

Dance: Subject-specific guidance

See also: *Extended essay guide* and *Extended essay teacher support material*

Overview

An extended essay (EE) in dance provides students with an opportunity to study in depth a topic in dance of particular interest to them.

The essay's focus must be on dance as expressive movement with intent, purpose and form that communicates through the body and gesture of the dancer.

Students should aim for a coherent written analysis and interpretation of one or more dances or dance styles and traditions in relation to their research question. The essay should engage students in critical thinking. They are required to present logically a personal point of view and develop a reasoned argument.

Students do not have to be enrolled in the Diploma Programme dance course to write an EE in dance. However, they must be familiar with the different aspects and requirements of the course.

Choice of topic

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.

Students can choose a particular dance, style or tradition as their topic. They should consider the dance, style or tradition itself and also the role it plays within its cultural context, in terms of:

- historical and current practice
- social, religious, political and/or intellectual significance.

Students must focus at least part of their research on a present-day issue so that they have access to some primary sources of information.

Sources of ideas

This list is not exhaustive but is intended for guidance only.

- The Diploma Programme dance course
- Performances and/or different interpretations of (a particular) dance
- Dance cultures and traditions students have encountered within their own experience
- 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 or concerns about the field of dance

Examples of topics

These examples are also just for guidance. Students must ensure their choice of topic is focused (left-hand column) rather than broad (right-hand column).

✓ Focused topics	✗ Broad topics
The influence of elements of conduct and mannerism of the 17th century imperial court on Japanese Mai style dance	Traditional Japanese dance styles
An investigation of the importance of customs and ritual in Alaskan native dances through an analysis of selected dances of the Yup'ik tribe	Native American dance
A study of the merge of Mandé performance traditions with ballet styles to develop Fodéba Keïta's dance choreographies for <i>Les Ballets Africains</i>	West African dance styles
The impact of the work of Nederlands Dans Theater on the European modern ballet style	Modern ballet styles

Treatment of the topic

The structure of the essay is important to its success. Students cannot fulfill its requirements by a simple listing of information.

At the beginning of the essay the student should:

- outline how his or her research question has arisen:
- through personal interest and/or experience or
- through an issue of the present day that needs to be addressed
- state the essay's research purpose and methodology in connection with the research question.

Research methods

Once students have chosen their topic, it is suggested they make a (flexible) research plan. It should take account of what information is available, or what might become available. Students must have access to sufficient resources, but sometimes the hunt for information can be part of the challenge and become part of the essay itself.

Students' research must include both primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources

Primary sources of information can include:

- the viewing of performances or participation in classes or workshops directly pertaining to the student's topic
- dance references in film, video, DVD and internet sources

- dance notation (but contemporary dance notation systems used by choreographers and ethnographers may be inaccessible to most students)
- photographs of dance performances
- interviews with practitioners
- a statement from a dance practitioner quoted in a book.

Limitations on research into pre-20th-century dance

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.

Students face a challenge researching early or pre-20th-century works because:

- film and videotape only became available in the early to mid-20th century
- ancient dance manuals are few—only a small number of masterpieces from particular styles and cultures have been notated
- dance notation systems have radically changed.

Hence the requirement that students should include a post-20th-century element within their topic and research question.

Secondary sources

Students must place their research question within the broader context of the study of dance by referring to secondary sources such as:

- textbooks
- journals
- the internet.

Students' choice of secondary sources should directly relate to the topic. Their reading may stimulate their own original ideas and provide models for the structure of their essay.

No EE in dance should be based exclusively on secondary sources.

Students can use these questions as prompts while researching and writing their essay, to check they are aware of all the issues they need to consider in developing their analysis and argument.

- 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?
- Do I show a clear awareness of the purpose of the study and how it informs the field of dance?
- Do I show awareness of any possible limitations of my study and can I offer suggestions for future investigations based on the research work I have conducted?

Developing an argument

Students must substantiate their argument with evidence from their research, using both primary and secondary sources. The following questions may help:

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

Students must also evaluate critically the sources they have used. They can ask themselves:

- 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:

- Does using primary sources (dance and dancers) and secondary sources (material about dance) allow them to establish and appraise varying interpretations?
- Does the analysis of sources (primary and secondary) explore and explain particular aspects of dance?
- Does students' primary source material focus on a particular aspect of dance?
- Does the collection and analysis of transmitted dance performances lead to a comparison of similar or different forms of dance?

Examples of topics, research questions and suggested approaches

Once students have identified their topic and written their research question, they can decide how to research their answer. They may find it helpful to write a statement outlining their broad approach. These examples are for guidance only.

Topic	The influence of Rukmini Arundale on the Bharatanatyam dance form
Research question	To what extent did Rukmini Arundale influence the re-emergence of the Bharatanatyam dance form in India?
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A brief overview of the historical origins and style of the Bharatanatyam dance form should be provided to place the topic into a dance-specific context. In particular there should be a discussion of the changes of the dance form due to societal pressures and enforced changes through British rule.• Information about the background of Rukmini Arundale and how she became involved in the Bharatanatyam dance form should be revealed for contextual reference.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influence of her studies with Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai and dancers such as Anna Pavlova on Rukmini Arundale’s artistic development should be discussed to further clarify the influences on her style and interests. • An analysis and discussion of her dance performance in the light of these influences should be given to support the argument of the essay. • A discussion of Rukmini Arundale’s involvement in Bharatanatyam and her particular contribution to the revival of the dance form may be presented to further support the argument. • The impact of her work on the founding of the Kalakshetra School and the importance of her philosophy and designed curriculum for the re-emergence of this dance should be outlined to answer the research question. • A conclusion should identify that Rukmini Arundale was one of the major influences in the revival of the Bharatanatyam dance form.
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Topic	The effect of the dances of the “Roaring Twenties” on the changing role of women
Research question	To what extent did the Charleston affect the changing role of women in the US from 1920 to 1925?
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brief contextual overview should be offered of women’s suffrage in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, explaining that these culminated in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which stated that no one should be denied the vote on account of sex. Specific women leaders in this movement, such as Susan B Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton etc, should be identified and how they brought about change.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summary of the dances that were in vogue, such as the waltz and foxtrot, leading up to the suffrage movement and the dances that evolved during the 1920–25 period, such as the tango and charleston, should be offered to place the topic into the appropriate dance-specific context. • A discussion of the attitudes of and influences on women at that time, such as jazz music, fashion, films etc, and how women changed their behaviour, dress and make-up, should be presented to support the line of argument. A selection of women who were at the forefront of this change should be included, such as Clara Bow and Mary Pickford. • The specific movement content of the charleston and its impact on social dancing should be analysed. In particular, how the dance reflected the energy and mood of the time should be discussed. • The conclusion should identify the significance of the charleston dance and how it echoed the changes in society for women at that time.
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Topic	The role of Louis XIV in politics and the development of ballet
Research question	To what extent did Louis XIV influence the development of ballet and was dance and ballet in particular a reflection of the social and political standards of that time?
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brief overview of Louis XIV's power in religion, trade and politics should be given to place the topic into context. • A brief overview of the history of court dance in the French court, with particular reference to the social importance of dance of the time, should be offered to place the topic into the appropriate dance-specific context.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louis XIV's role in the development of ballet and the establishing of dance as a performance art should be described to support the argument. • An analysis of how ballet confirmed the social and political standards established by the king, such as the strict rules of social etiquette and the requirement of nobles to be proficient in dance as well as the military arts, should support the argument. • The conclusion should identify the significance of ballet and how Louis XIV used dance to rule his kingdom.
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Topic	The Greek myths in Martha Graham's choreography
Research question	How and why did Martha Graham draw on the Greek myths in her choreography?
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brief overview of Martha Graham's life in dance and the particular influences, such as dancers, philosophers and musicians who played a role in the development of her technique and choreography, should be provided to place the topic into the appropriate dance-specific context. • A discussion on why the Greek myths might provide good subject matter for choreography would offer a preparation and basis to answer the research question. • An overview of specific myths that Martha Graham used in her choreography should be offered to support the line of argument of the essay. • An in-depth analysis of a minimum of two choreographies should be offered to show how Martha Graham applied specific myths. • The conclusion should illustrate key points that highlight the role of Greek myths in Martha Graham's choreography.

Topic	The influence of modern dance techniques on contemporary dance in the example of the work of Merce Cunningham
Research question	To what extent did the preceding modern dance techniques influence the emergence and development of contemporary dance?
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an introduction, a brief overview could be offered, outlining the emergence and development of modern dance through three eras. The overview should include a summary of the stylistic characteristics and technical features, of each era. To focus the overview, students may find it helpful to highlight specific important dance artists and the focus of their work. For example: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Early modern era: Ruth St Denis, Isadora Duncan, Mary Wigman, etc. Central modern era: Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Hanya Holm, etc. Late modern era: Merce Cunningham, José Limon, Paul Taylor, etc. The argument and discussion will focus on investigating one or more works by Merce Cunningham's to illustrate the influences from modern dance techniques on specific methods and motivations for creating his work. In contrast and to generate a more holistic picture, the investigation may also discuss other influences which have shaped his work. The conclusion should summarize the details of influences from modern dance techniques on the work of Merce Cunningham. The summary should generate an insight into the extent of the influences of modern dance on contemporary dance.

Use of external resources

The EE in dance should be modelled on an academic journal or research paper. The reader should be able to read and understand it without access to external web links, video files or DVDs.

Examiners will not access any material contained in an external source when assessing an essay. If information central to the argument is included in the external link, it will be treated as though the point has not been made.

An important note on “double-dipping”

Students must ensure that their EE does not duplicate other work they are submitting for the Diploma Programme. For example, students are not permitted to use the same material they have used for their world dance investigation.

The dance EE and other assessment components

An EE in dance is not an extension of other assessment tasks for the subject. Students must ensure that they understand the differences between them.

- Students may not submit an investigation of a dance they have arranged or research on dances that have influenced the student’s submissions for the composition and analysis component.
- Students may not submit research they have conducted for, or any research relating to, the dance investigation component.
- Students may not investigate dances that they have chosen to submit for the performance component.

Supervisors play an important role in guiding students on these distinctions. Students risk their diploma if academic misconduct is detected.

Interpreting the EE assessment criteria

Criterion A: Focus and method

(Strands: Topic, Research question, Methodology)

The topic must focus on analysis, investigation, discussion and evaluation of actual dance; that is, dance must be the source material.

Students should indicate their topic at the beginning of the essay through a clearly stated research question. The question should be focused and specific without unduly restricting the development of the research study.

The research question should lead to a point of view, focus or interpretation.

While students may be inspired by their dance encounters and experiences, it is important that the chosen topic is relevant and has a distinct research purpose.

The essay must outline the methodology that is followed throughout the research. It should include research on a present-day issue, such as:

- analysis of performances
- interviews with choreographers and performers
- questionnaires
- analysis of scores or transcriptions

- collecting data—eg through comparative analysis of interpretations or interviews
- consultation of other primary sources.

The data collection, analysis and evaluation will lead to critical arguments that reflect the student's deeper insight into the material studied.

Students must refer to secondary sources to place the study into a wider context.

Students also need to demonstrate that:

- their essay has been well planned
- the methodology used or the approach to the topic is appropriate to the research question.

Criterion B: Knowledge and understanding

(Strands: Context, Subject-specific terminology and concepts)

To successfully meet this criterion, students are expected to demonstrate their prior knowledge of the material studied and how the research is developed in relation to existing insights. Thus, the essay must demonstrate an effective and critical understanding of the topic chosen.

Students will gain marks for showing a good understanding of the topic itself, rather than a wide knowledge of any dance form, performer or choreographer that is not relevant to the research question. Sufficient preparation and sound understanding of the topic are prerequisites for a successful essay.

Students must ensure that the sources, analysis and evaluation of their data are reliable and valid.

Students must demonstrate a critical awareness of the quality, balance and quantity of their source materials. These should be clearly relevant and appropriate to the research question. They should also be used efficiently and purposefully to demonstrate an understanding of the issues involved.

The information and evidence presented need to be critically evaluated. Students are expected to show awareness of any limitations or uncertainties inherent in their approach.

When appropriate, students should critically comment on the validity and reliability of their findings relative to their management of variables within the investigation.

The essay should be carefully developed and structured. Students must present their arguments in a clear and concise fashion.

Students should use appropriate subject-specific terminology and apply dance concepts accurately in order to communicate their findings.

Criterion C: Critical thinking

(Strands: Research, Analysis and Discussion and evaluation)

The research question should be answered by means of a clear and logical argument that is supported by relevant and appropriate sources. Students should aim to develop their own argument rather than simply adopting the views of critics.

Essays that are predominantly narrative or simply describe the material do not provide evidence of analytical skills and do not score well.

Subjective accounts are not appropriate. Personal views may be relevant but need to be supported by reference to primary and secondary sources.

It is important that students evaluate their research, particularly in terms of:

- unresolved issues and further research questions that may be generated by their study
- the relative value and limitations of the sources used.

These evaluations should be integrated into the body of the essay to give useful insight relative to a source or opinion of a dance historian, choreographer or dancer.

Students must be able to interrogate their sources to gather evidence and develop and support a reasoned argument to answer the research question. The argument should culminate in conclusion(s) being given.

Students should support the points contained in their argument and analysis with material from their research. They should maintain a logical argument focused on the research question throughout.

An assessment of the extent to which the research question is answered by the information accessed should form part of the argument.

Students may draw conclusions throughout the essay to points and arguments made. The final conclusion must be consistent with the position and evidence presented in the essay. It should not introduce material that has not already been discussed. Questions that have arisen as a result of the research, if considered relevant, may also be included.

Criterion D: Presentation

(Strands: Structure, Layout)

This criterion relates to the extent to which the essay conforms to accepted academic standards in relation to how research papers should be presented. It also relates to how well these elements support the reading, understanding and evaluation of the essay.

Students may provide a section and sub-section structure to their essays, with appropriate informative headings.

Use of non-text materials

Any charts, images or tables from literature sources included in the essay must be carefully selected and labelled. They should only be used if they:

- are directly relevant to the research question
- contribute towards the understanding of the argument
- are of a good graphic quality.

Only selected materials—photographs, images, figures and notation scores—that are central to the argument of the essay should be included in the body of the essay, as close as possible to their first reference.

Transcripts of sample interviews collected by the student are best included in an appendix, where they should be carefully labelled (although students should be aware that transcribing is a time-consuming process).

Students must take care in their use of appendices as examiners are not required to read them. All information with direct relevance to the analysis, discussion and evaluation of the essay must be contained in the main body of the essay.

Any material that is not original must be carefully acknowledged, with specific attention paid to the acknowledgment and referencing of quotes and ideas. This acknowledgment and referencing is applicable to audio-visual material, text, graphs and data published in print and electronic sources. If the referencing does not meet the minimum standard as indicated in the guide (name of author, date of publication, title of source and page numbers as applicable), and is not consistently applied, work will be considered as a case of possible academic misconduct.

A bibliography is essential and has to be presented in a standard format. Title page, table of contents, page numbers, etc must contribute to the quality of presentation.

The essay must not exceed 4,000 words of narrative. Students should be aware that examiners will not read beyond the 4,000-word limit, nor assess any material presented thereafter. Titles for photographs, images, figures and notation scores are not included in the word count.

Criterion E: Engagement

(Strands: Reflections on planning and progress)

This criterion assesses the student's engagement with their research focus and the research process. It will be applied by the examiner at the end of the assessment of the essay, after considering the student's *Reflections on planning and progress Form (RPPF)*.

Students are expected to provide reflections on the decision-making and planning process undertaken in completing the essay. Students must demonstrate how they arrived at a topic as well as the methods and approach used. This criterion assesses the extent to which a student has evidenced the rationale for decisions made throughout the planning process and the skills and understandings developed.

For example, students may reflect on:

- the approach and strategies they chose, and their relative success

- the *Approaches to learning* skills they have developed and their effect on the student as a learner
- how their conceptual understandings have developed or changed as a result of their research
- setbacks they faced in their research and how they overcame these
- questions that emerged as a result of their research
- what they would do differently if they were to undertake the research again.

Effective reflection highlights the journey the student has engaged in through the EE process. Students must show evidence of critical and reflective thinking that goes beyond simply describing the procedures that have been followed.

The reflections must provide the examiner with an insight into **student** thinking, creativity and originality within the research process. The **student** voice must be clearly present and demonstrate the learning that has taken place.