

Vocational Graded Examinations in Dance

Comparability and Standardisation Exercise

Summary report on meeting to discuss exemplar candidate work for Intermediate Vocational Graded Examination in Dance

22nd August 2013

**Held at the office of the
Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET), London**

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1. Purpose of the comparability study

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this comparability exercise was to enable all CDET validated organisations to discuss and agree standards for their Intermediate Vocational Graded Examinations. A number of new organisations had been validated since the original comparability exercise in 2009 and CDET considered it timely to include all currently validated organisations in a comparability exercise.

The main focus of the study was to review whether the standard across Intermediate examinations is comparable, thus confirming a benchmark which organisations can apply internally across genres.

The accepted level of demand is currently articulated by means of a common QCF unit which was submitted to Ofqual in 2010. This was produced after the original comparability exercise in 2009. The August 2013 study provided an ideal opportunity for organisations to reconsider the unit content and agree if it is still an accurate summary of the standard, or whether it needs to be revised.

2. Summary of the meeting

2.1 Outcomes of discussions

DVDs provided by each awarding organisation taking part in the exercise were reviewed in group sessions and then discussed at a plenary session. The key issues raised were:

- Minor amendments were suggested to the level 3 to add the word “aspiring” which would more appropriately describe those candidates “working towards” professional practice.
- The range of approaches to marking and degree of compensation across examination elements.
- **Set music** – whether all awarding organisations should set music for the examinations or allow teachers to make appropriate selections.
- **Timings** - there were a few differences in the examination timings identified for components etc. Those organisations with briefer assessments agreed to explore adding other content so that a broader range of skills could be tested.
- **Unset work** – it was felt that unset work tests a different range of skills than previously prepared pieces, including the candidate’s ability to listen, to take instruction and to demonstrate their underlying knowledge of syllabus etc.
- **Grading** – there is considerable variation in the grading boundaries operated by different awarding organisations. This could lead to a possible misconception by the public that some examinations are “easier” than others because of a lower pass mark. Awarding organisations felt that this issue required further discussion as it can affect the choices made by candidates, teachers and parents about which examinations to enter.

2.2 Comparability of standards at Intermediate

In general the groups found that there was comparability across all the DVDs considered.

2.3 The unit template and level descriptors

All groups felt that the unit template and level descriptors for the Intermediate examination continues to be appropriate, particularly reflecting the work reviewed in the group sessions (subject to the alteration of wording about professional practice as highlighted earlier in this report).

4. Recommendations and future meetings

It was agreed by all that this was an extremely useful exercise and could be used as model of good practice by individual organisations when standardising examiners.

The recommendations to be taken forward are:

- To hold further comparability studies focussing on different levels and genres.
- To revise the level descriptors to reflect the age of candidates and their transition to professional practice by adding/amending agreed wording where appropriate.
- To further explore issues arising, including:
 - public perceptions of grade boundaries and whether anything can be done to reassure parents, teachers and candidates of the comparability of standards across the awarding organisations.
 - The different approaches to marking systems and whether these have any impact or effect on the overall standards required for pass, merit and distinction.

Appendix A

List of awarding organisations and representatives

Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET)	Glyndwr Jones Rachael Meech Ashlie Cherry
Graded Qualifications Alliance (GQAL)	Helen Mence Emma Chadwick Kathleen Davis
International Dance Teachers Association (IDTA)	Bobbie Drakeford Yvonne Gout
Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD)	Cynthia Pease Paddy Hurlings Elisabeth Swan
National Association of Teachers of Dancing (NATD)	Annette Hufton
Professional Teachers of Dancing (PTD)	Eleanor Cochrane Patricia Roberts
Royal Academy of Dance (RAD)	Gillian Sowerby Jackie Ferguson
Russian Ballet Society (RBS)	Deborah Adamou Robert Hampton
Spanish Dance Society (SDS)	Theo Dantes Sue Hilton
United Kingdom Alliance (UKA)	Ann Green Chris Marlow