

Dance

These subject guidelines should be read in conjunction with the “Introduction”, “Outline” and “Details—all essays” sections of this guide.

Overview

An extended essay in dance provides students with an opportunity to focus on a topic in dance of particular interest to them. In consultation with the supervisor, the student should carefully choose a topic of special interest, keeping in mind the availability of sources required to research it. The student is encouraged to develop a plan and structure for the research before its commencement, then to proceed in a disciplined and imaginative way to arrive at a logical, and preferably personal, conclusion.

Dance as expressive movement with intent, purpose and form that communicates through the body and gesture of the dancer should be at the heart of an extended essay in dance. A particular dance or a particular style of dance may be chosen as the core focus of the extended essay. Students should strive for a coherent verbal analysis and interpretation of one or more dances in relation to the chosen research question. Although the dance itself is of primary importance, consideration should be given to the role of the dance, dance styles or traditions within their cultural context, in terms of their historical and current practice, as well as their social, religious, political and/or intellectual significance.

Choice of topic

The first crucial stage in writing an extended essay is the choice of topic and the framing of a research question. A research question (or a title) should imply the overall scope of the essay without unduly restricting its development. The chosen topic may be inspired by one or several of the following areas of interest. (Please note, this is not an exhaustive list but is intended for guidance only.)

- Aspects of the Diploma Programme dance course (for Diploma Programme dance students)
- Performances of dance
- Dance cultures and traditions that students encounter
- Personal contact with choreographers or arrangers of dances, and/or dancers
- Direct involvement in the making of dances
- Film, video, DVD or Internet dance presentations
- Personal interests/concerns about the field of dance

Students should note that the Diploma Programme dance course includes assessment components in performance, composition and analysis, and world dance investigation. Those who choose to write an extended essay in dance should focus on a research question that has no common ground with the material of their world dance investigation.

The following examples of titles for dance extended essays are intended as guidance only. The pairings illustrate that focused topics (indicated by the first title) should be encouraged rather than broad topics (indicated by the second title).

- “The influence of historic modern dance in the mid-20th century on the work of choreographer Lin Hwai Min, artistic director of the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (in Taiwan)” **is better than** “Modern dance in Taiwan”.
- “The role of ritual in Afro-Caribbean dance in selected works of Katherine Dunham” **is better than** “Ritual in Afro-Caribbean dance”.
- “The impact of Rudolph Nureyev on the style of male dancing in the Royal Ballet (of Britain)” **is better than** “Male dancing in the Royal Ballet (of Britain)”.
- “The influence of Gregory Hines on the re-emergence of rhythm tap dance in the United States as a theatrical dance form” **is better than** “Tap dance in the United States”.

Treatment of the topic

The structure of the extended essay is important to its success. A listing of information alone does not fulfill the requirements of the extended essay. The essay should, therefore, express a reasoned argument (hypothesis): a point of view that is presented logically.

When the research topic has been established, it is suggested that the student makes a research plan that allows for some flexibility as the essay develops. The research plan should take account of what information is available, or what might become available. The range of materials used will vary according to the topic, but it is important that adequate sources are accessible, though not necessarily too easily accessible. Sometimes the hunt for information can be part of the challenge and become part of the essay itself.

The viewing of performances and participation in classes and/or workshops directly pertaining to the chosen topic can be excellent primary sources for the investigation. If these opportunities are not available to the student, then dance references in relevant film, video, DVD and Internet sources, as well as dance notation and photographs of dance performances, are also considered primary sources. Interviews with practitioners are also recognized as primary source material. It may be appropriate to include transcripts of such interviews, or extracts from them, in an appendix to the essay, although students should be aware that transcription is very time-consuming.

For an essay on dance, it may be that a pertinent statement from a dance practitioner quoted in a book will be regarded as a primary source. However, absolute reliance on textbooks and the Internet is discouraged and no extended essay in dance should be based exclusively on such sources. Textbooks and the Internet should only be consulted if they encourage direct and personal involvement in the essay topic, or if they stimulate original ideas and provide models for the structure of the essay.

It should be noted that access to film and videotape only became available in the early to mid 20th century. Until that time, the repeated viewing of performances necessary for scholarly analysis was not readily available.

In dance, the student faces a challenge in researching specific works when live performance, videotape and/or film recordings are not available. While the music notation system that first developed during the Renaissance in Europe is still in broad use today, dance notation systems have radically changed and earlier systems are not used other than for purposes of reconstruction. Furthermore, contemporary dance notation systems are used predominantly by professional dance notators and ethnologists, and are not accessible to most dancers and choreographers. In the dance field, these notation systems serve principally archival and reconstruction purposes. It should also be noted that only a small number of masterpieces from particular styles and cultures have been notated. However, ancient dance manuals do exist.

Because of the challenges stated previously regarding the limited availability of historical dance sources, it is of great importance for students writing a dance extended essay to focus at least part of their research on a present-day issue to allow primary sources to be consulted.

In summary, wherever possible, students should rely on primary sources to support the argument (performances, film, video, DVD, notation, interviews) and use secondary sources (textbooks and the Internet) as evidential support.

Students are expected to evaluate critically the sources consulted during the process of writing the essay, by asking themselves the following questions.

- Which sources are vital to the support of my ideas, opinions and assertions?
- Which sources do not contribute to the analysis?

Many different approaches to the research question can be appropriate, for instance:

- use of primary sources (dance and dancers) and secondary sources (material about dance) in order to establish and appraise varying interpretations
- analysis of sources (primary and secondary) to explore and explain particular aspects of dance
- use of primary source material for an analysis, with emphasis on a particular aspect of dance
- the collection and analysis of transmitted dance performances, leading to a comparison of similar or different forms of dance.

It may further assist a student in refining the focus of his or her research if, beyond the topic and research question, a succinct statement is produced that outlines the overall approach of the investigation. An example of this might be the following.

Topic	Lin Hwai Min's choreography.
Research question	The influence of American modern dance of the mid-20th century on Lin Hwai Min's choreography.
Approach	Specific analysis of the choreography of Martha Graham and identification of the influence her work had on the choreography of Lin Hwai Min, artistic director of the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (in Taiwan).

Students should also demonstrate awareness of other issues surrounding the dance studied such as the following.

- Do I show an awareness of the value and limitations of the dance I am studying through analysing its origin and purpose?
- Do I show a consistently good understanding of dance in setting the research question into context and addressing it fully and effectively?

Relevant outcomes of this analysis should be integrated into the student's argument.

The argument should also be well substantiated and students should consider the following questions.

- With what evidence do I support my comments and conclusions?
- Is this evidence relevant and well founded, and not based simply on my preconceptions?

Finally, an extended essay in dance is a formal essay, so students must pay very careful attention to the requirements of the assessment criteria.

Frequent reference to the assessment criteria by both the supervisor and the student will help keep a sharper focus on the project.

Interpreting the assessment criteria

Criterion A: research question

Although the aim of the essay can best be defined in the form of a question, it may also be presented as a statement or proposition for discussion. It must be specific, sharply focused and appropriate to the particular area of dance being explored. It must also be centred on dance, and not on peripheral areas such as biography and social issues. It must be stated clearly early on in the essay.

Note that larger-scale dance works or groups of pieces may limit the possibility of effective treatment within the word limit.

Criterion B: introduction

The introduction should relate the research question to existing subject knowledge. It should be clear and concise: it is not an opportunity to pad out the essay with preliminary statements of arguments that will be restated fully in the body of the essay.

Criterion C: investigation

The range of sources available will be influenced by various factors but above all by the topic chosen. Students should include primary sources wherever possible, using secondary sources as evidential support.

The proper planning of an essay should involve interrogating source material in light of the research question, so that the views of other dancers and dance scholars are used to support the student's own argument, and not as a substitute for that argument. It may thus be helpful for a student to challenge a statement by a dancer or dance scholar, in reference to the dance being studied, instead of simply agreeing with it, where there is evidence to support such a challenge.

If students make use of Internet-based sources, they should do so critically and circumspectly in full awareness of their potential unreliability.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Students are expected to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the dance, dance styles or traditions chosen within their cultural context, in terms of their historical and current practice, social, religious, political and/or intellectual significance.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

Students should be aware of the need to present their essays as a logical development of an argument. Personal views should not simply be stated but need to be supported by reasoned argument to persuade the reader of their validity. Straightforward descriptive or narrative accounts that lack analysis do not usually advance an argument and should be avoided.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject

Students should convey accurate and consistent analysis and evaluation of the movement qualities and aesthetic and/or cultural intentions of the dance work(s).

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject

There should be evidence of familiarity with, and the accurate and effective use of, dance terminology. Some dance forms, such as ballet and East Indian dance, have particular words to describe movement and movement phrases. The meaning of these terms needs to be made clear in the essay.

Criterion H: conclusion

“Consistent” is the key word here: the conclusion should develop out of the argument and not introduce new or extraneous matter. It should not repeat the material of the introduction; rather, it should present a new synthesis in light of the discussion.

Criterion I: formal presentation

This criterion relates to the extent to which the essay conforms to academic standards about the way in which research papers should be presented. The presentation of essays that omit a bibliography or that do not give references for quotations is deemed unacceptable (level 0). Essays that omit one of the required elements—title page, table of contents, page numbers—are deemed no better than satisfactory (maximum level 2), while essays that omit two of them are deemed poor at best (maximum level 1).

Criterion J: abstract

The abstract is judged on the clarity with which it presents an overview of the research and the essay, not on the quality of the research question itself, nor on the quality of the argument or the conclusions.

Criterion K: holistic judgment

Qualities that are rewarded under this criterion include the following.

- Intellectual initiative: Ways of demonstrating this in dance essays include the choice of topic and research question, locating and using a range of sources, including some that may have been little used previously or generated for the study (for instance, transcripts of oral interviews).
- Insight and depth of understanding: These are most likely to be demonstrated as a consequence of detailed research, reflection that is thorough and well-informed, and reasoned argument that consistently and effectively addresses the research question.
- Creativity: In dance essays, this includes qualities such as new and inventive approaches to dance analysis, new approaches to “well-worn” or popular topics, or attention to new topics and questions.