Ghost Dances (1981) by Christopher Bruce

1995

In 1995 the Set Study was choreographed by Wayne McGregor. This Set Study was a memorable teaching experience. Students loved the challenge of learning McGregor's idiosyncratic style, combining unusual combinations of arm gestures, travelling steps and use of the torso.

Ray Oudkerk



Rishard Nelson from *Union Dance* in rehearsal (1995)

1998

The term 'practical' was changed to 'performance' and the set study became only one option. The exam video was replaced with a set professional work. The first set work was *Petrushka* (1911) by Mikhail Fokine.



2000s

2000

The Associated Examining Board (AEB) merged with the NEAB to create the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). *Swan Song* (1987) by Christopher Bruce was the set work.

Our longstanding inclusion in the GCSE dance curriculum has been invaluable in deepening our connection with young people and dance educators across the country. It is crucial to our mission as Britain's national dance company to provide young people with the chance to explore important works from our repertoire and inspire them to develop their own creativity.

Julia Fitzelle, Joint Head of Learning and Participation, Rambert Dance Company



Left: *Overdrive* (2003) by Richard Alston
Top: *A Linha Curva* (2009) by Itzik Galili
Above: *Bird Song* (2004) by Siobhan Davies

2002

'Still Life' at the Penguin Café (1988) by David Bintley was the set work.

2003

GCSE Dance began to be published under AQA branding and "Assignments" were dropped from the GCSE. The term "composition" was replaced with "choreography" and the programme note was added to the unit. Choreography was increased to 60% of the final mark.

2004

Cross Channel (1992) by Lea Anderson was the set work.

When *Cross Channel* was chosen for the GCSE I was amazed and delighted that students would be able to study work like mine. I now realise the true value of the study of professional dance works at school. It has immense impact, allowing many people to benefit from the extraordinary art form of dance and to appreciate work critically, thus enriching their cultural lives.

Lea Anderson, Choreographer

2006

Front Line (2002) by Henri Ouguie was the set work.

2008

Bird Song (2004) by Siobhan Davies was the set work.

2009

The set study *Impulse* included 'free time' that allowed students to perform their own interpretation of the timing and dynamics. Choreographed by Abi Mortimer.



2010s to Present

2011

GCSE Dance gained a new fourth unit of composition and James Cousins featured as a dancer on Zoe Logic's 2011 *Find It!* set study. Two options of a set study were given between *Find It!* and *Impulse*. There was also a choice between two to four set works:

- *And Who Shall Go To The Ball?* (2007) by Rafael Bonachela, CandoCo.
- *Bird Song* (2004) by Siobhan Davies Dance
- *Tek Warriors* (1997) by Union Dance
- *Faultline* (2007) by Shobana Jeyasingh
- *Ghost Dances* (1981) or *Swansong* (1987) by Christopher Bruce
- *Nutcracker!* (1992) By Matthew Bourne
- *Overdrive* (2003) by Richard Alston
- *Perfect* (2005) by Motionhouse
- *Romeo and Juliet* (1965) by Kenneth MacMillan
- *Rosas Danst Rosas* (1983) by Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker
- *Still Life' at the Penguin Café* (1988) by David Bintley



Dance education and inspiring the next generation has always been a core part of what we do, so to formalise this through our work being on the GCSE syllabus was an incredibly important achievement for us.

Louise Richards, Executive Director of Motionhouse

We hope that through the study of 'Perfect', we have inspired young people and contributed to their overall education and experience of the arts. Louise Richards, Executive Director of Motionhouse I think the creation of GCSE Dance was fantastic: it gives value to the art form and offers young people a chance to develop their analytical skills.

Kevin Finnan, Artistic Director of Motionhouse



Boy Blue being on the GCSE Dance syllabus is an exciting step for hip hop. Our work is being studied alongside the more traditional styles of dance, and that is an important step in allowing young people to experience the diversity and richness of the art form in modern day Britain.

Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy MBE and Michael 'Mikey J' Asante (Co-Artistic Directors of Boy Blue Entertainment)

Bottom Left: *Emancipation of Expressionism* (2013) by Boy Blue Entertainment - Kenrick H2O Sandy
Bottom Right: *Artificial Things* (2014) by Stopgap Dance Company - Lucy Bennett

2016

The new 1-9 grading systems are introduced and the GCSE Dance specification develops:

- Performance 30%
- Set Study is broken into set phrases. Two of these are combined by the student or teacher as one set study.
- Duet or trio that is 5 minutes long.
- Choreography 30%
- Solo or group choreography based on a task as laid out by the board every year.
- Appreciation 40%
- 15 hour paper.
- New set works are added, and students are expected to study all six:
- *Artificial Things* (2014) Stopgap Dance Company, Lucy Bennett
- *A Linha Curva* (2009) Rambert Dance Company, Itzik Galili
- *Infra* (2008) The Royal Ballet, Wayne McGregor
- *Shadows* (2014) Phoenix Dance Theatre, Christopher Bruce
- *Within Her Eyes* (2016) James Cousins Company, James Cousins
- *Emancipation of Expressionism* (2013) Boy Blue Entertainment, Kenrick H2O Sandy



For many of us who studied GCSE dance those works we watched have stuck with us for life and began our journey into the exciting world of dance. It's an absolute honour to be a part of this next chapter of the dance GCSE and to have my work alongside such incredible artists and companies.

James Cousins, Choreographer & Artistic Director, James Cousins Company

Top Left: *Perfect* (2005) by Motionhouse
Top Right: *Within Her Eyes* (2016) by James Cousins



It is important that high quality inclusive dance, as seen with *Artificial Things*, is included on the GCSE dance specification because in addition to providing visible disabled role models; it opens young people's eyes and minds to innovative ways of working with different bodies, and all the possibilities that can hold. It should also not go without mention that Lucy Bennett is the only female choreographer included in the Anthology, providing a positive role model for young women to aspire to.

Siobhan Hayes, Interim Artistic Director StopGap Dance Company

Insider Quotes

Christopher Bruce

"If someone wants to become a dance maker, take time to study and learn the craft. Firstly, observe other people's existing works. It is especially important to work with choreographers and see how they go about their composition. When you are ready to begin choreographing, make sure you are properly prepared and have at least a rough idea of the structure of the dance. If you have chosen to make work with a theme, make sure you stick to the content of the theme or narrative. Don't get lost in making movement which isn't relative to the subject matter."

Whatever your initial influences (there are bound to be many in the early part of your career) try to find your individual signature. For me, there is too much work that is derivative, where the influences have not been digested and used to form a personal language. To dancers I would say: enjoy every moment and stay open to learning something new every day. Don't waste a moment because it is only when it is over that you realise how short a career it is. But, as long as it lasts, know that you are an extraordinary creature living an extraordinary life."

Ray Oudkerk

"The GCSE gives students opportunities to develop their own artistry and explore the significance of dance as an evolving human art form. Teachers have the opportunity to further integrate theoretical and practical study. As teachers become confident with the new specification, we want to see students create and perform in even more ambitious and powerful work. The new specification was also designed to give students the knowledge, understanding and skills needed for successful progression into the wide forms of post-16 education available."

GCSE Dance can bring a whole new culture, community and ethos to a school: ensuring KS3 dance can thrive, regular dance events take place, inclusion and team-building are nurtured and so much more. GCSE Dance alongside other Arts is critical to the question of social mobility. Students having access to assessment-based curriculum Arts courses is intrinsic to high-quality Arts and cultural education for all.

The course not only teaches the students about Dance, but also facilitates collaborative skills, leadership, problem solving, critical thinking and the resilience to try out new ideas, be creative and explore different ways of learning. Whilst being challenging and holistic in its design, GCSE Dance is accessible and should offer an enriching experience to students."

Further information
www.aqa.org.uk
www.onedanceuk.org



Liz Dale

"My personal involvement with GCSE Dance began at its inception, and I am proud to have been associated with its delivery and development during the last 30 years. As a young teacher, I was encouraged to get involved by the then Chief Examiner, Judy Smith, whose generosity and inspiring leadership helped me to develop the passion that led me to my current role. I believe that GCSE Dance provides young people with a valuable opportunity to explore a physical art form in a non-competitive environment and to engage in critical dialogue where their personal response is valued and encouraged."

It has provided the catalyst for the careers of many, many young dancers and creatives and it is hugely exciting to see the work of a former GCSE Dance student now appearing in the current anthology. As a subject that has been under threat of extinction numerous times in its 30 year history, we must be hugely grateful to AQA for continuing to be the only awarding organisation to offer it as a subject in its own right. Long may it continue!"

Heather Coke

of Lister Community School, Newham, London GCSE Dance teacher for 25 years
"On the use of assignments: I relished your own choice of assignment for the candidates. The first time I ran the course I did it rather badly as I got them all to do an independent written project which was an arduous task. Then on further understanding of the Specification I realised it could be a practical project, so I taught them a 'cool' lindy hop duet which I did for several cohorts, obviously improving over time, so that the majority of candidates scored A* on this."

Photos

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Top Left: Lauren Cuthbertson as Juliet and Federico Bonelli as Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*. Bill Cooper/ROH 2012; Top Middle: Francesca Hayward and Tristan Dyer in *Infra*, The Royal Ballet © ROH/Andrey Uspenskiy 2012; Top Right: *Ghost Dances* with Rambert's Daniel Davidson Liam Francis and Juan Gil-Jane Hobson; Middle Left: Elisha Willis as the Ballerina, Alexander Campbell as Petrushka and Dominic Antonucci as the Moor with Artists of Birmingham Royal Ballet in *Petrushka*. Bill Cooper; Middle Right: *Dance Tek* Warriors dancer Rishard Nelson in rehearsal. Cindy Sasha; Middle: *A Linha Curva* with Rambert Dance Company's Hannah Rudd, Carolyn Bolton, Luke Ahmet, Pierre Tappon, Hugo Glendinning. Bottom Left: *Overdrive* with Nancy Nerantz, Elly Braund and Oihana Vesga Bujan. Chris Nash chrisnashphoto.com; Bottom Right: *Bird Song*. Joel Chester Fildes.

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Top Left: *Perfect*. Chris Nash chrisnashphoto.com; Top Right: *Within Her Eyes*. David Foulkes; Bottom Left: *Emancipation of Expressionism*. Nicole Guarino. Bottom Right: *Artificial Things*, photo by Chris Parkes.