

ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE

Reliability of results policy

1 Overview

- 1.1 This policy outlines how the RAD seeks to ensure that exams results issued to learners represent a reliable, accurate and authentic measure of attainment.

2 Panel of Examiners

- 2.1 All candidates taking RAD exams are externally assessed by an examiner who is appointed, contracted, trained and monitored by the RAD.
- 2.2 Examiners are appointed on the basis of their professional expertise and suitability to the role. They undergo a rigorous selection process and training programme before their appointment is confirmed. For further information, see the *Examiner recruitment policy and procedures*.
- 2.3 Examiners are required to create a welcoming and reassuring environment in the exam studio, ensuring that candidates are able to perform to their full potential.
- 2.4 All examiners are required to complete a check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (or equivalent body, depending on country of residence, where possible / appropriate) and adhere to the policies and procedures of the RAD Exams Board, including in matters related to equality and diversity, safeguarding, and conflicts of interest.
- 2.5 Data relating to the marking of each examiner, based on all the considerations and procedures outlined in this policy, is collated and maintained in tracker documents by the Exams Results Quality Assurance Manager.

3 Assessment methodology

- 3.1 The RAD operates an assessment model based on the demonstration of mastery of specific tasks in accordance with published criteria. The assessment itself does not change from that outlined in the published [Specifications](#) and is identical for each candidate who takes a particular exam.

- 3.2 Detailed mark schemes relating to all assessments are outlined in full in the [Specifications](#).
- 3.3 The aims of the mark schemes are (i) to ensure that all examiners assess according to the same standards and principles; and (ii) to ensure that all users of qualifications are aware of the methodology used and can tailor the preparation of candidates for exams accordingly.
- 3.4 Mark schemes are as consistent as possible across all levels of exams in order to promote familiarity and confidence on the part of examiners, and to reduce confusion and aid clarity and understanding on the part of users of qualifications.
- 3.5 Mark schemes are kept under continual review by the Chief Examiner and may be changed when a clear rationale to do so is identified. Such a rationale may arise from the results of examiner standardisation activity, the comparison and monitoring of results data over time (as undertaken by the Exams Results Quality Assurance Manager, in the form of an annual review), and/or feedback from users of qualifications. Any such changes are reviewed and agreed by the Exams and Regulatory Subcommittee, attended by the Director of Exams, which also oversees their implementation.
- 3.6 The interpretation of attainment descriptors as outlined in the [Specifications](#) and as applied to particular parts of the exam across the whole panel forms a focus of standardisation activity, and in particular of discussion at seminars.
- 3.7 The RAD participates regularly in comparability exercises with other awarding organisations working in the same sector. This enables it to monitor specified levels of attainment set for similar qualifications offered by other awarding organisations.
- 3.8 All exams are externally assessed in full. All the evidence presented by the candidate in the exam forms part of the assessment.

4 Standardisation¹

- 4.1 Every examiner is required to participate in standardisation activity on an ongoing basis. This is delivered through a combination of online platforms and face-to-face seminars.
- 4.2 The aim of standardisation activity is to provide opportunities for examiners to apply the marking criteria to a series of short or longer extracts of filmed work. All examiners view and mark the same work, so that meaningful comparisons can be made.

- 4.3 A mandatory seminar of approximately 4-5 days in duration is held every 2-3 years. Where possible, such seminars involve the entire worldwide panel, which enables more effective and immediate intelligence about the spread of marking to be obtained. In particular, each examiner is able to gain an enhanced understanding of their own marking in the context of the whole panel, which in turn facilitates improvement in reliability of marking.
- 4.4 Any examiner who is unable to attend a mandatory seminar (because of illness or a family emergency, for example) will normally be given access to the filmed material used and asked to complete an assessment of it before s/he may resume examining. Where an examiner misses part/s of a mandatory seminar the Chief Examiner will decide what action it is appropriate to take depending on which parts were missed. Consideration will be given to performance at previous seminars. The examiner may be asked to mark further filmed extracts of exam material in their own time following the seminar.
- 4.5 The RAD also holds one-day seminars for localised groups of examiners around the world on an ongoing basis. These 'mini-seminars', for which attendance is optional, have the character of 'examiner surgeries' in which examiners can air concerns and ask for specific advice relevant to them. They also give the Chief Examiner the opportunity to deliver targeted training to specific examiners or groups of examiners as needed.
- 4.6 Face-to-face seminars also provide opportunities for in-depth discussion of marking criteria; learning new syllabus content, mark schemes and procedures; administrative updates; and peer-to-peer discussion and networking.
- 4.7 Some standardisation activity is undertaken on a 'self-assessed' basis, where examiners are provided with target marks at the time of the standardisation so that they can review and reflect on the accuracy of their marking without being subject to formal appraisal. At other times examiners are required to submit marks without having the opportunity to receive feedback or engage in discussion with colleagues before finalising the marks.
- 4.7.1 The Chief Examiner is responsible for setting standardisations, arranging and running seminars, selecting and arranging for the filming of suitable footage, and providing benchmark marks. They are supported in this work by the Panel of Examiners Manager, the Panel of Examiners Officer, and the national offices of relevant countries.
- 4.7.2 Marks awarded by examiners in standardisation exercises are logged, analysed and reported by the Exams Results Quality Assurance Manager. These inform analysis and adjustment of marks during the forthcoming year as well as the examiner's next Annual Review.

- 4.7.3 As well as general activity applying to the whole Panel, standardisation may be applied in a targeted way from time to time for certain examiners or groups of examiners, for example where marking gives cause for concern.
- 4.7.4 Particular scrutiny is applied to the standardisation results of any examiner who has provided students for filmed extracts used.
- 4.7.5 Together with the annual self-evaluation exercise, standardisation and seminar activity forms the basis of the examiners' annual programme of CPD which they may use in order to fulfil their CPD obligations as RAD Registered Teachers.

5 Examiner review

- 5.1 All examiners are subject to an annual review of their work.
- 5.2 The principal aims of the review are to:
 - 5.2.1 ensure that all examiners achieve and maintain the levels of accuracy, consistency and reliability in marking and the professional standards expected of an examiner of the Royal Academy of Dance
 - 5.2.2 promote the development of examiners' skills and knowledge
 - 5.2.3 identify examiners who do not meet or maintain the standards expected of them
 - 5.2.4 identify further training needs and other required actions
- 5.3 The review is carried out by the Chief Examiner with the support of other staff as required and is based on a range of data gathered from a variety of sources.
- 5.4 The review takes into account any or all, as appropriate, of the following:
 - 5.4.1 ability to perform the role of examiner as defined in the job description
 - 5.4.2 fulfilment of contractual obligations, including amount of work undertaken
 - 5.4.3 outcome of standardisation exercises and/or standardisation examiner visits during the year
 - 5.4.4 feedback received from teachers and RAD staff

- 5.4.5 outcomes of any investigations following formal complaints
- 5.4.6 any marks omitted from marksheets
- 5.4.7 the examiner's completed self-evaluation exercise
- 5.4.8 compliance with operational and administrative procedures.
- 5.5 Each examiner's performance is considered carefully taking into account individual circumstances and as much of the above data as possible or appropriate.
- 5.6 The initial review is carried out without the examiner being present. The outcome is provided in the form of a written report, normally in January each year.
- 5.7 The report is based on the previous 12 months (January – December). Where data from work undertaken towards the end of the year is unavailable at the time of issue, an amended report will be issued at a later date.
- 5.8 Examiners may request a meeting with the Chief Examiner to discuss the report. This may take place at the annual seminar (where held), other appropriate occasion (such as a 'mini-seminar') or via phone.
- 5.9 Where the review reveals serious cause for concern the Disciplinary Procedure as outlined in the Examiners' Handbook may be invoked.

6 Individual examiner standardisations

- 6.1 A team of standardisation examiners [SEs] is responsible for sitting in with examiners and double-marking a selection of the work.
- 6.2 SEs are selected by application from the existing body of examiners, taking into account a number of criteria. The Chief Examiner is responsible for reviewing the applications and appointing SEs, supported by other relevant RAD staff.
- 6.3 To qualify for selection, a SE should have:
 - 6.3.1 a proven track record of reliable examining outcomes
 - 6.3.1 demonstrable experience as an examiner, preferably of at least two years
 - 6.3.2 undertaken at least the average amount of examining each year for the past two years

- 6.3.3 a tactful, discreet and supportive manner in dealing with teachers and fellow examiners
- 6.3.4 no significant record of complaints against either conduct or assessment.
- 6.4 Geographical location will be taken into consideration. In general, more SEs are likely to be required in zones/countries with the greatest number of exam tours. SEs may be required to travel to another country in order to standardise one or more examiners on tour.
- 6.5 Appointments are normally for periods of three years (in line with examiner appointments), from 1 January, and subject to renewal.
- 6.6 The Panel of Examiners Manager is responsible for the organisation of individual examiner standardisations, with the assistance of the Panel of Examiners Officer and national offices of the countries concerned.
- 6.7 A standardisation exercise for SEs normally takes place at mandatory seminars, to ensure that all SEs are marking in line. This normally takes the form of joint assessment of excerpts of filmed work and is led by the Chief Examiner. SEs may be asked to submit marks for the online standardisation ahead of the regular deadline so that their marks can contribute to the creation of the agreed marks and mark analysis.
- 6.8 Every examiner normally receives an individual standardisation at least once every three years. Wherever possible, new examiners are standardised during their first examining tour. Individual standardisations normally last for half a day to a day, although this may be extended for those examiners under special scrutiny.
- 6.9 As soon as tour allocations for the following year have been accepted and agreed, the Panel of Examiners Manager will normally draw up a schedule of projected standardisations for the year ahead, covering at least 33 per cent of examiners, and notifies the SEs and national offices accordingly. In the cases of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and the US, the schedule will be prepared in consultation with the National Directors of those countries.
- 6.10 It is likely that some of the projected individual standardisations will not proceed as planned, because of changes of tour allocations as the year progresses. If these cannot be easily re-arranged, standardisation of the examiners concerned is deferred to the following year.
- 6.11 Towards the end of Year 2 of the cycle, the Panel of Examiners Manager draws up a list of those examiners not yet standardised and ensures where possible that they are allocated to tours in Year 3 where an SE is on hand to carry out a standardisation.

- 6.12 The Panel of Examiners Manager consults the Exams Results Quality Assurance Manager on whether there are any special requirements to be taken into account (e.g. whether there is a need to select a school with a 'strong' or 'weak' record).
- 6.13 The Exams Department keeps records of all individual standardisations, to ensure that every examiner is standardised over the three-year cycle.
- 6.14 The Panel of Examiners Manager, assisted by the Panel of Examiners Officer, is responsible for ensuring that the relevant RAD offices make the necessary arrangements for the standardisations, including notifying the relevant teachers and examiner to be standardised beforehand. All teachers whose candidates will be examined with a SE present must be informed at least a week in advance of the date of the standardisation.
- 6.15 As far as possible, where other considerations allow, individual examiner standardisations are not arranged to take place on the first day of a tour.
- 6.16 SEs are required to observe as many exams as possible, covering a wide range of grades or levels.
- 6.17 The SE double-marks all the candidates, and at the end of the day collects the carbon copy of the examiner's mark sheet in order to compare the marks.
- 6.18 An Examiner Standardisation Report Form is completed, on which the SE records their own and the examiner's marks for all candidates observed, together with comments on the examiner's conduct and completion of the mark sheets.
- 6.19 The completed form is sent to the Panel of Examiners Officer, who forwards it to the Chief Examiner and Exams Results Quality Assurance Manager, copied to Panel of Examiners Manager. Where timescales allow, the Exams Results Quality Assurance Manager will take reports into consideration when the tour results are monitored.
- 6.20 The Exams Results Quality Assurance Manager drafts letters to each examiner who has been standardised based on the SE's report. The letters are checked by the Chief Examiner before being sent by the Panel of Examiners Officer and are saved for reference.
- 6.21 No feedback on assessment may be given to the examiner at the time of the visit, in case it causes him/her to change their approach to marking in mid-tour. The SE may comment on conduct and other general matters if necessary.

7. Results analysis and moderation

Purpose and principles

- 7.1 All results are analysed before release and adjustments to marks are made where necessary.
- 7.2 The purpose of analysis and moderation is to monitor the performance of examiners over time, and to redress examiner error, thereby ensuring that marks are as accurate and reliable as possible before they are released to teachers and candidates.
- 7.3 Because of the ephemeral nature of the exam itself, the analysis is informed by a wide evidence base.
- 7.4 Results are monitored by tour, as this provides a sample of results which is statistically significant. On average, a single tour might contain somewhere in the region of 300 individual candidate results, most of which are broken down into 8 or 10 individual component marks. The whole tour is analysed and any adjustments are made before the results are released *en bloc*. (See 3.11 below re 'Specials').

Evidence and data

- 7.5 In monitoring any individual tour, the following data is used, obtained from the RADius reports shown in italics below:
- 7.5.1 Statistical data
- The % distribution and standard deviation of total marks between the six attainment bands of Standard Not Attained (SNA), Pass, Pass with Merit, Pass with High Merit, Pass with Distinction and Pass with High Distinction (*Marks Analysis*)
 - The same information applied to each individual grade or level (*Marks Analysis*)
 - The average mark awarded to each grade or level (overall and for each of the sub-marks) (*Marks Analysis*)
- 7.5.2 Comparative data
- The % results of each centre on the tour compared to those for the two previous years, together with average mark and standard deviation (*Centre Analysis*)
 - Each individual candidate's marks for the previous two exams, the difference between their current and previous marks, and average discrepancy across the whole tour (*Marks Discrepancy*)
 - The performance of the examiner, including at seminars over time, SE report (if available) and examining history

- Historical results data relating to the country in question.

Making judgements and decisions

7.6 In making adjustments to marks, the following principles are observed:

- The rank order in which the examiner placed the candidates is not changed
- All marks for any particular grade or level are treated in the same way, i.e. adjustments are made to the whole body of candidates for a particular grade or level - particular candidates or centres are not singled out for individual attention.

7.7 In reviewing the results of individual standardisations and seminars, it is borne in mind that it is not possible:

- 7.7.1 for SEs to ensure that all grades / levels are viewed or that the whole mark range is observed, so the individual standardisation may yield an incomplete picture of the examiner's marking, and
- 7.7.2 to re-create the examining conditions of a live tour at the seminar, and the marking of some examiners may not therefore be a true reflection of their normal performance, i.e. it may be either less or more reliable than in a 'live' scenario.

7.8 The marks of examiners who, over the course of the past two years of standardisation exercises (at seminars and online), have demonstrated consistently accurate assessment (i.e. not more than one total mark outside the agreed tolerance band), and whose marking of live exams over the past two years has been subject to only occasional adjustment, will not normally be adjusted, unless they produce very unexpected results.

7.9 The RAD believes that, in general, and given a large enough sample, marks for individual candidates can be expected to remain relatively consistent from one exam to the next, although it is equally recognised that many factors may influence the results of particular candidates or centres at particular times. The figure of ± 10 on previous results is used as a guide, on the basis that individual component marks (typically 10 components each marked out of 10) may each be expected to vary by ± 1 . The percentage of marks that are within ± 10 of the previous result achieved by the candidate is therefore an important factor to be taken into consideration when making a judgment about whether or not the raw marking is reliable (see 7.5.2 above, second bullet point).

7.10 Taking the evidence outlined in 7.5 and the considerations outlined in 7.7 – 7.9 into account, a judgement is made on the appropriateness of the marks on the tour, with one of the following outcomes:

- 7.10.1 All the marks awarded by the examiner stand
- 7.10.2 Some of the marks awarded by the examiner stand, but others are adjusted
- 7.10.3 All the marks awarded by the examiner are adjusted.
- 7.11 The judgement made is differentiated by mark range. This is assessed from the SE reports, from marking at seminars and in online standardisation exercises, and from reviewing the mark discrepancy reports.
- 7.12 The most common patterns of marking requiring adjustment are where the examiner is
 - 7.12.1 severe at the lower end of the mark spectrum but accurate at the higher end
 - 7.12.2 accurate at the lower end of the mark spectrum but gets progressively more generous at the higher end
 - 7.12.3 equally severe or generous with all candidates over the whole mark range
 - 7.12.4 accurate with the candidates in the middle of the mark range but severe at the lower end and generous at the higher end.
- 7.13 In the cases of 7.12.1, 7.12.2 and 7.12.4, a tapered adjustment is applied, where more marks are added or subtracted at the start of the mark range being adjusted than at the end. This is in order to reflect the increasing generosity / severity of the examiner's marking and also to ensure that the original mark order of the candidates is maintained.
- 7.14 The considerations outlined in 7.12 and 7.13 above are however weighted against the recognised long-term trend of an increasingly higher percentage of results being in the merit categories, and a lower percentage in the other brackets.
- 7.15 Most adjustments are in the range +/- 1 to +/- 7 (as applied to the overall percentage mark), but on occasion larger adjustments may be needed.
- 7.16 Following adjustment, in order to maximise the benefit of the doubt to the candidate, any candidate whose result is one mark below an attainment band boundary is normally automatically promoted into the higher category ('borderlined') (except where, because of a requirement to pass specific sections of the exam, the result would remain an SNA, or because additional marks have been awarded as a Special Consideration).

- 7.17 Exams with small numbers of candidates, e.g. many 'Specials', are treated with particular care. Judgements made in respect of other tours, with more substantial numbers of candidates, are unlikely to be distorted by particular instances of unpredictable or unusual results (e.g. where the teacher has been ill or where candidates have been taking extra classes).
- 7.18 Particular scrutiny is applied to the moderation of results in respect of any examiner who:
- has examined candidates who are known to them in any way
 - is or has been involved in the preparation of resources related to a qualification being assessed.

Procedure

- 7.19 All countries' results are monitored by the Exams Results Quality Assurance Manager using the tools available in the exams system. If relevant, adjustments are made and the borderlining exercise is carried out (see 7.16 above). A quality check is then made to ensure that all adjustments have been applied correctly.

Records and reporting

- 7.20 The following records are kept:
- 7.20.1 By country / region: each tour, with % distribution across the attainment bands
 - 7.20.2 By examiner: numbers of candidates examined, original results, adjusted results with a detailed breakdown of adjustments by grade/level
 - 7.20.3 By examiner: records of performance in all seminars since recorded exams began to be used for standardised assessment.
- 7.21 Data from results analysis and moderation is used to inform each examiner's annual review (see Section 5).

8 Complaints, enquiries and appeals

- 8.1 Data deriving from the RAD's complaints and enquiries procedures are used to inform the examiner review and may be used as the basis of the instigation of disciplinary procedures against examiners. A log is maintained of complaints about examiners (relating to both conduct and marking) over time, which provides the basis for determining when further action is needed.

8.2 For more information see the *Complaints Policy*.

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