

# ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE

## Policy and procedures for the development, delivery, review and withdrawal of qualifications

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### 1 Policy statement

1. This policy specifies the procedures to be used by the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) in the development, delivery, review and withdrawal of qualifications. The RAD is regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales, CCEA and Qualifications Scotland Accreditation, and, as such, this policy aligns with the following regulatory conditions:

### 2 Overview of current provision

- 2.1 The RAD administers and awards regulated qualifications through its status as an Awarding Organisation/Body, which is led by the Director of Exams. The RAD is a recognised awarding organisation in England (Ofqual), Wales (Qualifications Wales), Northern Ireland (CCEA) and Scotland (Qualifications Scotland Accreditation).
- 2.2 The Awarding Organisation/Body currently offers a range of exams and assessments including those in Ballet (through its graded and vocational graded syllabi, and the *Discovering Repertoire* programme), alongside the potential for other dance genres and programmes. These qualifications are placed on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) or, for some exams in Scotland only, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Most RAD exams are single unit qualifications, although *Discovering Repertoire* qualifications comprise three mandatory units.
- 2.3 Over the course of this time, the design, delivery and assessment methodology of these qualifications has developed in response to user demand and changes in the dance and performing arts education landscape, but they are in essence well-established and understood by all stakeholders, including learners, teachers, further and higher education providers, and employers.

### **3 Responsibilities and expertise**

- 3.1 The development, delivery, review and withdrawal of RAD qualifications is overseen by the Director of Exams, who reports to the Exams and Regulations Subcommittee.
- 3.2 The Artistic Director and Chief Examiner are subject experts. In addition, the RAD has access to an extensive network of experts in the fields of dance and dance education. Suitable subject specialists may be identified by the Artistic Director, Chief Examiner and/or Director of Exams, and/or may be co-opted from the membership of the Artistic and Exams Subcommittees.
- 3.3 The Artistic Director has expertise in the development of syllabi. The Director of Exams and Chief Examiner have experience in the design of qualifications and assessment methods. In addition, the RAD has access to experts in qualifications development and assessment through its membership of relevant professional bodies. Suitable experts in these areas may be identified by the Director of Exams, and/or may be co-opted from the membership of the Artistic or Exams & Regulatory Subcommittees.
- 3.4 The RAD employs a number of professional administrators both in London and in its network of national and regional offices who have responsibility for the day-to-day delivery of exams and the associated functions of the Awarding Organisation/Body.
- 3.5 Where necessary, external experts or consultants are contracted via advertisements, a tender process and/or recruitment. Where appropriate (i.e. where a formal contract of employment or similar is required) the Human Resources Department is engaged in this process.
- 3.6 The Director of Exams fulfils the role of Responsible Officer (or equivalent) to the regulators.

### **4 Development of qualifications**

- 4.1 Any proposal to develop new qualifications is discussed and agreed at the relevant committees and meeting groups and approved by the Board of Trustees.
- 4.2 As part of these discussions, clear evidence of user demand is obtained. This may be drawn as relevant and appropriate from potential candidates, parents, teachers, Regional and National

Offices, and the wider dance, performing arts and education sectors.

- 4.3 A clear need and justification for the qualifications is articulated, explaining how the qualification provides a benefit to learners.
- 4.4 A business case, which sets out the rationale for developing the syllabus and any new qualifications, an estimate of demand, and high-level financial projections, is prepared by the Artistic Director, Deputy Artistic Director, and the Director of Exams in consultation with other relevant staff and is presented to the Trustees. This is agreed before further work is undertaken.
- 4.5 The process of qualification development is managed through the Artistic Director for syllabus development and the Director of Exams for qualification development along with other senior staff, SMEs and relevant working groups as applicable.
- 4.6 As part of the process of development the following attributes are considered:
  - objective (including benefit to learners)
  - validity
  - fitness for purpose
  - title
  - learning outcomes
  - assessment criteria
  - level
  - size (expressed as appropriate by Guided Learning Hours (GLH), Total Qualification Time (TQT), and / or credit value)
  - content
  - assessment methodology (including mark schemes)
  - delivery methods (including manageability and the provision of adequate resources)
  - accuracy, reliability and consistency of marking and results
  - maximising access and the removal of any unnecessary barriers (including the application of reasonable adjustments and special consideration)
  - any specific requirements or design features imposed by regulators.
- 4.7 More specifically, the following considerations will be taken into account:
  - each learner will generate evidence which can be authenticated

- each learning outcome or level of attainment detailed in the specification can be reached by a learner who has attained the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding
- learning outcomes and specified levels of attainment are considered in relation to similar qualifications offered by the RAD and by other awarding organisations. This may include reference to level descriptors and comparability studies.
- assessment methods allow learners to demonstrate accurately the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the qualification
- assessors can differentiate accurately and consistently between a range of attainments by learners
- assessment methods require sufficient evidence from learners to enable valid, reliable and consistent judgements to be made about their achievement, and allow all admissible evidence generated by a learner to be considered
- assessment methods are designed in such a way that qualifications may be delivered efficiently and effectively, and appropriate skill and care may be taken in their delivery in order to achieve reliable results
- where there are options for tasks which can be completed, the options represent equivalent levels of demand / difficulty
- assessment uses methods and language which are clear, precise and understandable, and not unnecessarily complex, obscure, unfair or biased.

4.8 Consideration will be given during the development process to comparison with existing similar qualifications offered both by the RAD and by other awarding organisations. For example, level descriptors are used to define the levels of new qualifications where these are not obviously comparable to others we currently offer.

4.9 The nature of any barriers to entry for the qualification will be considered, and these will be mitigated or removed as far as possible. Given the nature of dance as a precise and physical art form, it is recognised that some barriers, for example for disabled learners, may be unavoidable; in such cases, the nature of such barriers is stated and their presence justified only in terms of the integrity of the qualifications. Any details of how the effects of such impediments to entry will be mitigated (for example, through the use of reasonable adjustments) are noted.

4.10 The Director of Exams takes responsibility for a final review of new qualifications, ensuring that they comply with all relevant regulatory conditions, and in particular that:

- there is sufficient evidence of demand and benefit to learners
- each qualification has a clear objective, and meets that objective
- assessment methodologies are effective, valid and reliable
- the RAD has or will obtain sufficient resources to deliver the qualification.

Following this review, any necessary changes are made and, if necessary, referred back to relevant committees / working groups.

4.11 Finalised qualifications, articulated in the form of a Specification and other relevant documentation, are submitted by the Director of Exams to the Exams and Regulatory Subcommittee and subsequently to the Board of Trustees for approval.

4.12 Qualifications are submitted to the regulators by the Exams Compliance Manager who is also responsible for providing all necessary associated documentation and evidence, such as letters of support.

## **5 Delivery of qualifications**

5.1 The day-to-day delivery of qualifications is overseen by the Head of Exams Operations in liaison with RAD National and Regional Offices worldwide. Quality assurance of the delivery of exams is monitored jointly by the Head of Exams Operations, the Chief Examiner and the Exams Customer Service Manager.

5.2 Demand for RAD qualifications is relatively predictable due to the closed market of RAD Registered Teachers and the cyclical nature of the examination year. The Annual Tour Planning process (managed by the Head of Exams Operations and the Panel of Examiners Manager) aims to predict and address fluctuations in demand and provides a structure which helps to address last-minute changes to demand when they occur. Take-up for new qualifications is monitored to make sure that the required resources are in place.

5.3 The RAD has a panel of approximately 230 examiners all of whom are subject experts. Examiners report to the Chief Examiner. There is a rigorous selection process for examiners, followed by a training programme lasting several weeks (including shadowing of tours), and there is a comprehensive suite of procedures to monitor the reliability and consistency of marking and of results issued. Tailored programmes of examiner recruitment and training are put in place

for exams delivered with partner organisations and varied schedules and policies may apply in these cases.

- 5.4 The Panel of Examiners Manager is responsible for ensuring that examiners are assigned to deliver exams worldwide. Examiner recruitment programmes are put in place as required, according to geographical need and attempts to pre-empt likely patterns of retirement. Data on examiner performance is maintained by the Exams Results Quality Assurance Manager via tracker documents.
- 5.5 All exams are externally assessed in full. Assessment is monitored by the Exams Results Quality Assurance Manager, who has no affiliation to any centre.
- 5.6 Applicants entering candidates for exams are required to authenticate the identity of candidates as a condition of entry. The presence of an external examiner at all live exams is the primary means of ensuring that assessments take place under appropriate conditions and that candidates' performance is directly, objectively and securely assessed. For filmed exams, candidates need to authenticate their identity in their exam recording.
- 5.7 The RAD operates an assessment model based on the demonstration of mastery of specific tasks in accordance with published criteria. The concept of 'setting assessments' (in the sense of setting question papers, for example) does not apply. The assessment itself does not change and is essentially identical for each candidate who takes a particular exam, and the validity and reliability of assessment is therefore defined at the qualification development stage.
- 5.8 Where there are (minor) variations in the specific tasks requested by examiners there are procedures in place to ensure that these are comparable. When syllabus content changes, steps are taken to ensure that the content is in line with the learning outcomes published for that qualification. Any changes to mark schemes are made on the basis of evidence gathered from results quality assurance and examiner standardisation information, in order to refine fitness for purpose and efficiency, to ensure that assessors can differentiate accurately and consistently between learners, and that specified levels of attainment are only achieved by learners who can demonstrate the required and published levels of skill and understanding.

- 5.9 Statistics on exams entries worldwide are maintained by the Exams Systems and Projects Manager based on information drawn from the RADius system and annual statistical returns from National and Regional Offices. This enables global trends of increase and decline to be identified and monitored.
- 5.10 Evidence of support for qualifications from relevant bodies is logged and retained on file.
- 5.11 The RAD maintains a comprehensive database of learner achievement which includes all exam results. This data, together with the results monitoring process mentioned above, feeds into the monitoring of assessment standards over time.
- 5.12 Data is retained via the RADius database and appropriate safeguards are in place (see Corporate Risk Register; Exams Risk Register; Information Management Policy). Support is provided by the IT department and external suppliers.
- 5.13 As the RAD is funded by income derived from its services, including exams, there is a natural disposition towards efficient and cost-effective delivery of exams. Budgetary data is provided via the Finance system and overseas from quarterly management reports.
- 5.14 Regular reviews of staffing levels are undertaken, particularly as part of budget planning processes. Competence is assessed via annual appraisals. Staff training and development programmes are in place. Quality assurance processes (tour evaluation) identify whether regional staffing and examiner composition is adequate. Contingency planning for future expansion and developments is undertaken as required.
- 5.15 A full range of policies, procedures and other documentation related to the delivery of the RAD's current provision is in place.

## **Review of qualifications**

- 6.1 Qualifications are kept under continuous review through the committee structure outlined above.
- 6.2 Review takes into account evidence from the delivery and assessment of the qualifications, which is received from a wide variety of sources. In particular:
  - the Exams Results Quality Assurance Manager provides an annual report derived from the monitoring of results

- a mechanism to allow users of qualifications to feed back via an online survey is in place. This data is analysed twice a year and presented by the Head of Exams Operations with questions on the survey also being reviewed at this time
- a comprehensive system to receive and process exam tour feedback from examiners and RAD National and Regional Offices is in place, managed jointly by the Head of Exams Operations and the Exams Customer Service Manager.
- National Offices attend two monthly meetings which cover operational and strategic challenges with the qualifications.
- all formal complaints and enquiries about results are logged, and information is fed back via relevant committees by the Exams Customer Service Manager.

6.3 Continued compliance with RAD equality and diversity requirements is also kept under review (see *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy*). RAD also has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Exams data on reasonable adjustments / special considerations and ethnic demographics is maintained.

6.4 Compliance with regulatory conditions is kept under review (see *Procedures to ensure compliance with regulatory conditions*).

6.5 Where information suggests that a change of approach to the delivery of qualifications should be considered, this is reviewed by the Artistic Director, Director of Exams and Chief Examiner and addressed by the relevant committee.

## **7 Withdrawal of qualifications**

7.1 The RAD may withdraw a qualification for any of the following reasons:

- the qualification no longer meets the needs of learners
- an insufficient number of learners are entering for the qualification
- it is no longer economically viable to deliver the qualification
- the regulator no longer recognises, or permits the RAD to award, the qualification
- the RAD undergoes a change of control or ceases trading.

7.2 Any decision to withdraw a qualification will be agreed at the Exams and Regulatory and Subcommittee

- 7.3 Any decision to withdraw a qualification will be recommended to the Artistic and Exams & Regulatory Subcommittees and will take into account an appropriate range of evidence. A rationale will be agreed, and operational and certification end-dates will be set, and then sent to the Board of Trustees for agreement.
- 7.4 The RAD will inform the regulators as soon as possible of its intention to withdraw a qualification. This will be done before making an announcement to learners.
- 7.5 Where possible learners will be given minimum notice of one year for the withdrawal of any qualification. Communication will be made via the normal channels, i.e. Members Area (*Focus on Exams, Key Changes Document*, and the RAD website. Clear, accurate and relevant information will be provided throughout the process of withdrawal.
- 7.6 Where a decision is taken to withdraw a qualification, the RAD will prepare, maintain and comply with a written withdrawal plan, which will include clear timescales, an explanation of why the qualification is being withdrawn, information about the potential numbers of learners that may be affected, and information about how the interests of learners taking the qualification will be protected. The progress of the withdrawal against the plan will be monitored via the Exams & Regulatory Subcommittee.
- 7.7 The RAD will normally be able to ensure that no candidate is in a position where they enter for a qualification which cannot be certificated. This is because of the relatively short timescales between entry and certification. However, should this happen for any reason, the RAD will refund fees in full and make every effort to direct the candidate to an alternative qualification offered by the RAD or by another awarding organisation.
- 7.8 The RAD's qualifications consist of either one or three mandatory units and claims for exemption do not apply.
- 7.9 If any learner feels they have been unfairly treated as the result of the withdrawal of a qualification they should contact the Exams Customer Service Manager who will deal with the enquiry according to normal procedures. Should the matter escalate into a complaint, this will be dealt with according to the exams department policy for complaints.

## **8 Policy monitoring and review**

8.1 This policy is reviewed by the Exams & Regulatory Subcommittee and the Director of Exams is responsible for signing off the policy.

Policy Author:	Dan Phelps (Head of Exams Operations)
Approved by	 Mary Keene Director of Exams
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