

Unit 40: Choreographing Dance

Unit code:	H/502/4908
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

In this unit learners will develop an understanding of the principles of choreography. They will produce choreography for different kinds of dances and for different purposes.

● Unit introduction

The dance that we see as members of an audience, at the theatre, on television, in films or in music videos has been choreographed by someone. Dance does not just happen, it must be devised by a dance maker who may be a dancer or a creative person who expresses ideas through movement.

Throughout this unit there will be opportunities for creating original work, from learners' own ideas, to a choice of accompaniment. There will be chances to create dances for staged productions, musical numbers and dance showcases. Dance for music videos will be another option, as well as site-specific choreography, where work is specially devised for a particular place. Learners are required to produce dance in more than one style and for different numbers of performers, from solos to small groups.

In the dance world many choreographers begin their careers as professional dancers, but others decide quite early on that their preferred dance role is one where they direct what will actually happen on stage. Once choreographers have mastered the language of movement, they do not necessarily need to be excellent dancers or performers. Their skills are very different. They need to be able to interpret music and ideas, use their imagination to invent movement from the dancers' bodies, have excellent spatial awareness so they can see how things will work on stage and be very organised in order to pull all the elements together to create performance.

Dance today often uses a mixture of styles, for example ballet mixed with ballroom, jazz mixed with hip-hop and south Asian dance mixed with contemporary. Apart from the classical dance forms such as classical ballet or Kathak, almost all dance is hybrid in style. This makes the work of choreographers exciting and challenging. It also means that there are no set rules. Dance can be about anything, devised from a range of styles and be accompanied by music, sounds or silence.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Understand the principles of choreographing dances
- 2 Know how to create dance for a specific event
- 3 Be able to choreograph dance in more than one style
- 4 Be able to make dance for performance.

Unit content

1 Understand the principles of choreographing dances

Structures: how dances are created through choreography eg binary, ternary, rondo, narrative, theme and variation, abstract, chance; direct interpretation of accompaniment eg dance for music video, dance on film; critical analysis of choreography in the studio and in performance

Devices: developing choreography eg motif development, unison, canon, repetition, dynamic variation, contrast, climax, highlights, proportion and balance, sequence, symmetry and asymmetry, opposition, stillness, cross-cutting for film/video/DVD

2 Know how to create dance for a specific event

Understanding the brief: response to the event or production brief; researching alternatives; planning; presentation of ideas; cooperation with director and production team

Achieving the brief: producing appropriate dances on time and within budget

Understanding the performing space: eg studio, theatre, site-specific, film/video/DVD

3 Be able to choreograph dance in more than one style

Stylistic development: understanding and exploiting the elements of a style; dynamic range; traditions, classical, post-modern, hybrid forms; styles eg classical ballet, contemporary dance, jazz including street jazz, hip-hop, body popping, locking, south Asian dance, African dance, social dance

4 Be able to make dance for performance

Realising choreography: eg creating the dance on self or with dancers, finalising ideas, casting dancers, translating ideas for the dancer, adapting and developing choreography with the dancer

Staging dances: repetition and rehearsing; staging; costume; make up; preparing performers; notes; performance

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 discuss the choreographic structures and devices used to create dance material [IE, RL]	M1 explain the choreographic structures and devices used to create dance material	D1 critically comment on the choreographic structures and devices used to create dance material
P2 create choreography that responds to the requirements of an event [CT, SM, IE]	M2 create choreography which is sensitive to the specific requirements of an event	D2 create choreography that fully meets the specific requirements of an event
P3 choreograph dance material using different styles and techniques [CT, IE, SM]	M3 choreograph and develop dance material using different styles and techniques	D3 independently choreograph and develop dance material using different dance styles and techniques
P4 realise choreographic ideas in performance. [CT, TW, SM]	M4 competently and confidently realise choreographic ideas in performance.	D4 realise choreographic ideas in performance with confidence, interpretation and flair.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

Since choreographers usually work in studios, having already read the performance or production brief and seen the space for which they are creating, most of the work for this unit can take place in the rehearsal studio, moving into the performance area or stage, as the performance date gets nearer. Where dance is site specific, learners must have the opportunity to become familiar with their chosen performing area, evaluating any particular requirements and necessities, for instance, health and safety guidelines.

Whilst choreography is a study in itself, and learners will need to watch and critically analyse examples of dance in action, it is vital that they try out dance ideas right from the start of the course, either on themselves or on other dancers. It is recommended that learners begin with tutor directed tasks in pairs or solo, to reinforce the basics of choreography before launching into assessed work. The development of dance material on others is challenging, exciting and demanding, requiring vision, imagination and sympathy with the dancers in question. Recall and memory as well as video/DVD recordings of work in progress will prove very useful during the choreographic process.

Any dance style can form the basis of the choreography; styles can also be mixed together as hybrid forms, as they are in many of the dances seen today on stage. For example, South Asian Kathak dance has been successfully merged with contemporary styles and ballet in the work of Akram Khan, and this might prove a stimulating starting point for exploration. Street jazz works with hip-hop, flamenco works with contemporary, ballroom works with ballet: there are innumerable possibilities that tutors can consider as ways into developing choreographic skills. No form of dance should be considered as off limits or unacceptable for study, so long as it is safe and appropriate.

Dances may be choreographed specifically for film and there are many examples of such work that have used this medium successfully. Creating dance for film is complicated and will need to be broken down and carefully organised. It would not be necessary for the choreographer to take the role of camera operator, however, since it is the realisation of the choreographic ideas that is assessed, and how well this meets the requirements of the performance medium.

Tutors may wish learners to keep choreographic notebooks or to complete written assignments. The majority of the work for this unit should be practical to mirror the vocational nature of this qualification.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Choreography, introduce a range of styles, different accompaniment, using music, percussion, sounds and silence.
First performances, mini assessments, evaluations and feedback.
Assignment 1: First Steps – P1, M1, D1, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• create a dance to own choice of accompaniment• learners choose a style, some accompaniment and create a short dance piece that expresses an idea• performances.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Assignment 2: How Choreographers Work – P1, M1, D1

- working as a dance journalist for a dance publication, write a critical account of two pieces of contrasting dance, seen on film, focusing on how the choreographer made them work and the choreographic structures and devices used.

Choreography workshops, small groups, solos, duets.

Learners explore choreography using a range of groupings: solo, duet, trio.

Work from previous performances developed for a different number of dancers.

Performances.

Assignment 3: Celebrating Ourselves – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4

- create two dances in different styles; one solo, one for a small group, for a performance showcase.

Research and development of existing dance material on DVD and live.

Choreography for another dancer, working in pairs or small groups.

Stimulus development, motifs, structure and quality.

Performances, assessments, evaluations.

Assignment 4: Dance on Film in Competition – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4

- dance on film, group watches examples of work
- choreography for a short dance film
- stimulus introduction by tutor
- short pieces of experimental choreography and group sharing of ideas
- filmed sequences.

Choreography and preparation.

Assessment

Learners' choreography will be assessed in the studio, in rehearsals and in performance. The principles of choreographing dance will be taught and assessed through practical workshops, where dancers experiment with a range of forms and styles, both for themselves as dancers and with others. Numbers of participating dancers should be varied so that the choreography explores group dynamics. Specific events, such as showcases, cabarets, variety shows and full-scale productions may be organised by the centre, but smaller site-specific events or showcasing dance films/videos/DVDs or dances to accompany music performances could be organised by learners themselves. Work will be seen live and assessed in both the studio and in performance, with DVD/video recordings made and tutor notes taken to support grading criteria awarded.

It is suggested that assessment will take place in at least two performances, using different performing spaces and different dance styles.

So that learners can achieve learning outcome 1, there must be opportunities to experience the work of several choreographers, working in different styles and media. This can be accomplished through watching recordings of dance from television, movies, stage shows and music video. Tutors will contribute their own observations of learners' choreography in action that will help contribute to the evidence for this outcome.

Learning outcome 2 will require an event to create work for, so that learners can assess the relative possibilities, opportunities and requirements of the event. For learning outcome 3, learners will create dance in a range of styles, and evidence for this outcome can be collected over the duration of the unit. For learning outcome 4, learners will choreograph work to be specifically realised in performance; the medium for the performance is open and might involve a site-specific event, a film or a staged show.

To achieve a pass for grading criterion 1, learners must show an understanding of choreographic structures and how these underpin the process of making dances. These structures must cover the way dances are developed, such as rondo, through narrative or theme. Devices, such as motif development, variation and contrast can be enriched by, for example, looking at how choreography for dance on film uses cross-cutting.

For P2, learners must produce dance that fulfils the requirements of a particular event; this implies that learners can work through a brief, consider alternative strategies, cooperate with others in the event team, they can create work for a particular space or venue and that they finally realise what they set out to achieve. For P3, learners are required to choreograph work in more than one dance style and for this they must show they have absorbed the basic nature of their chosen styles and can exploit those in the making of their own work.

For P4, learners will realise their ideas, on themselves as dancers or on others; they will need to rehearse those ideas and stage them appropriately.

To achieve M1, learners must show their understanding of the choreographic structures and devices by which dances are made. This implies explanations that highlight how these elements work together illustrated with clear examples. For M2, work created for specific events and purposes must show sensitivity to the requirements of those elements. This might be where learners create work that fulfils the expectations of a brief, such as dances made in a style to suit a particular show, for instance flapper style for *The Boyfriend*, or rock and roll for *Grease*.

Learners who achieve M3 will develop their choreography using styles and forms to create dances that show appreciation of those styles. These learners will produce work that shows imaginative responses to their brief. For M4, choreographic ideas will be confidently realised in performance, with a degree of independence and understanding of the needs of that performance.

Learners who attain D1 will have a critical approach to their analyses of other choreographers' work; they will have gained understanding of how those choreographers generate and realise ideas for dances and can critically comment on that, showing their own opinion and objectivity about the success or otherwise of a piece. For D2, learners' own choreography must fully meet the requirements of an event; this might be a performance or recording of a dance, a dance specifically made for film, a dance choreographed for a music performance, a dance to heighten the enjoyment of an exhibition or for a competition. For D3, learners will work independently, embracing a range of styles forms and even genres. They will be confident in their choices and how they develop their work, going beyond the conventional, discarding ideas that do not measure up to their own critical appraisal.

Finally, for D4, learners will have shown they can realise confident, exciting dances that fulfil the needs of the brief and those individual goals they have set themselves. They will have adapted their ideas as they have translated them on to the body of another dancer, or themselves; they will have cast their work effectively, taking into account the talent and skills of the performer. They will have an appreciation for the aesthetic qualities of both their performers and their choreography so that the work moves beyond the conventional. They will have deployed their performers creatively and intelligently to exploit their choreography to the full. The assessment must concentrate on the finished dances from a choreographic perspective.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	First Steps	Using a style of your own choosing, create a short piece of dance that captures the main features of a piece you have seen in performance.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • choreographer's log and notes • diagrams/notation • tutor observations • finished piece in performance and on DVD/video.
P1, M1, D1	How Choreographers Work	Brief: you are working as a dance journalist for a dance publication; write a critical account of two pieces of contrasting dance, seen on film, focusing on how the choreographer made the work and the choreographic structures and devices used.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluative notes on each dance • planning notes for the article • finished article.
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	Celebrating Ourselves	Create two pieces of dance to celebrate the cultural diversity in your centre. The works will form the basis of a performance.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • choreographer's log and notebook • diagrams/notation • rehearsal observations • tutor observations • rehearsals • performance on DVD/video.
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	Dance on Film in Competition	Choreograph and create a one minute dance film for a competition, about an issue or idea that interests you. You need not film the piece yourself, but you will have to work with your camera operator as director and producer.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • choreographer's log and notebooks • rehearsal observations • film on DVD/video.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Exploring Dance Skills	Performing Dance	Rehearsing for Performers
	The Development of Dance	Performing to an Audience
		Dance Performance
		Choreographic Principles
		Applying Classical Ballet Technique
		Movement in Performance
		Developing Contemporary Dance
		Jazz Dance
		Urban Dance

Essential resources

Centres will need a suitable clean, heated studio space, with barres and preferably fitted with wall mirrors, sprung floor, sound system and space for changing. Access to DVD/video recording/playback facilities for recording learners' work and watching dancers at work is essential. Suitable stage facilities or performing spaces will be required for dance performances.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres may wish to develop links with local providers of higher education and training so that learners may have access to outside expertise. Many dance training providers run community classes that learners can access, such as the University of Surrey community dance programme. Such providers are often hubs for visiting dance companies that learners can then see in performance.

National dance competitions provide opportunities for learners to showcase their talents in a broader setting than that offered within their own centre.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Auty J and Harrison K – *Dance Ideas for Teachers, Students and Children* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1991)
ISBN 9780340427705

Blom L A and Tarin Chaplin T – *The Intimate Act of Choreography* (Dance Books, 1995)
ISBN 9781852730109

Copeland R and Cohen M (editors) – *What is Dance?* (Oxford University Press, 1983) ISBN 9780195031973

Humphrey D – *The Art of Making Dances* (Dance Books, 1997) ISBN 9781852730536

McGreevy-Nichols S, Scheff H and Sprague M – *Building Dances: A Guide to Putting Movements Together*
(Human Kinetics, 2004) ISBN 9780736050890

Minton S C – *Choreography: A Basic Approach Using Improvisation* (Human Kinetics Europe Books, 1997)
ISBN 97808880115292

Smith – Autard J – *Dance Composition: A Practical Guide to Creative Success in Dance Making* (A&C Black, 2004) ISBN 9780713668247

DVD

Jiri Kylian's Black and White Ballets (Nederlands Dans Theatre, 2000)

Journals

Dance Now

Websites

www.dancebooks.co.uk

Dance Books

www.surrey.ac.uk/NRCD

The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD)

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	describing choreographic structures creating own choreography using different styles and techniques
Creative thinkers	creating own choreography that responds to the requirements of an event choreographing using different styles and techniques realising choreographic ideas in performance
Reflective learners	describing choreographic structures and devices by which dances are made
Team workers	realising ideas in performance when working with others
Self-managers	creating choreography that responds to the needs of an event choreographing dances using different styles and techniques realising choreographic ideas in performance
Effective participators	working with others to realise choreography.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	exploring the choreographic ideas of others trying out ideas for dances on self and others planning and carrying out a brief
Creative thinkers	developing ideas for dances and their interpretation
Reflective learners	workshopping and rehearsing ideas for dances developing work for other dancers' bodies inviting criticism and feedback on own work and responding positively to it exploring the possibilities for making dance films
Team workers	working with others in an ensemble developing group-based choreography cooperating in the production of an event filming and editing dance for film
Self-managers	setting realistic goals for a performance maintaining discipline, fitness and technique directing others to fulfil the needs of the choreography and the performance
Effective participators	taking part in a group event supporting a performance with own choreography.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> interpreting choreography with others translating own choreography on to other dancers planning for an event taking part in production meetings
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	maintaining choreographic logs.