

Unit A2 1: Written Report - Section 1 - Skills and Training

My chosen discipline is dance and I intend to pursue dance as a career and hopefully become a professional in this area of performing arts. This document outlines 3 future training paths available to me and I have customised the research to suit my particular skills and requirements.

I have performed a number of dance repertoire from Unit 1 and Unit 2 and as a result have developed my contemporary dance skills from the stated baseline. In unit 1 I looked particularly at the work of Liz Roche from the dance company "Maiden Voyage" and performed two contrasting extracts of rep from her choreography. This helped me to gain expertise in the skills of contemporary dance including: - development of form, quality and dynamics.

In unit 2 I performed extracts from Alvin Ailey's Revelations and from Michael Jackson's Smooth Criminal. This unit helped me to develop my skills in these chosen genre and included exploration of ballet informed contemporary movement and the very unique style of MJ.

To further enhance my competence I have become a member of the school's dance society as well as a youth dance leader for the Rainbow Factory at Youth Action in Belfast. I have learned through contacts at Youth Action of several training routes I could pursue.

The first training route I have outlined is available through the Laban Guild. The Laban Guild is a National Governing Body in the UK and as such has the authority to award certificates and diplomas in dance. The Community Dance Leaders Stage 1 course traces its roots to Central European modern dance inherited from the practitioner Rudolf Laban. This is a long established course, recognised by the Arts Council of N Ireland with a supportive network of practitioners throughout Ireland. All participants have to be over the age of 18 and the course takes place over a one year period involving 12 weekends of study with a total of 150 hours of tuition. Each weekend explores one of a number of Laban dynamics and each of the sessions is led by a tutor from the Laban Guild.

The course is mainly practical and covers the basics of movement analysis, teaching styles and strategies of dance making for groups; all skills that I can take into my own professional practice. The website states that the "work is holistic, empowering and relates to many other areas of life and work, as well as improving your own performance and leadership skills". It also states that it is not for beginners and that "all applicants must demonstrate some experience of dance or movement and experience of teaching or community work". I will be able to present my performance DVD's from Unit 1-3 as evidence of my dance work plus some of my performances for the Rainbow Factory. I would also present a reference from the senior dance tutor at Rainbow to say that I am a voluntary youth leader for their outreach community projects. The course costs £1.250 but this can be paid in stages and I would be eligible to apply for lottery funding. At the end of the course I would be a qualified Community Dance leader and as a result would have full insurance cover through the Laban Guild and would therefore be able to teach in any venue. The course is delivered at the Crescent Arts centre in Belfast which is very accessible to me.

Another training route which I could pursue would be a degree course at University level. I am also interested in choreography and my previous dance tutor had spoken about his course which I found very interesting. He went to Falmouth University and on their website they state that "Dance & Choreography at Falmouth gives you the creative edge you need to excel in today's interdisciplinary world of choreography" The course includes a high level of both physical technique training and expert choreography instruction and there are sessions organised which involve visiting speakers, companies and lecturers who share their experiences and "provide regular sources of inspiration". The course is also designed to help students pursue a career in dance, choreography, the arts, education and cultural sectors.

Dance & Choreography is part of the integrated Dance programme at Falmouth that also includes BA (Hons) Dance & Performance and BA (Hons) Dance & Communities. "All courses follow the same first year, providing a thorough grounding in technique and skills, and a framework of contextual, practical and written projects in the final year. This allows students to specialise in the second and third years while maintaining a sense of focus and identification with the Dance programme as a whole".

The website also states that "students receive daily technique and bodywork classes, artist-led projects, visiting artist workshops and residencies, as well as exchange opportunities in the EU and USA"

I have also discovered that assessment for this course is both written and practical with the inclusion of research elements and video projects. I feel I have already gained experience of these assessment forms during my study of AS/A2 Performing Arts and that this form of assessment would present no obstacle.

From this course students go on to join dance companies, become choreographers or some have even set up their own company.

Candidates applying for the course must have 3 A levels at grade B and above. One of the A levels must be performance related and must contain a major dance element. I am doing 3 A levels and hope to gain high grades in all of these.

The final training route I have chosen to investigate is through work with an actual dance company. I have investigated "Maiden Voyage" who are a contemporary company based in N. Ireland. Maiden Voyage is an artist-led commissioning company working with local, national and international collaboration. They have a reputation for "producing distinctive dance performances and programmes that stimulate and enrich audiences and participants".

Maiden Voyage was set up by Artistic Director, Nicola Curry in 2002 and joined in 2012 by Eibhlin de Barra as Company Manager. The company offer opportunities for those new to dance through participation and partnerships. I have seen some of their work at our school and we have worked with a number of their dancers on a project called Luminous Soul in 2012. I was inspired by the dancers and felt that this type of work was something I could do.

Maiden Voyage now provide a mentoring programme which they state is "designed to develop the next generation of dance professionals. Opportunities are dovetailed with the current production and performance programme and participants gain insight into choreographic and performance process alongside dance facilitation and project delivery" They also provide a small number of school or university placements annually. Work placement can be offered when the company are in production so students can gain experience of life as a "professional dancer joining in company class, observing development of dance work in studio and in the delivery of workshop programmes"

In order to pursue this training route students are asked to contact the company directly. Contact details are taken and an audition /interview is set up to see if the students meet the criteria of the company. To pursue this third training route in "mentoring" there is a requirement for individuals to have gained a third level qualification in dance. This would be a route to follow after graduation, however there are undergraduate work experience opportunities with the company about which I will ask my careers department.

In summary I have presented three very different training routes and have found it interesting to discover that there a number of equally valid ways to pursue a dance career. My preferred option is to attend University and that means I must achieve high grades in my forthcoming A levels.

Section 2: How to gain employment - Dancer

A summary of the role of outside agencies, indicating the part played by agents, unions and recruitment agencies in securing employment

From doing this course in Performing Arts and from my work experience and research, I am aware that working in the performing arts industry as a dancer is very competitive. Most dancers begin auditioning at age 17 or 18 as they will probably stop performing in their mid to late thirties. Very few people get “discovered” so it is the sort of profession where you get out of it as much as you put in. To get started and to begin to gain experience, you may have to work for free and you might also have to work in an area that is not your first choice.

It is not essential for a professional dancer to use outside agencies in pursuit of employment but it certainly helps. An **agent** has a wide network of industry contacts; it's the agent's job to know what's going on, put your name up for auditions and, basically, find you work. An agent sends out CVs and photos to dance companies, casting directors and talent scouts, for example, and cajoles and persuades them into giving you an audition. Very often, they negotiate pay and conditions. A good agent with well-placed connections can make all the difference in getting a dancer in front of the right audience and increasing their profile. An agent will: liaise with the dancer to agree on performance dates, the financial and logistical requirements of the gig and its goals; contact promoters and venues to pitch dancers and agree on performance dates; and, arrange contracts with promoters regarding pay and conditions. A good agent has the ear of all the good promoters and will have more bargaining power than the dancer himself with regard payment. In fact, in many cases, promoters will contact agents they know and trust to find the dancers for whom they are looking. An agent takes a percentage of the performance payment, the least being 10% but for bigger gigs, it could be as much as 20%.

Recruitment Agencies are a good source of job vacancies. Some employers/promoters carry out their main recruitment through agencies so signing up can give a dancer access to jobs that are not advertised elsewhere. Most agencies display current vacancies on their websites, which can be a very good starting point when deciding whether to register or not. A dancer could find out which promoters/event organisers they usually deal with and how many vacancies they have. A recruitment agency will speak to you to find out exactly what sort of employment you are looking for, build a profile of your skills and knowledge and help you write your cv. You can sign up with more than one recruitment agency. Most reputable recruitment agencies will notify you before they send out your cv to a promoter and it is a good idea to ask them to do this when you sign up.

Many professional artists, including dancers, in the UK, are member of Equity, which is the only UK **Trade Union** to represent artists from across the entire spectrum of arts and entertainment. One of Equity's strengths is that it is not politically affiliated so it is able to lobby governments of all political hues, in support of its members and the industry's issues. Equity also operates at an international level through the Federation of International Artists, which Equity helped to establish, the International Committee for Artistic Freedom and through agreements with sister unions overseas. Obviously, this national and international operation gives Equity great power in support of its members.

Equity works for its members by negotiating minimum terms and conditions of employment across the world of entertainment, taking account of social, economic and technological changes. It constantly aims to improve the working lives of its members by, for example: negotiating with

employers, organising industrial action, if necessary and appropriate, lobbying government departments and ministers, taking up legal claims and providing a range of services to their members.

The advantages and benefits of joining a professional union, by far, seem to outweigh any disadvantages. Those at an early point in their careers may be tempted to see membership of a union as unnecessary expense but it provides important and significant safeguards to a professional dancer.

My research indicates that employment for professional dancers can be inconsistent and not all-year round. Contracts can be difficult to acquire and will, almost always, involve long and unsocial hours rehearsing and dancing and perhaps months spent touring. So, as the working life of a dancer is quite short, many dancers try to build qualifications to allow them to diversify into becoming choreographers, dance instructors or administrators. Dancers may qualify for funding for approved professional courses and information is available from the Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET) and GOV.UK: grants and bursaries for adult learners. The Creative Choices website also has examples of how a dance company can offer opportunities for dancers starting their careers. The Dancers' Career Development (DCD) website gives advice on funding for professional dancers whose performing careers are coming to an end. Dancers may also be able to apply for funding for professional development through national Arts Councils: Arts Council, England; Arts Council, Northern Ireland, Arts Council, Wales and Creative Scotland. And, finally, dancers may be able to access funding from The Big Lottery but it is important to read the eligibility criteria before you begin filling in the application form.

Section 3: Employment Plan - Dancer

Once I have completed initial dance training there are three areas I could gain employment in; professional dance, dance development and dance teaching.

This plan will summarise three possible areas of employment as a dancer.

Each area of employment will include:-

- Job description
- Qualifications
- Experience required
- Contractual Obligations
- Fee/salary
- How to apply

Area 1: Professional contemporary dancer

The first job role I will explore is a professional contemporary dancer.

It is very difficult to get a full time job as a professional dancer in the UK. A recent feature on Article 19 highlighted that there are only approximately 195 full time dancers with companies that receive government funding and even these jobs aren't very secure. I would be more likely to get employment as a freelance dancer on a specific project, for example with Smallpetitklien who are looking for dancers for a project in Scotland.

Job title: Contemporary Dancer

Details of job: Perform in a project called 'Wheechin'About'

Qualifications/Experience required: I need to have at least two years professional experience before I can apply for the job. I have to have a high standard of contemporary technique, and also improvisational and voice skills. The company are also looking for dancers who may have experience in Scottish Country dancing. Although this does not apply directly to me I have some experience in Irish dancing. There is also a local Scottish Country dancing group, which I could approach to gain some experience before going to the audition.

Fees/salary The salary is £430 per week, which is above Equity rates for dancers. **Contractual obligations:** The contract is for just 3 weeks work, so then I would have to look for further work. Networking is very important within the dance world, so even if it is a short contract I may be asked by the company for further work and also it would build my CV and repertoire which can only add to my employability.

How to apply: To apply for the job I need to email a CV that is no longer than 2 pages, a headshot, a file or link to a short video of me dancing. If I am successful I will then have to go for a dance audition. Every dance audition is different as it depends on what the choreographer wants.

Area 2: Community Dance

The second job I will explore is a Dance Development Officer

Job title: - Dance Development Artist with a Community Dance Company

Job description: The Dance Development Artist is responsible for delivering a dance development programme which will involve the planning and teaching of a variety of dance classes and projects within a range of community and educational settings. This includes marketing and managing regular performance events, raising the profile of the company, developing new links within the community and delivering projects. As well as developing dance activities, I will have to carry out planning and administrative tasks to ensure I am fully prepared to deliver the work under the direction of the Artistic Director of the company.

Qualifications: I need to have a qualification in specialist dance training and/or 3+ years' experience of dance teaching/development in community/educational settings, which should include work with Special educational needs groups.

Skills and experience required: The essential criteria for this job are based on my skills in planning and teaching classes, courses and projects to the highest standard from idea to delivery.

I need to be able to use different strategies to engage different groups of people and liaise effectively with parents, funders, arts organisations and participants of all ages and abilities. I will have to lead groups in a range of dance styles from contemporary, jazz, musical theatre, jive as well as creative dance classes, therefore I need to be fit and up to date with current dance practice.

I will need to be well organised and have good people skills as I will be working with a range of people over different settings. I need to be self motivated as I will work on my own for quite a lot of the job and will be managing my projects independently. I need to be passionate and enthusiastic to encourage everyone to take part in the dance activities I deliver. The hours are irregular so I would have to maintain my energy levels effectively. As I am working for a company I need to be aware of the company's style, identity and ethos to ensure my practice meets the company director's expectation.

As I will be working with young people and potentially vulnerable adults, I need to have training and awareness of safe guarding issues and be CRB checked. The Company is based in a rural location so I need to have a driving license.

Contractual Obligations: 40 hours p/week, including regular evenings and weekend

Salary between £19,000 - £26,000 dependant on experience

What do I need to do to get the job: I have to complete an application form, submit a CV and attend an audition/interview. The interview process includes teaching two classes to two different age groups on a given theme. I need to be well prepared for this and show my knowledge and understanding of current dance practice as well as my ability to engage with different age groups.

Area 3: Dance Education

The third job I will look at is a secondary school dance teacher.

If I want to pursue a career as a professional dancer I could do some fitness based training in either Yoga or Zumba which would utilise my dance skills and supplement my income. Alternatively I could do a PGCE and become a qualified dance teacher and work within a school teaching dance within PE or within Creative and Performing Arts. On the Times Educational Supplement website I found 9 jobs advertised for a dance teacher. Some of these jobs require me to be able to deliver skills in music and drama as well as dance. However, I am more interested in a purely dance post so the position I have chosen to look at is The Holy Cross School in Kingston.

Job Title: Teacher of Dance

Details of job: The job is to teach dance to Keys Stage 3 and 4 and contribute to extracurricular activities.

Job description: I have the same duties and responsibilities as a classroom teacher which are set out in the application form as follows:

- carry out the duties of a school teacher, as set out in the current Schoolteachers' Pay and Conditions Document
- promote the vision, values and expectations of the school
- secure high quality student outcomes within the Dance Department
- maintain good standards of planning, preparation and assessment
- ensure that personal standards of teaching are consistently high
- play a full and active role within the subject area
- comply with all whole school policies and procedures

Curriculum provision and development:

To

- contribute to curriculum development within the department
- produce schemes of work, as appropriate
- keep up to date with developments in the subject (including research/inspection findings); classroom management and pedagogy to encourage good practice
- liaise with the Subject Leader regarding links with relevant examination and validating bodies

Personnel:

To

- participate fully in Performance Management and to act as appraiser if necessary for identified staff within the subject area in line with school policy
- ensure the effective and efficient deployment of classroom support
- participate in the school's ITT programme

Raising standards:

To

- make full use of assessment data to produce personal student targets and ensure these are reviewed on a regular basis
- contribute to the subject area's programme of enrichment activities (e.g. booster classes; visits; special events)
- contribute to the establishment of common standards of good practice and to the development of effective teaching and learning within the subject area
- comply with the whole school assessment and reporting procedure

Communications:

To

- represent the department within school as agreed with the Subject Leader
- ensure reports to parents are produced to a high standard and meet the agreed timescales
- ensure effective communication as appropriate with parents/carers and relevant external bodies

Qualifications: A degree in dance or Performing Arts and Qualified teacher status is needed.

Experience required: It is suitable for newly qualified teachers so I could apply for this job straight out of university, but I would have to show experience in teaching KS3 and KS4 dance. I would need to be creative and show enthusiasm for my subject and maintain the high standards of the department.

Contractual Obligations: Full time permanent post.

Fee/salary: as for NQT

How to apply: I have to complete an application and if shortlisted attend an interview. At interview for a teaching post it is common practice now to teach a lesson.

From researching 3 specific job roles I have learnt that it is extremely rare to get a full time, long term contract as a professional dancer, so if I wanted to go down this route I would have to be prepared to supplement my income in other ways. I have also discovered that the jobs available in dance are mainly outside Northern Ireland, as are the dance auditions, so I need to be prepared to travel which can be expensive. If I was working freelance I also need to be flexible in terms of

travel and be happy to stay in different places for short periods of time. This would very much impact on my lifestyle in terms of family and friendships. If I chose a more stable career in teaching, I would have more financial security, but I would miss being able to perform.