

Madelaine Perkins

2405690

ADPA6004

Career action plan essay

Introduction

In this essay I will be discussing my career action plan for going into a dance focused side of performing and what I need to achieve during my final months of training as well as my transition into the professional industry. I have chosen to go into the dance focused performance side of the industry as I feel that's where my main strengths lie and there is more versatility for me as a performer to be able to do different styles and dance through different medias not just on stage. My action plan will cover where I am currently in my training and what I need to improve on before going into the professional world, it will also cover any barriers or risks I feel I will come across in my transition to the industry and how I can prepare myself to overcome these. Another topic I will be covering is my goals for the future which includes short term goals and my long-term goals in a multiple year plan, discussing these goals will help me visualise and set expectations for myself more accurately giving me a higher chance of completing them to be prepared for the industry.

Self-assessment and industry readiness

Throughout my training I have gained many new skillsets that will better help me in the industry, the ones I feel are more notable are my dance skills specifically around becoming a more versatile dancer and my general confidence as a performer. I know these are skills that have improved as throughout my assessments at university my marks and feedback for dance training have improved over the two modules, we have also done multiple cabarets throughout level 4 and 5 with some being assessments and some not but I can feel in myself that I have become more confident in my singing as I have learnt to not let my nerves overtake my voice which used to happen during the first cabaret performances. This improvement is also clear within my feedback for the singing 2 module where it said my work reflected commitment, progression and a growing ability to anchor my technique (WAVDA, 2026). As much as these skills have improved, I know there are still many areas I need to improve on such as bringing my acting skills into my dancing which is significant to the industry as becoming a cross-trained performer will mean I can be more adaptable to roles and using physicality to show emotions will add further depth into a performance (Theatretrain, 2024). With only having five months of university training left I feel I am in a good position with my preparation for the industry, throughout my training I have done audition technique classes which have helped me learn what professional auditions are like and the expectations for the auditionees. In a playbill article, it is said that with technology and self-tapes becoming more popular in the industry auditionees need to be tech knowledgeable and be able to whip together a self-tape in matter of hours sometimes (Hetrick, 2014) which I feel my knowledge has grown on over the last few months in training as we have been given various mock audition briefs and asked to prepare for them simply using what we have at home. Another industry standard for auditions is researching in depth what the casting panel is looking for and turning up looking the part, in the same article it states showing the essence of the character you're going for is expectation and you want the panel to see you fitting into the show straight away (Hetrick, 2014). This has also come into practice during the audition technique modules when being given audition briefs for specific shows and for example needing to dress in bright colours as we're going for a younger cast or needing to dress in appropriate dance wear for a more dance heavy show, therefore I feel I have had enough training in preparing for professional auditions however I know I don't have the experience in the true professional atmosphere. Alongside this type casting is a very prevalent thing in the industry, and most professionals know they have a certain look that fits

better with certain character types. Through the audition tech modules I learnt about type casting and have learnt that I fit the more edgier and straight forward characters, with this knowledge going into the industry it means I can apply for open call auditions where I fit the characters better and have a more likely chance of getting seen which can benefit me greatly as a recent graduate.

Industry research

The industry is constantly adapting with social media and online presence becoming more relevant, self-tapes have become one of the main ways to audition for agencies and jobs and having a strong online presence as a dancer can help you gain another income stream. In a thesis I have found about commercial dance in the modern industry it is said that digital media gives dancers the visibility and accessibility to dance and it helps the creative sector reach a wider audience (Clarke, 2023). I have researched into popular dance agencies in the UK and Europe to see what types of jobs professional dancers are getting in today's world, the main things I have found are music videos for artists, backing dancing for concert like the summertime ball and the brit awards and also tv adverts for brands like Schuh and Amazon (AMCKdance), this shows how versatile your career can be as a dancer and how income will come from various media streams. The other most popular dance agencies in the UK and Europe have similar castings for their dancers which shows backing for various artists and awards ceremonies are the more current opportunities for professionals. The expectations for professional dancers are simply about your etiquette in auditions, classes and the rehearsal room, showing up on time, having respect for your mentors and colleagues and giving it your all are the main principles to follow (Italia Conti, 2025). These expectations are set as you never know who you're going to work with again on future projects and keeping a positive and collaborative environment will help make the creative process smoother and enjoyable for everyone involved. As I discussed above type casting is a known thing in the industry and it has both its positives and negatives, I believe its more positive for recent graduates who can then tailor their auditions to characters they fit better, I have research into current casting calls and found one for a short film in Wales who are looking for a lead female who is described as "bold, intelligent and determined. A rebel against the Clarity Corporation who has fought to reclaim her identity" (Casting calls UK, 2026). This is a role I would apply for based on my type cast being the outgoing, edgier character and following this research there are many short films that need casting in the Wales area which can be great experience for recent graduates who are just stepping into the creative industry as it is a good chance to gain professional experience and clips to use to enhance showreels. A barrier I have found is keeping up with the changing industry means that you need to keep up with training even as a graduate which all comes with a cost, the industry is always developing to fit with the times whether it's bringing technology into performances or using AI to help create choreographic pieces. As a professional dancer your income can be unstable and you're working from gig to gig especially as a recent graduate so adding training funds on top of that can be stressful, budgeting and having multiple income streams is a top strategy to help lessen the financial strain.

Career goals using smartie framework

My first short term goal is to research and apply for dance agencies to gain representation at a maximum of six months after graduating. Some agencies I have looked into are AMCK dance, mass movement and the dark horse. These agencies source employment for their talent in

areas I aspire to work in, they are all about individuality and catering to the talent. My first steps in applying and getting signed to an agency is to get professional standards headshots, body shots and create a professional showreel, these will be the agencies first impressions of me when scouting for talent, so they need to be the best standard I can make them. For the showreel it needs to showcase what I want to be hired for so I will need studio space to perform dance routines as that's my main career focus now, I can either rent out a studio space, or I could also use my universities facilities to film which would be a more cost-effective way of filming. Another thing I will need for my showreels is someone to help me film, I could use my phone however as I want them to be professional standards using a videographer and a camera will be my best options, I want to research into videographers in the area and get a price range for them and also look into university students that are about to graduate from a photography or media course that might want experience who could film for me as a cost effective approach.

A medium-term goal of mine is to be doing touring work with a dance company, the main companies I have looked into are the Jasmine Vardimon company, Rambert and Matthew Bournes new adventures. These are companies that I have always been inspired by and the types of shows they create fit me as a dancer, my steps into becoming part of one of these companies is to start with agency representation as stated above as that will help me get in the room for the auditions. Before auditioning I need to make sure I'm keeping up with my ballet and contemporary training and be constantly trying to improve my technique as these are the most prevalent styles for these companies. I have researched into Matthew Bournes new adventures and they have development opportunities for dancers which include two-year courses, seasonal intensives and placements which would be a good place for me to start getting my foot in the door to the company. A lot of dancers who have taken part in one of these training courses have gone on to be a part of the company after completing.

The main long-term goal of mine is to be the role of dance captain in a heavily dance based musical like cats or & Juliet or a dance company; in order to achieve this, I will first need professional experience in musicals in general whether that's west end or regional shows. Once gaining more professional experience and networking to get my name better known within the industry, I will then be able to go into the auditions with more confidence and knowledge in what I need to do to achieve this goal. Another action I will need to take is making sure my psychical and mental health is in top form before stepping into the role, keeping up with dance training and fitness is always important for this industry however in a dance captain role it will be more physically and mentally demanding with more routines to remember even if I am not part of them. I have research into the role of a dance captain in the UK and the main skills you need are physical fitness, muscle memory in order to learn all choreography and musical staging, communication to make sure you are conveying the artistic vision of the creative team, calmness under pressure and organisation (Kathy, 2023) these are skills I have learnt and developed through university training and they will continue to develop in the professional world before stepping into this role.

Action plan summary table

Goal	Action	Resources needed	Deadline	Risks	Mitigation
Create a professional	Choose choreograph	Studio space with speakers	July 2026	Not having	Research studio

dance reel and upload it to social media platforms	y or choreograph my own routines, find studio space that looks professional , make sure my phone camera looks good and if not then find someone who can film with an actual camera.	available, camera operator		free studio space available and funding to get someone to film for me.	spaces near me and get into contact with the schools. Contact any photographers or videographers in the area and also see if any university students studying photography would be interested.
Research and apply for dance/performing agencies	Start looking for agencies that get performers the type of jobs I want to go into, list these agencies down and start preparing what I need for the application process.	Laptop/something to research with, showreel content that I can send in.	December 2026	Agencies not taking new clients, based too far away, clients not getting the jobs I will be looking for.	Look into smaller or upcoming agencies first that may not have as many clients and make sure to check where they have booked people before.
Build a professional network connecting with choreographers, dancers and directors	Start following more dancers that inspire me on social media and see who they work with, attend local events for performers whether they're big or small.	Access to creative events, social media platform, speak with confidence and clarity.	Ongoing over the next year	Not having enough event locally to me and needing to travel therefore needing funding for travel costs.	Save up for potential travel costs, see if there are free events still within the creative sector even if not directly linked with dance.

Tour with a dance company or on a cruise ship	Research into the main companies I would want to be a part of, look into their current dancers to see what they look for when casting, attend auditions when they are open.	Agent in order to get more auditions other than open calls, keep up with training and improving my techniques.	January 2028	Not getting into the auditions , funding for travelling for rehearsals	Save up an audition fund to go towards my travel, attend as many open calls as I can, follow casting accounts on social media to find latest auditions.

Barriers and solutions

Over my transition into the industry I know there are many barriers I will come across but some of the main ones I know I will face are financial barriers, travel for auditions/rehearsals and keeping my physical health at its peak. Financial barriers are very well known in the performance industry due to the inconsistent work and contracts leaving income gaps. Another barrier that factors into the financial side is the cost of keeping up your training and travel for auditions/rehearsals, keeping up with consistent training when transitioning into the professional setting is highly important as you want to keep your technique at its best and continue growing as a performer however the cost of classes or studio hire plays a large impact on the financial barriers. A strategy I have found through research which can help with the unstable income is having various income streams from different creative pathways like choreographing, teaching fitness classes or even jobs outside of the creative sector that can give more stability (Levina, 2022). A major barrier for many creative professionals is keeping your mental and physical health strong as burn out and injuries are likely to occur unless you take care and listen to your body, burnout occurs when your body undergoes excess amounts of psychical or mental stress without giving yourself the time to recover (Koutedakis, 2000) which leads to professionals overworking themselves. Ways to help prevent burnout for dancers is to keep a consistent stretching routine after rehearsals/auditions to allow the body a better chance of recovery, practice meditation to keep the mind clear and help work through mental stress of auditions and getting proper nutrition and hydration to maintain good fuel for the body.

Conclusion

Overall, I have set clear goals for myself and my future which will help me track my transition into the industry as well as my main goals for my career, I have a clearer understanding of what skills I currently have that I can use to help my progression of professional development. My research and reflection has clarified that as a dancer you need to be versatile and willing to

work in various medias as well as having realistic standards for your income, this action plan has helped me become more realistic and understand what I need to do outside of auditioning and performing to create a balanced life as a professional. With five months of university training left it is important that I start my steps for professional development now in order to keep on top of everything, mainly taking on the research side into agencies and starting to get my applications in, also curating a list of potential further training courses I can do for recent graduates. These first steps in development will help me be able to pursue my long-term goals as a creative professional.

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