



Subject Benchmark Statement: Dance, Drama and Performance

The Basics

This summary is designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Dance, Drama and Performance for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Subject Benchmark Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape, and boundaries, of subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals specifically in relation to: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); the requirements of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); and enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.



Why study a degree in Dance, Drama and Performance?

Dance, Drama and Performance is a creative field of study which builds skills, critical thinking and imagination. It encompasses diverse provision which operates in productive dialogue with the creative industries to support their development. Studying dance, drama, and performance offer opportunities to engage with a wide range of established and emerging forms and practices of performance. It involves a blend of theory and practice, exploring both the production and understanding of performance through diverse methodologies and critical frames of reference.

The courses within this Subject Benchmark Statement, whether at undergraduate or postgraduate level, are characterised by diversity, allowing students to choose from specialised training in a single discipline, multidisciplinary approaches, or interdisciplinary studies with other subjects - most often across the creative arts, humanities and education. The degrees are designed to be responsive to current and anticipated employment needs, often incorporating vocational education and industry-facing components.

The curriculum is shaped by a broad spectrum of subjects, including acting, choreography, musical theatre, dance theatre, scenography, theatre design, and writing for performance. Courses may be focused on practical skills and industry readiness, balanced with critical and conceptual studies, or centred on research and social engagement. One notable aspect of these degrees is the use of progressively more complex learning outcomes, aligned with diverse teaching methods and assessment strategies. While led by academic experts and practitioners, the courses promote autonomy and inclusive practices through student engagement and co-creation of the curriculum. Courses in Dance, Drama and Performance also often highlight the dynamic and contested nature of cultural practices in performance, emphasising adaptability and innovation, and increasingly responding to new forms of digital practice.

Studying a degree in Dance, Drama and Performance offers a transformative educational experience, fostering practical and theoretical knowledge, physical and digital skills, critical analysis, and a deep understanding of the social, political and community contexts within which these disciplines are situated. It prepares students to navigate the ever-changing landscape of the creative industries, encouraging intellectual engagement, synthesis of ideas, and the acquisition of practical skills essential for a career in the performing arts.



What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Dance, Drama and Performance?

Teaching, learning and assessment styles in the discipline support students to acquire knowledge of practitioners, socio-cultural contexts, histories, critical contexts, creation processes, craft, technique, interdisciplinary applications, and the ethical aspects of performance. Courses aim to develop critical, creative, performance and production skills. Students engage in performance, project management, and creative decision-making, analysing texts, and addressing social, cultural and political aspects of performance. They plan and deliver participatory projects, considering ethical implications, and engage in a range of collaborative projects.

Experiential and embodied learning underpins the pedagogic approach, combining practice and theory. Learning activities include work in practical, professional, and research contexts, moving towards increased independence through a course of study. Group work is common, taking place both in-person and online, through workshops, rehearsals, productions and other learning activities. Performance making is often part of the approach to learning, and teaching emphasises diversity, inclusion and accessibility.



How are students assessed?

Assessments allow students to demonstrate their abilities through diverse, inclusive modes aligned with the discipline. Formative and summative assessments evaluate understanding, knowledge, skill, critical reflection and creativity. These include practical activities, performances, production and technical outputs, workshops, industry briefs, digital outputs, scripts, presentations, essays, evaluations, journals, projects, research, dissertations and written exams.

The assessment of Dance, Drama and Performance courses includes a mix of methods that are accessible to all students within different learning situations. Where individual students may be disadvantaged by particular assessment methods, adjustments to those assessments are considered in discussion with the student concerned, while ensuring fairness across the full cohort. The procedures used for assessment cover the subject knowledge (breadth and depth), abilities and skills developed through the degree course.



Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Dance, Drama and Performance are outlined on **pages 18-23** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 25** of the full Statement.

Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

The [full Subject Benchmark Statement](#) is available on the QAA website.



Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector.

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