

NATD

National Association of Teachers of Dancing

Guidance on Reasonable Adjustments And Special Considerations for Students Taking Graded and Vocational Graded Examinations in Dance

(Based on guidelines from The Council for Dance Education and Training March 2016)

Purpose of examinations

Graded and Vocational Graded Examinations judge a candidate's performance via a practical demonstration of the genre to the required standard. Candidates are tested when it is felt that they have reached the appropriate standard for a grade, and they are judged by the external examiner to have achieved the standard (with merit and distinction in some cases) or not.

Due to the practical nature of the examinations, it is vital that any requests for reasonable adjustments and/or special considerations are dealt with appropriately by NATD to ensure that fair access for all candidates is maintained, whilst not compromising the integrity of the examination process itself.

Fair and equal access to examinations

NATD will ensure that as far as possible all candidates wishing to do so have the opportunity to access graded examinations at an appropriate level. However, there will be some necessary barriers to access for some candidates which will be reviewed on a case by case basis by NATD but are likely to include physical barriers, for example:

- Strength to accomplish particular technical exercises
- Physical ability to successfully complete particular exercises
- Ability to respond to musical stimulus and/or direction from the examiner

Health and Safety issues

A key barrier to access for graded and vocational graded examinations is that of health and safety which for NATD is paramount and is the deciding factor in a judgement relating to reasonable adjustments or special considerations.

If there is a concern that the effects of a person's disability or difficulty may have health and safety implications for themselves and for others, an option open to NATD would be for a suitably qualified person to carry out a risk assessment related to the candidate's particular circumstances. This is the responsibility of individual teachers who report to NATD or in the case of "centres" a suitably qualified individual (for example a tutor or the centre contact). In some circumstances the NATD itself may wish to appoint a member of staff to carry out the risk assessment.

If required, the risk assessment should identify the risks associated with the particular activity, but should also take account of any reasonable adjustments put in place for the candidate which may remove or reduce the risk. The risk assessment may reveal that it is not possible for the candidate to fulfil all the requirements of the assessment. In this case NATD would make a judgement about whether the candidate is capable of successfully achieving the grade in question or whether another option would be available (for example transferring to another grade or a different qualification if available).

Assumptions should not be made about a disability or difficulty posing a health and safety risk, but the health and safety of all candidates and others must always be of paramount importance.

If NATD feels that a candidate's physical disability or learning difficulty would compromise their health and safety then they may refuse access to the examination on these grounds.

A definition of Reasonable Adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is defined as an action that will reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the learner at a substantial disadvantage during assessment.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the integrity of the assessment, but may involve, in the case of graded and vocational graded examinations, practical considerations in the way an examination is organised or carried out.

This could include:

- making changes for individuals to the standard arrangements for examinations, for example allowing learners extra time to complete the examination requirements
- providing access facilitators during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader, provided that this did not impinge on other candidates
- re-organising the examination room, such as removing visual stimuli for an autistic learner

Reasonable adjustments are requested and approved before the assessment takes place. The use of a reasonable adjustment will not be taken into consideration during the assessment of a learner's work.

A definition of Special Considerations

Special Considerations are different to Reasonable Adjustments. They are not governed by the Equalities Act and as such awarding organisations are not legally obliged to grant them although those recognised by Ofqual are required to have clear arrangements for special considerations including information about how a candidate qualifies for special consideration and what will be given.

Special Consideration is consideration to be given to a candidate who has temporarily experienced

- (a) an illness or injury, or
- (b) some other event outside of the candidate's control, which has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on that Candidate's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment.

This could be taken into account before, during or after the assessment.

It would not normally be appropriate for candidates to apply for special consideration in the case of a disability or learning difficulty which is known to be permanent as this is covered by reasonable adjustments.

Interpreting requests for reasonable adjustments and/or special considerations within graded and vocational graded examinations

Principles for making a reasonable adjustment to an examination

- When considering whether an adjustment to assessment is appropriate, NATD will consider the following:
- Any adjustment made to the examination should not compensate the candidate for lack of knowledge, understanding and skills at the grade for which they are entered. The candidate must be able to cope with the examination content and be able to work at the level required.

- Any adjustment to the examination must not invalidate the standards for the examination. Standards relating to levels and individual grades should not be altered NATD would take all reasonable steps to ensure that a candidate with a disability or difficulty is not placed at a substantial disadvantage, in comparison with persons who are not disabled, in terms of access to assessment. However, there is no duty to make any adjustment to any part of the examination which relates to the standard that needs to be achieved. All candidates' performance will be assessed against set standards of attainment. These standards cannot be altered, but it may be possible to change the delivery or format of the examination so that each candidate has an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do.
- Any adjustment to the examination must not give the candidate an unfair advantage or disadvantage the candidate. The qualification of a candidate who had an adjustment to assessment must have the same credibility as that of any other candidate.
- Any adjustment to the examination could be based on the individual need of the candidate. Decisions about adjustments to examinations should be taken after careful consideration of the needs of each individual candidate, the requirements of the grade in question and the nature and extent of the support given as part of normal teaching practice.
- Any adjustment to the examination should reflect the candidate's normal way of working providing this does not affect what is being assessed in any way. The candidate should have experience of and practice in the use of the adjustment.
- Any adjustment to the examination must be supported by evidence, which is sufficient, valid, reliable, and current.
- All adjustments to the examination must be authorised by NATD in advance of each examination taking place according to its nominal procedures.

Responsibilities of teachers and centres in the process of identifying reasonable adjustments

The majority of candidates entered for graded and vocational graded examinations will register via an individual teacher. In these cases, teachers have the responsibility for anticipating and identifying potential needs for reasonable adjustments in advance of an examination. They should be able to:

Identify as early as possible, preferably before entering a candidate for an examination, any difficulties the candidate may have in accessing the assessment. Teachers should make contact with NATD as soon as possible in order to determine whether reasonable adjustments to the assessment process are possible;
 Select an appropriate examination for the candidate, based upon their particular circumstances. The teacher should explain to the candidate the requirements of the examination. It should be made clear at the outset if the candidate will not be able to meet the standard. The candidate may still decide to proceed with the examination but the teacher should explain to the candidate that they are unlikely to meet the standard they entered if they are not able to achieve all the criteria necessary which will restrict their level of attainment.

Identify an appropriate adjustment to make the assessment accessible to the candidate. In order to decide whether an adjustment is appropriate, the teacher should consider what is being assessed in the examination and the implications for assessment of the candidate's difficulties. The centre should involve the candidate and/or their parent/guardian where appropriate in making any decisions about appropriate adjustments to assessment. In cases of doubt, the centre should contact NATD for advice on suitable and appropriate adjustments;

Where an examination takes place at premises used by the teacher, ensure that buildings and facilities used for the examination are accessible to all candidates, as far as is practicable.

Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties

Below are examples of adjustments that could be made for candidates with particular disabilities and/or learning difficulties. The examples are not exhaustive and are for illustrative purposes only. Further details are given in Section 7 below.

The types of adjustment agreed should be appropriate to the needs of the candidate and the particular level/grade or genre being assessed. It may not be necessary or appropriate to make adjustments for a candidate in all genres or at all levels. Each application should be assessed on a case by case basis.

Cognition and learning needs

(e.g. general and/or specific learning difficulties)

- Supervised rest breaks
- Extra time
- A practical assistant

Communication and interaction needs

(e.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN))

- Supervised rest breaks
- Extra time

Sensory and physical needs

(e.g. Hearing Impairment (HI) Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI), Physical Disability (PD), Vision Impairment (VI))

- Supervised rest breaks
- Extra time
- A sign language interpreter
- Amplification equipment

Social, mental and emotional needs

(e.g. Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), mental health conditions)

- Supervised rest breaks
- Extra time
- Alternative assessment arrangements

Use of individuals to facilitate assessments

Where a person is appointed to facilitate an access arrangement, e.g. a sign language interpreter, they will normally be responsible to the teacher or dance school principal rather than to the awarding organisation. The person appointed must not be the candidate's teacher, relative, friend or peer.

Where an individual is used to facilitate an assessment it is the responsibility of the teacher/dance school principal to make sure that the person appointed is appropriately trained and understands the rules of the particular access arrangement they are facilitating.

Sign language interpreter

A sign language interpreter can be used in some cases to give instruction or direction, but only where this does not compromise a candidate's ability to perform the required exercises. Where sign language is the primary means of communication for a candidate with hearing impairment, these candidates may have the support of a BSL/English interpreter to sign the instructions or directions which are being given to them by the examiner.

Where a sign language interpreter is used in an examination, the awarding organisation should also permit additional time to allow for instructions to be relayed to the candidate via the interpreter.

The teacher/dance school is responsible for providing a sign language interpreter.

The sign language interpreter should be recruited with integrity by the teacher/dance school and hold an appropriate qualification in sign language and a good working knowledge of the content of the examination. They may not be the candidate's teacher relative, friend or peer

A candidate should, wherever possible, have had previous experience of working with a sign language interpreter and should have used this arrangement during their classes.

Potential areas in which reasonable adjustments can be made

Allowing extra time

It may be permissible to allow an individual candidate extra time to complete the examination if they have a learning difficulty/disability which affects the speed at which they are able to process the instructions (but not their ability to carry them out in accordance with the set standard).

The amount of extra time allowed should accurately reflect the extent to which the completion of the assessment will be affected by the candidate's difficulty.

'Unlimited' extra time will not be allowed. NATD will set a maximum amount of extra time in relation to the individual candidate's requirements which must be adhered to by the Examiner.

25% extra time, for example, may be added for a candidate who has evidence of requiring additional time for explanation or instruction by the examiner. This may apply to the following sections of an examination:

- unset work where an examiner may have to repeat instructions or break down an exercise for a candidate to be able to demonstrate that exercise. Examples of candidates who may need this include those with dyslexia, memory problems or other learning difficulties meaning that they need instructions repeated.
- set exercises where a candidate requires the examiner to repeat an instruction or where the candidate needs the exercise to be broken down into smaller elements and requires extra time to complete these.

In certain exceptional cases a candidate might be allowed up to 50% extra time however there would normally be a strong justification for this. For example, this might apply to a candidate working independently with a learning difficulty which has a very substantial and long term adverse effect on speed of working.

In very exceptional cases a candidate may be allowed more than 50% extra time in order to manage a very substantial impairment.

The teacher is responsible for ensuring the candidate can cope with the content of the examination and that the candidate is medically fit to undertake an extended assessment period before additional time is requested.

Extra time will not be allowed in cases where the timing is a crucial part of the assessment or in group activities where the candidate's performance will be assessed in conjunction with others.

Supervised rest breaks

Additional rest breaks could be permissible for some candidates.

Rest breaks should be incorporated into the format of the examination (for example taking a rest break between exercises or sequences).

Alternative assessment arrangements

In some cases it may be permissible for a candidate to be assessed in an alternative way. For example this could include

- modification of the layout of the examination room (e.g. placement of the examiner or the music operator)
- allowing the candidate to be examined on their own
- allowing the candidate to be examined with friends/peers
- allowing the teacher to be present in the examination room

Such arrangements must not alter or compromise the integrity of the examination. For example, a candidate requiring friends or peers to dance with them during an examination must be assessed with the same assessment requirements as other candidates and those friends or peers should not then subsequently be taking the same examination in that session with that examiner.

A teacher present in the room must observe the examination only as a way of making the candidate comfortable in the examination room and must not in any way involve themselves in the examination. They would also usually not be permitted to make any enquiry or appeal on the basis of their presence in the examination room, as this would be unfair to those candidates who teachers were not present in this way.

Where a modification of the layout of the examination room is proposed, this must not impact on the assessment. The examiner must be able to see the candidate dancing so that they can make an accurate assessment against the standards. The music operator must be able to see when to start and stop the music.

Other Forms of Reasonable Adjustment

Identifying eligible candidates for reasonable adjustments

Candidates are normally eligible for reasonable adjustments if their ability to undertake an assessment is likely to be substantially affected by a particular impairment. Many of these candidates will be defined as being disabled under the Equalities Act. Please note that some candidates may not be registered as disabled but they may still be considered.

The submission of evidence to support a request for Reasonable Adjustments

Requests should be made by the teacher or the tutor (or an appropriate person in the centre) 21 days before the examination date.

In order to ensure that any adjustment to assessment will only provide the candidate with the necessary assistance without giving them an unfair advantage over others, the person responsible for submitting the form must be clear about the extent to which the candidate is affected by the disability or difficulty.

Requests for reasonable adjustments should be submitted by the teacher, 21 days in advance of each exam the candidate is entered for, with appropriate evidence of the disability or learning difficulty for which the adjustment is being requested. This could include (depending on the nature of the adjustment and the difficulty):

- Evidence of assessment of the candidate's needs in relation to the particular assessment, made by the teacher or another responsible person. This evidence should include an indication of how the teacher currently meets the candidate's needs and should show that the candidate can cope with the level and content of the grade for which they are being entered.
- Medical or expert evidence to support the application from appropriately qualified individuals. This could take the form of medical, psychological or professional reports or assessments. These reports should state the name, title and professional credentials of the person who carried out the assessments and wrote the report. The current report should set out the nature of the difficulty and extent to which the candidate is affected by the difficulty, including the effects of any medication that the candidate may be taking.

Special Consideration

A candidate may apply for special consideration prior to the examination (for example if they have broken their arm a few weeks beforehand), although it would normally be more appropriate to apply for a reasonable adjustment where the condition is understood to be permanent rather than temporary.

In the case of graded and vocational graded examinations, the candidate should make the request before the examination to the examiner, ideally before the examination session starts or during a break so that the examiner has time to read the request. The various options open to the examiner could be as follows:

In the case of a candidate who has been disadvantaged by a temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances it may be possible:

- To reschedule the examination for later in the day, if there is capacity for this to occur. This would give the candidate additional time to prepare and rest before the examination.
- To offer the candidate the opportunity to reschedule the examination for a later date. This would need to be done in consultation with the awarding organisation's head office staff and may not be possible to confirm on the day.

After the examination

Teachers may in some cases apply for a special consideration after the examination if there was a circumstance that affected the candidate's performance. Awarding organisations will have their own procedures for requesting a special consideration to be made including what will and what will not be considered. Examples of special considerations which would be considered include:

- serious disturbance or disruption during the examination such as a fire alarm or power failure
- temporary illness, injury or indisposition either prior to or during the examination (but assuming that the candidate attempted to, or did, complete the examination, and did not elect to withdraw)
- illness during the examination of the examiner, pianist or music operator
- recent bereavement or terminal illness of a member of the candidate's family, close friend or pet
- serious and disruptive domestic crisis leading to acute anxiety

A candidate will not be eligible for special consideration due to:

- very minor disturbances during an examination which did not materially impact on their ability to demonstrate the requirements of the examination
- a permanent disability or difficulty which is known about at the time of entry to the examination (in these cases candidates should apply for reasonable adjustments)

Roles and responsibilities for special considerations

In the context of graded and vocational graded examinations in Dance or Musical Theatre, the first line of responsibility for deciding on whether a special consideration should be upheld is the Examiner appointed for that particular examination session. It is the teacher's responsibility to apply for special considerations in accordance with NATD policy.

Examiners should use their judgement within the guidelines set out by NATD to decide if a particular candidate's circumstances warrant a special consideration. Within the limits of their responsibility, they can decide to reschedule an examination (if this is possible within the examination timetable) to later in the day.

Examiners would be expected to refer to Head Office in cases where an examination would have to be rescheduled for a later date as this would need to be confirmed formally with the teacher.

Head Office and the Quality Assurance Manager would always be the final arbiter of any decision made about special considerations – these decisions should be logged and recorded for monitoring purposes and to inform future decisions.

Teachers, candidates, and parents/guardians should also be aware that there is no liability on the part of the NATD or the Examiner if the candidate suffers an injury during any NATD examination.

This policy and code of practice is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary in order to respond to changing needs and circumstances and to comply with any new legislation.