



Subject Benchmark Statement

Dance, Drama and Performance

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About this Statement

This document is a QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Dance, Drama and Performance that defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies. Subject Benchmark Statements are an established part of the quality assurance arrangements in UK higher education, but not a regulatory requirement. They are sector-owned reference points, developed and written by academics on behalf of their subject. Subject Benchmark Statements also describe the nature and characteristics of awards in a particular subject or area. Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as an expert quality body on behalf of the higher education sector. A summary of the Statement is also available on the QAA website.

Ever-increasing diversity within the field of Dance, Drama and Performance is recognised in this Statement alongside the need to develop the subject at honours degree level. This document does not prescribe substantive content, but, rather, indicates the areas of knowledge which constitute the core of the subject area.

Key changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement include:

- a revised structure for the Statement, which includes the introduction of cross-cutting themes of:
 - equality, diversity and inclusion
 - accessibility and the needs of disabled students
 - education for sustainable development
 - employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education
- a comprehensive review updating the context and purposes of Dance, Drama and Performance, including course design and content in order to inform and underpin the revised benchmark standards.

How can I use this document?

Subject Benchmark Statements are not intended to prescribe any particular approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Rather, they provide a framework, agreed by the subject community, that forms the basis on which those responsible for curriculum design, approval and update can reflect upon a course and its component modules. This allows for flexibility and innovation in course design while providing a broadly accepted external reference point for that discipline.

They may also be used as a reference point by external examiners in considering whether the design of a course and the threshold standards of achievement are comparable with those of other higher education providers. They also support professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with the academic standards expected of students.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of courses in Dance, Drama and Performance
- a prospective student thinking about undertaking a course in Dance, Drama and Performance
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of Dance, Drama and Performance graduates.

Relationship to legislation

The responsibility for academic standards lies with the higher education provider which awards the degree. Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them by their relevant funding and regulatory bodies. This Statement does not interpret legislation, nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements.

The status of the Statement will differ depending on the educational jurisdictions of the UK. In England, Subject Benchmark Statements are not sector-recognised standards as set out under the Office for Students' [regulatory framework](#). However, they are specified as a key reference point, as appropriate, for academic standards in Wales under the [Quality Assessment Framework for Wales](#) and in Scotland as part of the [Quality Enhancement Framework](#). Subject Benchmark Statements are part of the current quality arrangements in Northern Ireland. Because the Statement describes outcomes and attributes expected at the threshold standard of achievement in a UK-wide context, many higher education providers will use them as an enhancement tool for course design and approval, and for subsequent monitoring and review, in addition to helping demonstrate the security of academic standards.

Additional sector reference points

Higher education providers are likely to consider other reference points in addition to this Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by PSRBs and industry or employer expectations. QAA has also published [Advice and Guidance](#) to support the [Quality Code for Higher Education](#), which will be helpful when using this Statement - for example, in [course design](#), [learning and teaching](#), [external expertise](#) and [monitoring and evaluation](#).

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in [QAA's Glossary](#). Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Statement where appropriate.

1 Context and purposes of a Dance, Drama and Performance degree

Context

1.1 Dance, Drama and Performance is a field which encompasses a breadth of disciplines of established and emerging forms and practices in contemporary contexts relevant to the creative industries. Courses in these disciplines combine practice with theory in studying performance and its production. They draw equally on established and emerging methodologies and diverse critical frames of reference, as well as on a breadth of traditional and experimental workshop, rehearsal, performance and facilitation practices.

1.2 Within the scope of this Subject Benchmark Statement are undergraduate and taught postgraduate degree programmes delivered by a broad range of providers, each with their own ethos and pedagogic emphases, as well as varying approaches to student journeys.

1.3 Diversity of provision is a key strength of Dance, Drama and Performance as a set of disciplines. Accordingly, this Statement captures this expansive range while providing a clear indication of the kinds of creative context, knowledge, understanding, skills, approaches and methods of learning that underpin the disciplines. It is the purpose of this Statement to articulate the breadth of the subject and to guide providers towards delivering best practice in learning, incorporating the four cross-cutting themes of equality, diversity and inclusion; accessibility; sustainability; and enterprise and entrepreneurship education.

1.4 The practical and conceptual bases of engagement with performance and production in the disciplines can be discrete, diverse or interrelated. It is the dynamic nature of the cultural practices of performance and production, and their frequently contested nature, that sustains their vitality.

1.5 The disciplines of Dance, Drama and Performance are studied individually and in combination. Course design therefore draws on subject areas in a variety of ways, resulting in a rich assortment of provision. Courses may, for example, comprise specialised intensive training in a single discipline or may be multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary across the creative arts. They are shaped by an increasing emphasis on vocational education targeted at current and perceived future employment needs. Hybrid provision has developed both because of digital innovation in learning and teaching, and in response to technological developments in the creative industries.

1.6 Some courses have an explicit focus on practical skills and knowledges and are directed towards the production of 'industry-ready' graduates for the creative industries. Other courses balance industry-facing provision with critical and conceptual study of the field. Other provision is centred on research, including practice research, or on education and social engagement. Courses are offered in combination with other arts and humanities subjects and with business and management.

Purposes and characteristics of a Dance, Drama and Performance degree

Purposes

1.7 Creativity and its communication are central to degrees in Dance, Drama and Performance.

1.8 Courses support student engagement with the relationships between theory and practice in a wide variety of ways. Courses in Dance, Drama and Performance include creative, practical, theoretical, vocational and professional dimensions in a range of formulations reflecting the nature of the creative industries in the real world. To this end, they respond to the specific contexts in which they are offered.

1.9 Courses in Dance, Drama and Performance place significant emphasis on embodied learning and knowledge, and these embodied ways of seeing and knowing the world provide distinctive insights and opportunities.

1.10 Courses provide opportunities for students to gain deep understanding of the creative industries and their contexts within specific cultures, societies and historical periods. Programmes of study remain responsive to innovation and cultural change and offer students opportunities not only to make new work for contemporary contexts, but also to confront and challenge the operation and practices of current creative industries. Programmes demonstrate awareness of socio-cultural, environmental, political and technological change, and provide opportunities for students to develop informed personal perspectives on a changing world. Creative exploration in Dance, Drama and Performance has the capacity to blur boundaries between fact and fiction, past and present, the virtual and the real and may thus involve students in constructions, presentations and visions of alternative worlds.

Characteristics

1.11 The study of Dance, Drama and Performance comprises a variety of methods, creative practices, disciplines and fields of study. In broad terms, it includes:

- practical work in a range of contexts linked in the performance, creation, design, production and presentation of dance, drama and performance
- technique and technical training for craft or skills development related to creation and/or operation in the disciplines
- critical studies (analytic, reflective, theoretical, historical, textual or contextual) appropriate to the context and orientation of the field, its disciplinary focus, and its related multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches
- utilisation and integration of technologies into performance, production and analysis
- communication methods and ways of working collectively and individually
- preparation for employment within and beyond the creative industries, including in social, community and educational contexts.

1.12 Dance, Drama and Performance students learn through collaboration and partnership. Group and collaborative work are prominent features of these courses. Students learn from historical understandings of training as they develop into artists, makers and producers, and from engagement with multidimensional creative practices, and issues of interpretation and

context. Multidisciplinary creative practices are characteristic of working in ensembles of various kinds, in performance, in groups or in production.

1.13 The disciplines of Dance, Drama and Performance construct and scaffold learning experiences which depend, for their effectiveness, on building inclusive learning communities. Consequently, individual programmes of study and modules may relate to wider cultural agendas in which personal, social and community development are foregrounded. Courses are responsive to trends in facilitation, direction and training and utilise a range of inclusive pedagogic approaches. Student-centred activities, student-led research, learning partnerships, and group and company working are typical. Working in collaboration underpins the positive impact of flexible, equitable and accessible learning experiences on students' social development. Pre-professional learning environments encourage a productive and equitable balance between safety and creative risk.

1.14 Learning and teaching design enables engagement with a range of perspectives, cultures, histories, locations and identities. This is reflected in curricula and in learning, teaching and assessment activities that interrogate performance histories and practices as forms of knowledge production. Historical understandings derived from the interpretation of texts raise questions concerning authorship, the cultural status of particular types of texts, and the ownership of ideas and approaches. These, together with analyses of resonances between cultures and contexts, including the critical reception of works and ideas, underpin students' abilities to develop critical awareness of their own artistic practice and thus support the development of personal creative journeys.

1.15 Generative artificial intelligence (AI) and other new technologies are both analysed in terms of their impact on creative industries and processes and are also used with critical reflection as tools for developing creative material in a range of forms. Transparency and openness in the use of these technologies enable judgements to be made on their appropriate use in both creative practice and analysis.

1.16 This Statement incorporates sections on equality, diversity and inclusion, on accessibility, on sustainability, and on enterprise and entrepreneurship education, which follow below. These four cross-cutting themes complement each other and are applicable to the wider context and purpose of Dance, Drama and Performance. The principles and practices encapsulated in these themes apply throughout this Statement and inform all courses in the field.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

1.17 Dance, Drama and Performance promotes inclusive learning communities, committed to guaranteeing equality of opportunity for all students to ensure equitable outcomes and awards. Our disciplines share a collective responsibility to embed equity, equality, diversity and inclusion within curricula, assessment practices, pedagogies, methodologies and professional practices. Key to this is the promotion of respect for the values and needs of diverse learning communities. The disciplines promote a flexible, adaptive and anticipatory approach to curriculum design, delivery, assessment and feedback. No student should be structurally disadvantaged due to their individual characteristics. Dance, Drama and Performance courses acknowledge and promote the spirit and the letter of the [2010 Equality Act](#) with respect to all protected characteristics, and mutual respect across groups from diverse backgrounds.

1.18 Our disciplines operate in complex and contested spaces which are physical, psychological, political, context-dependent and intersectional. Guiding principles that frame creative and critical practices in studios and classrooms include:

- the expectation for ethical and inclusive conversations to accommodate diverse lived realities and develop understandings of personal and social identities openly, responsively and non-judgmentally
- a focus on the graduate attribute of applying learning in the wider world, promoting learning for future generations and illuminating individual achievement
- opportunities for multifaceted exploration and experimentation within and across the disciplines resonating with personal development
- a respect for mental well-being which is adaptive and responsive to physical and emotional challenges that emerge in experiential creative learning.

1.19 At the core of Dance, Drama and Performance is recognition that contemporary performance is intrinsically diverse. Courses promote the exploration and critique of a variety of histories of knowledge and knowledge production, established and emerging critical discourses, and creative practices. Learning design draws on a range of past and present approaches and frameworks which have the potential to centre marginalised voices, challenge histories and act as dynamic forces for change. Learning experiences create space for self-reflection, in which staff and students explore together how identities, biases and cultural backgrounds impact learning, lived experience, creative processes and the development of curricula in the disciplines.

1.20 Courses in Dance, Drama and Performance are committed to developing inclusive learning opportunities that:

- are responsive to the identities of students
- create learning and teaching environments, processes and assessments in which all students can thrive
- acknowledge and share a range of cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds and identities
- embed global perspectives
- foster awareness and understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure that the diverse nature of society and inclusivity are explicit at all levels.

Accessibility

1.21 Inclusive and equitable design is embedded across all elements of Dance, Drama and Performance teaching, learning and assessment, and is evidenced in every interaction within the learning community. Contexts include, but are not limited to, practical studio-based and classroom-based teaching, independent student work, field work and trips, digital work, and assignments.

1.22 Ableist knowledge and understanding is called into question to challenge awarding gaps and to deliver learning, teaching and assessment modes that are inclusive and anticipatory of access needs.

1.23 The primary importance of live, experiential teaching and learning is central to the disciplines. However, the value of blended learning in providing additional educational options and support to students is increasingly acknowledged, as digital practices continue to make significant contributions to both curriculum content and delivery mode.

1.24 Pedagogic methods for teaching Dance, Drama and Performance will generally reflect the needs of the student body and professional practices relevant to the disciplines, through an inclusive curriculum that prioritises accessibility and equity. The availability of appropriate learning and teaching resources and materials is key.

1.25 Programmes of study are designed to challenge barriers to learning by acknowledging and addressing students' access needs. Learning and teaching design is framed to enable inclusive engagement.

1.26 Programme learning outcomes are sufficiently flexible and versatile to support individualised needs and trajectories. Learning, skills acquisition and the curricula in its entirety are structured and scaffolded to enable students to negotiate assessments successfully. Learning design is anticipatory of diverse experiences, modes of communication and knowledge production.

1.27 Students work effectively with each other, treating others with dignity and respect, and recognising collaboration as a key component of Dance, Drama and Performance. This emphasis is reflected in curricula, and in learning and teaching practices. That all students will see themselves reflected meaningfully in the curriculum is acknowledged as a key strategy for supporting learning across diverse backgrounds, and as an important strategy for addressing the equity agenda in the disciplines.

1.28 Learners in Dance, Drama and Performance acquire an expansive understanding of the field practically and theoretically, through their own embodied engagement and through engaging with that of others. This education requires access to a variety of types of fieldwork that may include theatre trips, workshops, visits, placements and observations. While these activities are essential parts of the discipline, an awareness of the individual needs of the student in these contexts is crucial. Anticipatory design ensures no student is excluded on the basis of protected characteristics or economic disadvantage, and that appropriate support is in place for all individuals.

1.29 Potential barriers to accessibility caused by traditional delivery modes, including group work and practical sessions, are considered in advance.

1.30 Our disciplines are well-placed to advocate for accessible and inclusive teaching and learning, and to inculcate a sense of belonging in which all students are aware of, and can access, the full range of learning and pastoral support offered at both subject and institutional level. Through working with students as partners, programmes of study can support personalised learning and encourage the development of individual and collective identities.

Sustainability

1.31 The study of Dance, Drama and Performance has the potential to address social, environmental and economic challenges in novel and innovative ways by promoting and pursuing a vision for a better world, and by reflecting on the material practices of the creative industries. Responsive to the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the QAA and Advance HE [Education for Sustainable Development Guidance \(2021\)](#), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is the process of creating curricula, including subject-relevant content and pedagogy, which support sustainable development. Resources such as the [Theatre Green Book](#) offer additional reference points for developing best practice. Addressing sustainable development principles is challenging and complex. It encompasses a wide range of interconnected environmental and social concerns such as the global climate crisis, local and global biodiversity loss, depletion of

natural resources, deforestation, air quality, access to water, hunger, gender equality, and widening inequalities of wealth, health and well-being.

1.32 At subject level, the creative and empathetic qualities of Dance, Drama and Performance mean that these art forms are well-equipped to support students in acquiring the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to develop values and act to help transition society towards a sustainable future. ESD offers an opportunity to centre institutional and societal environmental and sustainability imperatives through Dance, Drama and Performance curricula.

1.33 When creating new curricula within the disciplines of Dance, Drama and Performance, consideration of education for sustainability focuses on the interconnections between economic, social and environmental factors. The following themes are suggestions to support providers in challenging and enabling students and staff to co-design solutions and drive change for sustainability:

- **Economic:** this theme addresses production practices; touring and cost implications; business and enterprise crossover; funding systems, structures and processes; disciplinary sustainability; entrepreneurship; fair pay and employment precarity; wider industrial implications; government and sector industrial and cultural strategies and agendas; and career scaffolding and training, including leadership development.
- **Social:** this theme addresses communities and their diversity and intersections; applied and socially engaged practices; participation, partnership, collaboration and non-extractive practices; change making; activism, access, agency, equality, diversity and inclusion; digital access, poverty and literacy; history, continuity and change; and cities of culture.
- **Environmental:** this theme addresses place, space, landscape and location, both culturally and materially; local and global interconnectedness and internationalisation; minimising environmental impact; material sustainability, including choice of materials, opportunities for recycling/upcycling, reuse and sharing; and the carbon and ecological footprint of the discipline/industry.

1.34 New technologies offer opportunities for innovation across these three themes. However, it is recognised that access to technology and digital literacy is not evenly distributed, and steps are taken to make teaching materials, learning platforms and virtual spaces accessible to all students. This includes disabled students and those whose personal circumstances dictate that they cannot always participate in synchronous teaching events.

Enterprise and entrepreneurship education

1.35 [Enterprise and entrepreneurship education](#) supports behaviours, attributes and competencies that are likely to have a significant impact on the individual student in terms of future-ready employability, and the capacity to build a successful career. It prepares students for changing work environments through projects, placements and other activities that build links between academic institutions and external organisations. Authentic assessment is a central tenet of course design. Beyond employment, entrepreneurship education develops competencies to help students lead rewarding, self-determined professional lives, ensuring they are well placed to add social, cultural and economic value to society throughout their careers.

1.36 As a field of study, Dance, Drama and Performance adds significant social, political and cultural value, contributing meaningfully to community cohesion and individual well-being. Enterprise and entrepreneurship education in the field exposes individuals to existing

and emergent creative practices and artistic processes within relevant creative professions, thereby enhancing employment opportunities and prospects.

1.37 Critical thinking is a key transferable skill which is integrated into all programmes in the field through knowledge acquisition and generation, analysis and evaluation of the outcomes of creative processes and understanding of lineages of practice and social, historical and political contexts. Courses instil the capacity to undertake research and to synthesise information from a range of sources. Criticality is communicated through performance, individual and group presentations, verbal and non-verbal assessments, digital assets and in a variety of written formats, thus ensuring students graduate with a wide range of communication skills.

1.38 Training within Dance, Drama and Performance is focused on the skills, knowledge and behaviours associated with specific artistic and professional roles. It extends to the development of the professional skills through which individuals will manage themselves and support their employability throughout portfolio careers within the creative industries, and a wide range of other sectors, working within existing organisations or in a self-employed capacity. Graduates demonstrate the skills and competencies necessary for self-efficacy, professional role-specific skills and competencies, and entrepreneurship.

2 Distinctive features of the Dance, Drama and Performance degree

Design

2.1 Dance, Drama and Performance degrees are designed to give students an integrative education in their chosen subject(s). Courses in Dance, Drama and Performance are built on progressively more complex learning outcomes that are aligned with teaching methods and assessment. While course design and delivery are led by experts and practitioners, inclusivity is enabled through student engagement and co-creation of the curriculum. Dance, Drama and Performance degrees typically employ strategies to support student-centred and experiential learning.

2.2 The range and scope of the subject area is reflected in provision in which Dance, Drama and Performance are complemented by associated subject areas, such as acting, musical theatre, dance theatre, scenography and theatre design, applied and social theatre, and writing for performance, at FHEQ Levels 6 and 7/FQHEIS 10 and 11. For example, higher education providers offer:

- specialist vocational training and education in performance arts
- single honours degrees within the discrete and interconnected fields of dance, drama, theatre, musical theatre or performance
- combined honours courses bringing together Dance, Drama and Performance or Dance, Drama and Performance with other subjects
- interdisciplinary courses in which Dance, Drama and Performance are intrinsically implied or associated, such as musical theatre, acting and performing arts
- interdisciplinary courses in which no specific subject is named in the award (for example, contemporary arts). In such courses, a blurring of categorical boundaries between art forms and practices has led to combinations of Dance, Drama and Performance with, for example, visual arts, digital arts, music, writing, curating and arts management
- interdisciplinary courses, particularly at taught postgraduate level, that bring together Dance, Drama and Performance with cultural, historical and political study such as performance and politics, theatre and community, dance and identity.

2.3 Degrees that fall under the umbrella of Dance, Drama and Performance comprise the study of practical, theoretical and conceptual bases, covering:

- discrete, diverse and interrelated fields of activity, conventionally characterised as the 'disciplines' of acting, dance, drama, theatre, performance and their production, within which each has its own intellectual/practical performance traditions, bodies of knowledge, skills and concepts. Included within this are multidisciplinary practices such as musical theatre, scenography, theatre and costume design
- areas that combine these activities with other cognate practices, such as audio, digital or multimodal performance, AR, VR and XR technologies, film, television and radio
- practical skills acquisition informed by engagement with different cultures, histories and processes, and augmented by critical and reflective analysis promoting the ability to contextualise, historicise and interrogate performance traditions, materials, and practices

- practical and theoretical knowledge of histories, methods and forms of Dance, Drama and Performance
- the social, political and community contexts within which Dance, Drama and Performance are situated, and the ways in which audiences are constituted and engaged.

2.4 Dance, Drama and Performance embrace bodies of knowledge generated through performance-making activities. They are not constrained by a fixed set of skills and knowledges but are characterised by attentiveness to changing social, cultural, political and artistic values and practices. It is the dynamic nature of these cultural practices and their frequently contested nature that sustains the vitality of the subject areas. Reciprocally, the activities of students and staff impact upon and transform those practices.

2.5 It is vital that any definition of the subject does not constrain future innovation, and that the continuation of well-established methodologies and engagement with traditional subject matter is respected.

2.6 Courses will engage with, reflect and be informed by national and international performing arts contexts, developments, industries, people and practices.

2.7 Learning, teaching and assessment practices across dance, drama, theatre, performance and associated areas include intellectual engagement with relevant critical discourse, the synthesis of ideas and the acquisition of practical skills. Curricula are designed to introduce students to an inclusive range of practices and to explore the interconnections between practices, cultures, locations and identities.

Progression

2.8 A Dance, Drama and Performance student will progress from one level of study to the next, in line with the regulations, processes and exit qualifications for each institution. However, it is expected that each level will be accompanied by the attainment of knowledge, expertise and experience that builds towards the final achievement of meeting the threshold-level subject-specific and generic skills listed in this Statement. This will usually include successful completion and the award of credit for the full range of learning and assessment.

2.9 Upon graduation from an undergraduate degree, it is expected that a student who had achieved a second-class degree or higher will be capable of, and equipped for, undertaking postgraduate study in Dance, Drama and Performance or a related discipline. Entry requirements to postgraduate courses are, however, determined by individual providers which may require specified levels of achievement at undergraduate level.

2.10 Undergraduates studying Dance, Drama and Performance as part of a combined or joint degree with other subjects will achieve core elements of the specific and generic skills outlined in this Statement and will add others according to the topics covered in the other subject(s) of their degree. Additionally, they may explore the overlap between different disciplines, creating further opportunities for interdisciplinary study.

2.11 Integrated master's degrees (FHEQ Level 7; FQHEIS Level 11) are available in Dance, Drama and Performance in the UK and comprise a four-year full-time course or a part-time course of not less than five and not more than eight academic years.

2.12 In a standard undergraduate honours degree course or an integrated master's course in Dance, Drama and Performance, students may exit earlier and be eligible for a Certificate of Higher Education, a Diploma of Higher Education, or other award depending upon the levels of study completed to a satisfactory standard. At providers in England, Wales and

Northern Ireland, the standard duration of a full-time undergraduate course is three years. Scottish bachelor's degrees with honours are typically designed to include four years of study, which relates to the structure of Scottish primary and secondary education. Students following part-time routes accumulate academic credit in proportion to the intensity of their study, and their total study time and credit value will be the equivalent of the three or four-year degree.

Flexibility

2.13 Higher education providers structure the courses they offer to support students' learning and attainment. Depending on the educational mission of the provider, this may include opportunities to engage in learning on campus, online, and/or through hybrid and distance learning, arranged in terms, by semester, year-long block or other formats. These may be offered in full and/or part-time modes of study, and credit may be accumulated through the completion of micro-credentials or shorter, more intense, periods of accredited learning.

Partnerships

2.14 Partnerships within Dance, Drama and Performance facilitate the long-term progression of students beyond their degree into the wider world of work, enhancing student experience and employability, and augmenting students' ability to locate themselves and their subject outside academia and in the wider world.

2.15 Partnerships support curriculum content and delivery and enable professional practices to be reflected within teaching, learning and assessment modes. Partnerships include internships, work or industry placements, civic engagement and research placements, community outreach projects as well as contributions by industry professionals and experts in related fields. Activities may range from short-term activities to long-term relationships and are designed to be student-centred and to support understanding of the subject beyond the academic experience.

2.16 Relationships may range from formal partnerships, in which the curriculum is delivered jointly by providers and their industry partners, to more informal partnerships that support the student experience through placements, shadowing and performance opportunities.

2.17 Institutions ensure that equal opportunity is given to all students in terms of their ability to engage in partnership activities. Placement learning aligns with QAA guidance on [work-based learning](#) and is regularly evaluated to ensure suitability and effectiveness in enabling students to meet associated learning outcomes.

2.18 Partnerships with external partners are valuable ways of supporting students' professional development and increasing their employability. They enhance students' capacity to see a relationship between their degree and the practice of dance, drama, theatre and performance in community, education or industry contexts.

2.19 Partners become part of the Dance, Drama and Performance learning community and demonstrate the same principles of equity, equality, diversity and inclusion in their interactions. Partners offer important opportunities to enhance the learning community's engagement with equality agendas.

2.20 Partners enable students to develop and enhance their transferable skills in a subject-specific context. These include working collaboratively and independently, finding creative solutions and problem-solving, thinking critically and self-reflectively, building professional relationships, and operating entrepreneurially.

2.21 Partners may be asked to comment on curriculum design, industry practices and expectations, and new approaches to skills development.

Monitoring and review

2.22 Degree-awarding bodies, and their collaborative partners, routinely collect and analyse information and undertake periodic course review according to their own needs. The student voice is integral to these processes, which draw on a range of external reference points, including this Subject Benchmark Statement, to ensure that provision aligns with sector norms. Monitoring and evaluation are part of the assessment of all courses, which is conducted internally or by external independent evaluators. Evaluation uses data from both current and historic monitoring processes to develop deeper understanding of student achievement or inform future course planning.

2.23 Externality is an essential component of the quality assurance system in the UK. Providers will use external reviewers as part of periodic review to gain an external perspective on any proposed changes and ensure threshold standards are achieved and content is appropriate for the subject.

2.24 The external examiner system currently in use across the UK higher education sector also helps to ensure consistency in the way academic standards are maintained by degree-awarding bodies. Typically, external examiners will be asked to comment on the types, principles and purposes of assessments being offered to students. They will consider the types of modules on offer, the outcomes of particular cohorts and how these compare to similar provision offered by other UK providers. External examiners are required to produce a report each year and make recommendations for changes to modules and assessments (where appropriate). Subject Benchmark Statements, such as this one, can play an important role in supporting external examiners in advising on whether threshold standards are being met in a specific subject area.

2.25 Courses with professional and vocational outcomes may also require evaluation and accreditation from professional and regulatory bodies. These are usually done through a combination of site visits and desk-based reviews.

2.26 Subject teams engage in regular curriculum review procedures to ensure course content, learning, teaching and assessment modes remain fit for purpose.

3 Content, structure and delivery

Content

3.1 The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of Dance, Drama and Performance as a field of study makes it inappropriate to identify prescriptive generic models for the content of courses. The disciplines are subject to continual change according to the emergence of new technologies and practices, local conditions and partnership agreements, cultural shifts and preoccupations. Higher education providers will differ in their emphases and approaches, particularly in the proportion and types of practices undertaken and studied, and in the extent to which course content makes use of the traditions of performer training, performance histories, research, practice and scholarship. Typically, courses will incorporate several areas listed in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3, focusing on some as distinguishing features.

3.2 In this and the following section, an overview is provided of the content that may be found in degrees in Dance, Drama and Performance, and of the types of skill developed through that content. In these sections the term 'Performance' is used inclusively, to cover activity in all the areas of Dance, Drama and Performance. Higher education providers design their courses so that Performance students acquire knowledge and understanding in some of the following areas:

- practitioners, practices and their socio-cultural contexts
- histories, forms and traditions of Performance
- critical, theoretical and ethical contexts of Performance
- processes by which Performance is created
- craft and technique
- critical awareness of research methods used to investigate Performance
- applications of Performance in educational, community and social contexts
- the interdisciplinarity of Performance, and the application of knowledge, concepts and skills from other disciplines.

3.3 Courses in Performance should typically be designed to enable students to acquire a range of critical, creative, performance and production skills and to focus in depth on some of them. Students will:

- engage in performance and production, based on the acquisition and understanding of appropriate performance and production vocabularies, skills, structures, working methods and research paradigms
- develop techniques informed by or derived from particular cultural forms/histories/ contexts and/or practitioners
- take responsibility for project management and creative decision-making, whether working independently or within groups
- describe, theorise, interpret and evaluate Performance texts and events from a range of perspectives, using appropriate subject-specific vocabularies
- access and analyse historical materials
- analyse the role of Performance in social, cultural and political discourse, in the past and present

- plan, facilitate, deliver and evaluate projects that apply participatory Performance expertise in social, educational and community settings
- address the ethical implications of Performance
- research and evaluate information, arrive at independent judgements, and articulate reasoned arguments
- operate collaboratively in intellectual, creative and professional contexts to generate and pursue shared goals
- consider, acknowledge and respect diverse opinions, experiences and performance traditions
- produce written work within appropriate scholarly and professional registers and conventions
- present information in a range of forms appropriate to content, audience and context.

3.4 Performance may be studied as part of single, joint or combined honours courses, major-minor degrees or as separate components within general degrees. Modules or elective routes may be open to students whose principal area of study lies elsewhere. Whatever the focus of the course, the same learning outcomes are expected of those students undertaking Performance modules or pathways.

3.5 All students engaging in the study of Performance will develop subject-specific knowledge and/or skills and a commensurate degree of experience. The study of Performance within any programme of study will facilitate progression in terms of subject-specific expertise, personal and social development and intellectual maturity through engagement with appropriate ways of thinking and doing. Courses will often culminate in a final year capstone project. Some highly specialised modules may not be available to students for whom Performance is not their principal area of study; therefore, for such students the same level of progression in terms of in-depth knowledge and/or technical skill may not be expected.

3.6 Teaching, learning and assessment will be underpinned by a commitment to diversity, inclusion and accessibility. Curriculum design, delivery and assessment activities will have the built-in flexibility to allow for reasonable adjustments to be made in recognition of individual learning needs.

Teaching and learning

3.7 Within Performance, learning and teaching utilise a variety of approaches that facilitate students' artistic, creative and scholarly development. Characteristically, these cohere around the integration of practice and theory. The relative contribution of each approach is likely to vary from course to course.

3.8 In Performance, experiential and embodied learning underpin pedagogic frameworks and principles of study.

3.9 Learning and teaching activities will be informed by practices that are typical of, and relevant to, the diverse disciplines that constitute Performance.

3.10 Students will usually experience learning in, or related to, practical and professional Performance contexts. Students will undertake a variety of roles appropriate to their subject area and participate in a range of processes, including initial research, interpretative and creative practice, experimentation, rehearsal, production and performance.

3.11 Students will typically experience both tutor-led and self-directed methods of learning. As they progress through different levels, their learning trajectory moves towards increased levels of independence and autonomy, encouraging positive attitudes towards lifelong learning. Group work is a typical feature of courses in Performance.

3.12 Learning and teaching will normally take place in a variety of continually evolving contexts, both in person and online, including an appropriate balance of workshops, rehearsals, productions, practical classes, laboratory/studio-based practice, screenings, lectures, seminars and tutorials. These interactions will often be characterised by some or all of the following:

- group and individual learning
- work-based learning of varying types (professional placements or independent industry study)
- tutor-led, student-led and self-directed study
- use of subject-specific and generic technologies
- resource-based learning (studio, workshop, laboratory, library, archive, internet)
- technique and skills-based learning through intensive studio-based activity and individual or group practice
- experience of relevant events (performances, installations, masterclasses, auditions, screenings, exhibitions)
- working with external practitioners
- critique, review and reflective practice.

Assessment

3.13 Assessment within Performance enables students to demonstrate their level of attainment and the full range of abilities and skills. A diverse range of inclusive assessment modes that reflect the discipline(s) is used, and curriculum design ensures that students are appropriately prepared for and actively engaged in the choice and, at times, the negotiation of the specifics of assessment such as the particular form of creative practice (writing, directing, performing, and so on). Modes of assessment and related feedback strategies are designed to be part of the learning journey, and to ensure that the learning outcomes identified by course components can be met. Inclusive and diverse forms of assessment, including negotiated, adapted assessment for learners with specific additional needs, provide equality of opportunity for all learners to succeed. Assessment is recognised as an integral part of the learning experience.

3.14 Formative and summative assessment are designed in a variety of formats, which assess understanding, knowledge, skill, technique, creativity, artistry and application. These include, but are not limited to:

- practical activities (group and/or individual)
- performance
- production and/or technical outputs (for example, model boxes, prompt copies, lighting and stage designs)
- workshops (applied, educational, creative)
- experiential/work-based learning
- industry and professional live briefs
- digital outputs (for example, podcasts, web pages, social media platforms)
- performance texts/scores/plays
- scriptwriting
- storyboards
- verbal and non-verbal presentations

- lecture presentations essays
- critical/reflective evaluations
- journals/portfolios
- project reports
- research projects (practical and/or written)
- dissertations
- written examination (timed, take-away).

3.15 Opportunities should be provided for self and peer assessment to support learning. Information regarding feedback rationale, grade guidelines, mechanisms and timeframes is provided alongside assessment information. Students are provided with course information (online and/or in print) that comprises:

- structure and content
- aims
- learning outcomes
- assessment/reassessment procedures and criteria
- expected study approaches
- time allocated for guided and independent learning hours
- credit weightings.

3.16 Details regarding the provision of feedback, tutorial support (academic and pastoral), online resources and access, and bibliographies and screenings should also be included. This course information is designed to be read by students in relation to the individual institution's degree award regulations.

3.17 Course and/or module handbooks advise students on academic issues such as assessment/reassessment criteria, unacceptable academic practice and on ways to access study skills, learning support and well-being. Other related information is added as appropriate, for example, attendance requirements for undertaking assessment, learning contracts, health and safety issues and ethical issues.

4 Benchmark standards

Introduction

4.1 The word 'Performance' is used inclusively throughout this section and may be understood to cover activity (practical and/or theoretical) in all areas of Dance, Drama and Performance and associated courses.

4.2 This Subject Benchmark Statement sets out the minimum threshold, typical and excellent standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Performance. Demonstrating these standards over time will show that a student has achieved the range of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of graduates in Performance.

4.3 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.

4.4 Benchmark standards are expressed in terms of learning outcomes. The following standards are set alongside levels of attainment that are expected of students on Performance and associated courses, subject to individual course specifications.

4.5 The typical goal of Performance courses is to produce students with demonstrable skills as creative and critical artists and thinkers, who are capable of independently evaluating and engaging, practically and conceptually, with performance and, as appropriate, demonstrating particular performance, technical and artistic skills.

4.6 It is important that students are made aware of expected standards and inspired and supported to achieve beyond the threshold. Students will meet the threshold level if they have demonstrated, as appropriate to their course of study, knowledge, understanding, creativity and skill sufficient to provide a presentation of performance and/or information or arguments with respect to discipline-specific skills or materials. Students demonstrating excellent standards of work will tend to transcend the learning outcomes and display originality, insight and a selection or combination of qualities associated with artistic insight and/or technical excellence. They are also likely to demonstrate the highest standards of research appropriate to the field of study.

4.7 The list of standards below provides indicative learning outcomes. It is expected that it will be read in conjunction with individual course information, which will be determined by each higher education provider. The standards expressed are for single-honours courses. The stated learning outcomes are indicative and not intended as a checklist for Performance curricula. It is not expected that individual courses will lead to the attainment of all the stated learning outcomes. However, all courses should embed and promote concepts and practices of accessibility, equality, diversity and inclusion, enterprise and sustainable development.

Threshold level

4.8 On graduating with an honours degree in Performance, students should be able to demonstrate:

- knowledge of forms, practices, techniques, traditions, local and global histories and applications of Performance

- knowledge of the key components of Performance and the processes by which it is created, realised, managed, distributed, consumed and documented
- knowledge of critical and theoretical perspectives appropriate to the study of the discipline
- knowledge of practitioners and practices, and/or theorists, and their cultural and/or historical contexts
- knowledge of the role and function of Performance in social, educational, participatory and industry contexts and settings
- understanding of the interplay between critical and creative modes of enquiry within the field of study
- understanding of how to engage with and interpret texts, media, notations and/or scores to create Performance
- understanding of group and collective processes, and associated impacts and dynamics
- understanding of key components of Performance within the disciplines, such as the role and function of source materials, performers, space, music, soundscapes, text, movement and environment
- understanding of appropriate interdisciplinary elements of Performance, and how to apply these
- understanding of knowledges, practices, concepts and skills from other disciplines
- understanding of the responsibilities of performance practitioners to facilitate safe, ethical and environmentally sustainable working practices.

Subject-specific skills

4.9 On graduating with an honours degree in Performance, students should be able to:

- engage in the creation and/or production of Performance through utilisation of appropriate performance vocabularies, techniques, crafts, technologies, structures, contexts, working methods and research paradigms
- understand the possibilities for Performance implied by a text, stimulus, media, dance notation or score and, as appropriate, realise these sources through design, technology and performance
- make records of Performance using skills and technologies in notation and/or documentation
- describe, interpret, and evaluate Performance events
- engage in independent research, whether investigating past or present Performances or as part of the process of creating and/or responding to Performance
- identify the cultural and contextual frameworks of Performance
- investigate performance environments to determine the significance of spatial relationships.

Generic and graduate skills

4.10 On graduating with an honours degree in Performance, students should be able to:

- demonstrate skills in self-management, including the ability to set goals, manage workloads and meet deadlines
- display adaptability, flexibility and critical awareness of self and others
- assess and manage risk and employ ethical working practices
- deploy skills in critical engagement, demonstrating the ability to operate and respond reflexively, creatively and critically, to develop ideas and to construct and present arguments in appropriate ways
- work in a group or team and to have the skills needed for the realisation of collaborative project-based work
- demonstrate the ability to manage creative, personal and interpersonal relationship issues in the context of creative work
- demonstrate skills in communication and presentation and be able to articulate and communicate ideas and information in a variety of forms, as appropriate to content and context
- deploy information management skills, be able to retrieve information, and to gather, sift, evaluate and organise it
- demonstrate the ability to select, employ and adapt digital media and information technologies
- use project management skills to investigate, organise and realise activities
- apply appropriate numeracy skills to solve problems and realise creative outcomes.

Typical level

Subject knowledge, understanding and skills

4.11 On graduating with an honours degree in Performance, students should be able to demonstrate:

- creative and critical engagement with forms, practices, techniques, traditions, histories and applications of Performance, and the capacity to problematise them
- creative and critical engagement with the key components of Performance and the processes by which it is created, realised, managed, distributed and documented
- engagement with critical and theoretical perspectives appropriate to the study of Performance
- critical understanding of key practitioners and practices and/or theorists and their cultural and/or historical contexts
- creative and critical engagement with the role and function of Performance in social, educational, participatory and industry contexts
- strong understanding of the interplay between critical and creative modes of enquiry within the field of study
- critical understanding of how to engage with and interpret texts, media, notations and/or scores to create Performance

- creative and critical understanding of group and collective processes
- creative and critical understanding of key components of Performance within the disciplines such as the role and function of source materials, performers, bodies, space, sound, text, movement and environment
- creative and critical understanding of appropriate interdisciplinary elements of Performance and how to apply knowledge, practices, concepts and skills from other disciplines
- critical understanding of the responsibilities of performance practitioners to facilitate safe, environmentally sustainable and ethical working practices.

Subject-specific skills

4.12 On graduating with an honours degree in Performance, students should be able to:

- engage creatively and critically with the skills and processes of performance and production, and demonstrate the ability to select, refine and present these in Performance
- engage creatively and critically with the possibilities for Performance implied by a text, stimulus, notation or score, and, as appropriate, realise these sources sensitively through design and performance
- engage creatively and critically with the creation and/or production of Performance through a developed understanding of appropriate performance vocabularies, techniques, crafts, structures and working methods
- engage creatively and critically in appropriate independent research, whether investigating past or present performances or as part of the process of creating new performance
- identify and interpret the cultural frameworks that surround performance events and their specific relation to social and historical contexts.

Generic and graduate skills

4.13 On graduating with an honours degree in Performance, students should be able to:

- have critical and analytical skills in developing ideas and constructing arguments and the capacity to evaluate and present them in a range of ways
- demonstrate a developed capacity to examine and evaluate forms of discourse and their effects on representation and reception in the arts and culture more broadly
- work productively, creatively and imaginatively as part of a group and have the creative skills needed for the realisation of practice-based work
- manage personal workloads efficiently and effectively, meet deadlines, and negotiate and successfully pursue goals with others
- constructively and effectively manage creative, personal and interpersonal issues in the context of creative work
- use the information retrieval skills needed to gather, sift and organise material independently and to critically evaluate its significance
- demonstrate appropriate technological and digital skills, and have developed considerable awareness of their application and potential within the field of study

- identify and apply a range of appropriate numeracy skills to solve problems and realise creative outcomes.

Excellent level

Subject knowledge, understanding and skills

4.14 It is expected that on completion of a bachelor's degree with honours in Performance, graduates should be able to demonstrate:

- sophisticated engagement with, and ability to interrogate, the forms, practices, techniques, traditions, histories and applications of Performance
- sophisticated creative and theoretical engagement with the key components of Performance and the processes by which it is created, realised, managed, distributed, interpreted and documented, leading to novel insights
- sophisticated engagement with critical and theoretical perspectives appropriate to the study of Performance
- comprehensive and critical understanding of key practitioners and practices and/or theorists, and their cultural and/or historical contexts
- sophisticated engagement with the role and function of Performance in social, educational, participatory and industry contexts
- sophisticated understanding of the interplay between critical and creative modes of enquiry within the field of study
- sophisticated understanding of how to engage with and interpret texts, media, dance notations and/or scores to create performance
- sophisticated critical understanding and application of group processes
- sophisticated critical understanding of key components of Performance within the disciplines such as the role and function of source materials, performers, body, space, sound, text, movement and environment
- sophisticated critical understanding of appropriate interdisciplinary elements of Performance and how to apply knowledge, practices, concepts and skills from other disciplines
- comprehensive understanding of the responsibilities of performance practitioners to facilitate safe, environmentally sustainable and ethical working practices.

Subject-specific skills

4.15 On graduating with an honours degree in Performance, students should be able to:

- engage critically and comprehensively with the processes of Performance and production, and demonstrate the ability to select, refine and present these in Performance
- engage creatively and thoroughly with the possibilities for Performance implied by a text, dance notation or score and, as appropriate, realise these sources sensitively through design and performance, leading to novel or original work
- engage creatively and comprehensively with the creation and/or production of Performance, through a developed and thorough understanding of appropriate performance vocabularies, techniques, crafts, structures and working methods

- engage critically and comprehensively in appropriate independent research, whether investigating past or present performances or as part of the process of creating new or novel performance and/or insights
- identify and interpret through critical modes of investigation the cultural frameworks that surround performance events and their specific social and historical contexts.

Generic and graduate skills

4.16 On graduating with an honours degree in Performance, students should be able to:

- demonstrate sophisticated levels of creative and analytical skill in developing and constructing arguments, and the capacity to evaluate and present them in a range of ways
- demonstrate a developed critical capacity to examine and evaluate forms of discourse and their effects on representation in the arts, and culture more broadly
- work productively, creatively and imaginatively in a group
- manage personal workloads efficiently and effectively, meet deadlines, and negotiate and pursue shared goals with others
- constructively and effectively manage creative, artistic, personal and interpersonal issues
- use discerning information retrieval skills needed to gather, sift, synthesise and organise material independently, and to critically evaluate its significance
- demonstrate appropriate technological and digital skills, and be fully aware of their potential applications
- identify and deploy a range of numeracy skills to solve problems and realise creative outputs.

Master's level degrees in Dance, Drama and Performance

4.17 In addition to the benchmark standards above, study for a master's degree in Performance requires additional critical and conceptual understanding, and students should be able to:

- demonstrate a systematic and comprehensive understanding and critical awareness of current and emerging trends in Dance, Drama and Performance practice and research
- evaluate current research and advanced scholarship to apply knowledge in original ways in the field of Performance
- evaluate appropriate methodologies and demonstrate self-direction and originality in dealing with complex problems in Performance practice and/or research
- create new insight in their field of study, and communicate conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- complete of a major piece of practice, or substantial research project, informed by thorough understandings of the discipline.

5 List of references and further resources

Equality Act 2010

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

Disabled Students Commission

www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion/disability-equality-higher-education/disabled-students-commission

QAA The UK Quality Code for Higher Education

www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code

QAA (2024) www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/qualifications-frameworks

QAA and Advance HE (2021) Education for Sustainable Development Guidance

www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/education-for-sustainable-development

QAA (2018) Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education: Guidance for UK Higher Education Providers

www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/enterprise-and-entrepreneurship-education

QAA (2022) Glossary

www.qaa.ac.uk/glossary

QAA, Quality Enhancement Framework (Scotland)

www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/quality-enhancement-framework

QAA (2021) Quality Enhancement Review (Wales)

www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review

QAA (2018) Quality Code Advice and Guidance

www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/advice-and-guidance

UNESCO (2020) Education for Sustainability: A Roadmap,

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802>

United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

6 Membership of the Advisory Group

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Dance, Drama and Performance 2024

Professor Paul Johnson (Chair)	University of Chester
Professor Trish Reid (Deputy Chair)	University of Reading
Miss Charlotte Baker	Winchester Student Union
Dr Sam Beale	Middlesex University
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The fourth edition, published in 2019, was revised by the QAA to align the content with the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education, published in 2018. Proposed revisions were checked and verified by the Chair of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Dance, Drama and Performance from 2015.

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Liz Dale	Council for Dance Education and Training
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Greg Giesekam	University of Glasgow
Dr Angela Kane	University of Surrey
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Professor Robin Nelson	Manchester Metropolitan University
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