

Scottish Dance Teachers' Alliance

Reasonable Adjustments And Special Considerations For Students Taking Graded And Vocational Graded Examinations In Dance

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 required standard or not.

Due to the practical nature of examinations in dance, it is the policy of the SDTA 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

The SDTA 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, but are likely to include physical barriers, for example:

- 1 Strength to accomplish particular technical exercises
- 2 Physical ability to successfully complete particular exercises
- 3 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 is paramount for the SDTA 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 him/herself and for others, an option 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 the Examinations Board of the SDTA. In some circumstances the Examinations Board may wish to appoint a member of staff to carry out the risk assessment.

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 the SDTA will 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 the SDTA 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:

- 1 making changes for individuals to the standard arrangements for examinations, for example allowing learners extra time to complete the examination requirements
- 2 providing access facilitators during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader, provided that this did not impinge on other candidates
- 3 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 as they apply to a disadvantage that occurs to the learner either just before or during the assessment. Reasons for special consideration could be temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances at the time of the assessment.

Candidates may apply for special consideration during or after an assessment but may not apply for special consideration in the case of a permanent disability or learning difficulty. Special considerations will be taken into account by the examiner at the time of the assessment and will be recorded and sent to the SDTA head office for the attention of the Examinations Board. Special considerations may result in a small post-assessment adjustment to the mark of the learner. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances during the assessment and will reflect the difficulty faced by the learner.

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, the SDTA will bear in mind 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 will not be altered. The SDTA will 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. 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 will be based on the individual need of the candidate. Decisions about adjustments to examinations will 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 will 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 the SDTA, in advance of each examination taking place according to the 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 the SDTA 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 his/her 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 the SDTA 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.

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 he or she has 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. The SDTA will set a maximum amount of extra time in relation to the individual candidate's requirements which must be adhered to by the examiner.

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).

Allowing other forms of communication to be used within an examination

For some candidates, it may be permissible to use alternative forms of communication to give direction or instruction, or a hearing loop, although these should be kept to a minimum by the examiner in accordance with examination regulations.

Examples of alternative communication could be the use of British Sign Language to give instruction or direction, but only where this does not compromise a candidate's ability to perform the required exercises. Where BSL is the primary means of communication for a deaf candidate, these candidates may have the support of a BSL/English interpreter to sign the instructions or directions to them which are being given by the examiner. The teacher is responsible for providing this.

The BSL interpreter should be recruited with integrity by the teacher and hold an appropriate qualification in the sign language and a good working knowledge of the content of the examination and must not be related to the candidate.

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

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 Disability Discrimination 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 will normally be made by the teacher or the tutor (or an appropriate person in the centre).

In order to ensure that any adjustment to assessment will only provide the candidate with the necessary assistance without giving him or her 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 a minimum of twenty one days prior in advance of each examination for which the candidate is entered, with appropriate evidence of the disability or learning difficulty for which the adjustment is being requested. This may 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 may 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

Due to the nature of special considerations – that they are requested at the time of the examination – each request will be unique to that candidate and that particular examination, and must be discussed with the SDTA.

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 are as follows:

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

- 1 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.
- 2 To offer the candidate the opportunity to reschedule the examination for a later date. This would need to be done in consultation with the SDTA's head office and may not be possible to confirm on the day.

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

Minor disturbances during an examination

A permanent disability or difficulty (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, 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 the SDTA's policy

.Examiners should use their judgement within these guidelines set out by the SDTA 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 will refer to the SDTA head office in cases where an examination has to be rescheduled for a later date as this would need to be confirmed formally with the teacher.

The SDTA Examinations Board will be the final arbiter of any decision made about special considerations – these decisions will be logged and recorded for monitoring purposes and to inform future decisions.

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