Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing
Classical Indian

Kathak Outline for Primary, Grade 1–6 Examinations and Theory Examination

Specification

For teaching from
1 January 2026

For exams
1 April 2026 onwards

Version 1.0

First published in 2026
by Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, 22/26 Paul Street, London EC2A 4QE

Copyright ©2026 Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Registered charity number 250397

Contents

1 Foreword and faculty history 5

2 Faculty aims and objectives 7

3 Qualification purpose 8

4 Transferable skills 8

5 Qualification structure and regulation 9

6 Classical Indian Dance: Kathak 11

7 Primary Examination format 13

8 Assessment – Primary Class Examination 14

9 Classification of results 14

10 Classical Indian Dance: Kathak 16

11 Entry conditions and general information 17

12 Grade 1–6 Specification 19

13 Scheme of assessments: Graded Examinations 31

14 Grade 1 and 2 33

15 Grade 3 and 4 34

16 Grade 5 and 6 36

17 Grade 1–6 Marking Allocation and Indicative Content 38

18 Classical Indian Dance Theory Examination – Kathak 44

19 Assessment delivery 49

20 Examinations and quality assurance 50

1 Foreword and faculty history

Kathak is a northern Indian classical dance form, originating as a storytelling art in Hindu temples and later refined in the Mughal courts, blending Hindu and Muslim influences. Characterised by expressive gestures, intricate footwork, rhythmic interplay, and a balance of movement and stillness, Kathak integrates music, text, and vocals.

The ISTD syllabus aims to provide a comprehensive Classical Indian dance education adapted for students worldwide.

History of the Classical Indian Dance Faculty

The development of Indian dance in the United Kingdom

Over a period of a little more than 150 years, Indian dance in the UK has made a stimulating and substantial journey. It has developed from being exhibited as an exotic artefact of the 'jewel in the crown' that was India, to becoming an established and exciting element of the contemporary British dance scene.

In 1838, traditional Indian temple dancers or devadasis appeared in performance for the first time in Europe at the Adelphi Theatre, London. Between the 1920s and 1960s, a number of non-devadasi modern, professional Indian dancers were presented and fêted in the UK and Europe. These included Uday Shankar, Ram Gopal, Ragini Devi, Mrinalini Sarabhai and Indrani Rahman.

By the mid-1970s, however, when Naseem Khan's seminal report on the arts of British ethnic minorities was commissioned and published (1976), a significant number of teachers from the South Asian diaspora were running thriving classical Indian dance classes in the UK. During the 1980s, these dance forms, along with their performers and schools, became extremely popular.

By the 1990s, Indian dance was recognized as 'South Asian Dance' in the UK's arts scene and began incorporating contemporary and hybrid styles, attracting public funding. Despite this evolution, many young people of South Asian descent continued to study classical Indian dance to maintain their cultural heritage.

The Faculty story

In 1996, the dance organisation Akademi, under the artistic directorship of Mira Mishra Kaushik, sowed the seeds for a South Asian Dance Faculty of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

Encouraged by Mike Browne, the Society's Chief Executive at the time, Akademi created, funded and managed a three-year syllabus research project, led by Sushmita Ghosh. It involved consulting over a hundred teachers of classical Indian dance in the UK and abroad and sampling their existing curricula.

Akademi offered to the Society proposed Kathak and Bharatanatyam syllabi compiled respectively by Sushmita Ghosh and Pushkala Gopal by working closely with a core working group and helped recruit David Henshaw as Founding Chair of the South Asian Dance Faculty in 1999.

Under Henshaw's championing and meticulous chairmanship, the Faculty committee commissioned Sushmita Ghosh (Kathak) and Nina Rajarani (Bharatanatyam) to develop and fine tune the syllabi and formulate specifications in line with the Society's pedagogical and examination systems.

Examining in Kathak and Bharatanatyam started in earnest in 2001 in various regions of the UK, with expansion by 2012 international as widely as Amsterdam, Delhi, Dubai, Johannesburg, Mumbai, Seattle and Toronto.

In 2013, CIDF had the special honour of bestowing the ISTD's rare International Fellowship award on the Kathak maestro Pandit Birju Maharaj, whose Ang Kavya text is prescribed reading for CIDF Kathak examinations.

Faculty-led Misrana showcases and teachers' forums have fostered skills development, networking, and recruitment within the classical Indian dance community, whilst our classical Indian grades are also recognised in national advanced training applications.

Dancing forward

Bharatanatyam and Kathak have spread worldwide, bringing traditional teaching methods with them. However, the Faculty has recognised and taken active action to address some practices in traditional Indian dance training that may pose health or safety risks, especially when taken out of their original context, limiting dancers' growth in different environments. The current syllabi demonstrate this awareness and implement appropriate application of safe practices, facilitating the confidence for dancers to practice dance safely.

The Faculty respects and embraces traditional techniques, repertoire, and wisdom, while incorporating in its pedagogy and vision updated practices that foster understanding, talent, curiosity, responsibility, growth, safety, creativity, confidence, agency and, above all, the promotion and enjoyment of proficiency in dancing.

Keeping abreast of changes in the UK's qualifications requirements is important to the faculty and updating the syllabus and specifications is completed regularly to ensure that students and teachers are kept up to date. This is all part of the faculty's aims, identified by the committee, as seeking to advance our members' teaching success, and grow our membership at home and internationally is our paramount priority.

2 Faculty aims and objectives

Aims

The ISTD celebrates the various cultural approaches that our classical Indian dance teachers bring to their studios and classwork.

Our syllabus embraces this diversity within the ISTD's Kathak training system and is designed to closely reflect traditional teaching whilst accommodating the needs and experiences of present-day students worldwide.

Objectives

This syllabus encourages students to invest time and effort into the early grades to create the necessary physical and cultural infrastructure for the dancer in training. The syllabus is designed to develop further proficiency through the grades and onwards to the vocational and teaching qualifications if they choose. It promotes a holistic dance experience at the initial stages, even before each aspect of the physical training has been mastered.

Students are also encouraged to watch dance performances to gain a cultural and critical understanding, and to develop a lively interest in Kathak as well as the wider horizons of dance.

The ISTD Kathak syllabus:

- Promotes correct posture and safe dance practice
- Develops an understanding of Kathak technique and terminology
- Develops the sense of line through arms, body, head and legs
- Promotes appreciation of varying expressions, styles and interpretation
- Encourages an awareness of the use of space and focus
- Encourages awareness of audience, sense of performance and artistry
- Develops a creative use of rhythm, footwork and movement within the Kathak style
- Develops understanding of the cultural, mythological and storytelling aspects of Kathak

The ISTD syllabus provides a structure equally suited to students of any of the different gharānās of Kathak, without favouring one over another.

In each examination the syllabus is presented in three sections:

- Technical Skills
- Performance
- Safe Dance Practice, Ancillary Skills, and Requested Additional Material

It is essential for teachers to purchase the full Kathak Primary, Grade 1–6 and Vocational Technical Examination document available from our ISTD shop.

As this includes comprehensive syllabus details appropriate for examinations and explanation of content for best teaching practices. shop.istd.org/faculties/classical-indian-dance/

3 Qualification purpose

Classical Indian Dance: Kathak offers a range of learning opportunities that builds technique and understanding of the Kathak style, developing physical and technical abilities and the cultural, expressive and artistic skills.

After the graded examinations, candidates can progress to vocational graded examinations as preparation for further or higher education, full/part time dance training, employment as a professional dancer or as preparation for dance teaching qualifications.

4 Transferable skills

Performing skills	Technical skills	Personal skills
• Artistry • Communication • Dynamic and rhythmic awareness • Expression • Fluency • Phrasing • Focus • Musicality • Projection • Sensitivity to others • Spatial awareness	• Accuracy • Application of feedback • Application of technique • Coordination • Creative engagement with movement material • Fitness • Flexibility • Kinesthetic awareness • Mastery • Memory and recall • Movement intensity appropriate to the style • Placement • Rhythm • Sensitivity to the cultural framework and/or stylistic influences of the technique • Stamina • Strength • Timing • Understanding of anatomy and physiology	• Ability to analyse • Application of knowledge • Commitment • Confidence • Concentration • Conviction • Cooperation and teamwork • Creativity • Critical self-reflection • Discipline • Individuality • Mental and physical wellbeing • Perseverance • Problem solving • Respect • Response to feedback • Self-challenge • Self-management • Self-motivation • Setting and achieving goals • Understanding and appreciation of cultural framework, style and genre

5 Qualification structure and regulation

Non-regulated examinations: **Primary Class Examination**

Regulated Graded Examinations: **Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 5, Grade 6 and Theory (Theory Regulated in UK only)**

ISTD Graded Examinations are regulated by Ofqual in England; Qualifications Wales in Wales; and the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland.

The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) provides a single, simple system for cataloguing all regulated qualifications, indicating qualifications by their level (degree of difficulty) and size (amount or breadth of learning).

Size is indicated by a credit value, corresponding to a term used in the title. An Award is worth 1-12 credits, a Certificate is worth 13-36 credits, and a Diploma is worth 37 or more credits.

One credit corresponds to 10 hours of learning for the typical learner, which is divided into Guided Learning hours (GLH), which is broadly contact time with the teacher, and personal study time, which together make Total Qualification Time (TQT).

The ISTD's qualifications on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) are as follows:

Qualification title	Qualification number	Guided learning hours	Total qualification time (hours)	Credits
ISTD Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 1 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0755/0	60	70	7
ISTD Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 2 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0753/7	60	70	7
ISTD Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 3 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0754/9	60	70	7
ISTD Level 2 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 4 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0756/2	75	95	10
ISTD Level 2 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 5 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0757/4	75	95	10
ISTD Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 6 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0758/6	90	130	13
ISTD Level 3 Certificate in Classical Indian Dance Theory (Kathak)	610/7250/3	70	130	13

Regulation – Europe

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is an overarching framework that links the qualifications of different countries together and allows for comparison and translation. The EQF has eight levels across which qualifications can be mapped.

The levels do not correspond directly with the UK's Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), although they are similar.

The following table shows the level of our Vocational Examination qualifications on the RQF and the EQF.

Qualification title	RQF level	EQF level
Grade 4	Level 2	Level 3
Grade 5	Level 2	Level 3
Grade 6	Level 3	Level 4
Certificate in Classical Indian Dance Theory: Kathak	Level 3	Level 4

UCAS points

In the UK, our Vocational Graded Examination qualifications can contribute towards entry into higher education through the allocation of UCAS points. UCAS tariff points translate your qualifications and grades into a numerical value, which some universities, colleges, and conservatoires may refer to in their course entry requirements.

The number of points they can get depends on how well they performed in their examination, i.e. Distinction, Merit or Pass.

Grade 6	Tariff points
Distinction	12
Merit	10
Pass	8

Equivalence of qualification levels

Qualification level	Level	Equivalence
Grade 6	3	Equivalent to KS5 Year 12/13 - A-Level and T-Level standard
Classical Indian Dance Theory Examination: Kathak	3	Equivalent to KS5 Year 12/13 - A-Level and T-Level standard

6 Classical Indian Dance: Kathak

Primary Class Examination

Rationale

This syllabus is common across Bharatanatyam and Kathak, in preparing children for the graded examinations of either genre. It may equally be taught by teachers of either genre, using the movement vocabulary which is familiar, and which would be of use in later learning.

This syllabus has been designed to introduce younger learners to classical Indian dance and as such has been designed to meet their needs.

Entry requirements and general information

Age requirements

The Primary Examination has no lower or upper age limit but is recommended for those between the ages of six and eight.

The examination does not require the dancer to make a gender specific presentation, and all candidates are presented together.

Studio layout for examination

Teachers should select the most suitable studio layout for the examination, to allow candidates to demonstrate fully. Mirrors in the studio should be completely covered or made opaque and a tablecloth and bell should be arranged on the examiner's table.

Language

All exams and assessments are conducted in English.

Time allowances and number of candidates

Examination	1 or 2 Candidates	3 or 4 Candidates
Primary Class	Only in exceptional circumstances	20 minutes

Musical accompaniment

The teacher is responsible for the musical accompaniment in a recorded format. For the Primary Class Examination only, the teacher may be the music operator.

Dress requirements

Although examination attire is not formally assessed in Kathak examinations, it remains an essential component of training. Wearing appropriate attire and maintaining well-groomed hair contribute to poise and confidence.

Candidates are expected to dress suitably in garments that allow the examiner clear visibility of the dance and enable the candidate to perform without distraction.

The following are expected:

- Candidates should be suitably dressed in clothes that enable the examiner to see the dance and allow the candidate to perform without distraction
- Candidates should wear a suitably tailored kamīz/kurtā and salwār/churidār/pyjāmā
- All candidates should firmly bound their waist
- Wearing Dupatta is optional
- Hair should be pinned away from the face and, if necessary, drawn back in a single plait or bun
- A long plait should be secured at the back to prevent its movement from distracting from the dance
- No dance costume or costume jewellery should be worn
- Ghungrūs are optional

7 Primary Examination format

In the presence of the examiner, the teacher teaches three to four candidates following the sections below:

Section 1

- Section 1 of the examination is conducted by the teacher, leading a pre-rehearsed dance or warm-up sequence, of 5 minutes maximum, covering all aspects of the syllabus.
- Section 1 should demonstrate the candidates' ability to follow and respond to the teachers' instructions and demonstrate their experience of the syllabus material.

Section 2

- Section 2 is a dance performance of around 3 to 4 minutes maximum, pre-prepared by the teacher. This can include non-genre specific dance movements.
- The teacher may remain in the room for this section but must not guide or direct candidates nor make eye contact with them.

Section 3

- For the final part of the examination, the examiner may ask the teacher for candidates to perform additional syllabus material not previously shown.
- This is the opportunity for the examiner to see if syllabus content from all the required components have been presented. (as stated below). This gives the candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the syllabus material requested.

Primary syllabus content

The format of this examination is as a presentation class that is teacher-led.

1. Body Awareness

1.1 Warm-up
1.2 Cool-down
1.3 'Everyday' stance/ the 'dance' stance
1.4 Awareness of body parts
1.5 Placing of the legs and feet
1.6 Carriage of the arms, shoulders, neck, head and eyes
1.7 Mobilisation of the arms, wrists, hands, fingers, shoulders; head and neck; face and eyes

2. Rhythm and Timing

2.1 Hand clapping, foot beating
2.2 Variations in the sound of stamping

3. Dynamics

3.1 Firm and gentle
3.2 Quick and slow
3.3 Rising and sinking
3.4 Action and stillness

4. Expression

4.1 Communication of feelings and emotions
4.2 Lucidity of mimetic statements

5 Spatial Awareness

5.1 Direction relating to body
5.2 Direction relating to space
5.3 Travelling and floor patterns
5.4 Turns and spins

8 Assessment – Primary Class Examination

Title of component	Marks attainable
Body awareness and control	15
Rhythm and timing	15
Dynamics	10
Expression	10
Spatial awareness and use of space	10
Response to teacher	10
Movement memory	10
Performance quality	20
Total	**100**

9 Classification of results

Method of assessment

The Primary Class Examination is assessed externally by visiting examiners recruited and trained by the ISTD.
The titles of the components and the marks attainable are detailed above. The overall mark is given out of 100 and the overall result is indicated as follows:

Grade	Marks
Distinction	80-100 marks
Merit	60-79 marks
Pass	40-59 marks
Not Attained	0-39 marks

Candidates are assessed on their ability to show:

- Technical accuracy with correct placement to the best of their physical facility
- Appropriate use of limbs showing an understanding of the purpose or significance of each movement or sequence of movements
- A sense of line and well-coordinated movements
- An assured performance showing the different qualities of movement required by each section of the examination structure
- Musicality and rhythmic awareness

Mark scheme

Marking allocation and indicative content

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Primary Class Examination – Kathak

Component titles	Rhythm and Timing (15 marks)	Body Awareness and Control (15 marks)	Spatial Awareness and Use of Space (10 marks)	Dynamics (10 marks)	Movement Memory (10 marks)	Performance Quality (20 marks)	Expression (10 marks)	Response to Teacher (10 marks)
Indicative content	**Rhythm**: demonstrates accurate use of hand clapping, foot beating **Timing:** demonstrates accurate timings in relationship with tāla.	**Body Awareness:** demonstrate an awareness of balance and coordination **Control:** demonstrate control throughout the body (torso and limbs)	**Spatial Awareness:** demonstrates a basic understanding of the use of directions relating to the body. Demonstrates a understanding of turns and spins in the torso, limbs, hands and feet **Use of Space:** demonstrates an understanding of pattern and direction within the performance space.	**Dynamics:** Variations of these dynamics listed below should be demonsrated appropriately: Firm and Gentle, Quick and Slow Rising and Sinking Action and Stillness . mininum of two exercises. (These are listed in the specification - .i.e running for 8 pausing for 8)	Movement Memory: demonstrates accurate detail and neatness of execution.	**Performance:** demonstrates correct posture and projection throughout the examination	**Expression:** demonstrates natural engagement and enthusiasm throughout	**Response:** recalls and responds accurately to the teachers instructions & questions.
Marks allocated	**5 marks -** demonstrates accurate hand clapping **5 marks -** demonstrates correct foot beating **5 marks -** demonstrates correct timing in relationship with tāla.	**5 marks -** demonstrates awareness of balance 5 marks - demonstrates awareness of coodrination **5 marks -** demonstrates an awareness of control through the whole body.	**5 marks -** demonstrates a basic understanding of the use of directions relating to the body (i.e turns and spins in the torso, limbs, hands and feet) **5 marks -** demonstrates an understanding of pattern and direction within the performance space.	**10 marks -** demonstrates appropriately the variations and contrasts of the listed dynamics below: **5 marks** for Firm , Gentle, Quick and Slow **5 marks** for Rising, Sinking, Action and Stillness.	**5 marks -** demonstrates accurate detail **5 marks -** demonstrates neatness of execution.	**5 marks -** demonstrates correct posture throughout and **5 marks** for awareness of stance **5 marks -** demonstrates an enjoyment and **5 marks** for correct projection throughout.	**5 marks -** performs with enthusiasm throughout 5 **marks -** performs with natural engagement throughout.	**5 marks -** responds to the teachers instructions and questions appropriately. **5 marks -** reponds with technical accuracy.

10 Classical Indian Dance: Kathak

Graded 1–6 Examinations

Qualifications

This section sets out the required teaching and learning content and how they should be delivered. The learning and teaching content for each qualification in the specification is set out in a similar way. Learners should take examinations only once the learning and teaching content have been covered in full.

Rationale

Kathak makes a distinctive contribution to the education of all students, in that it uses movement, which is one of the fundamental modes of human expression. It offers a range of learning opportunities and enables participants to enjoy physical expression, as well as develop intellectual sensibilities.

As they work together in Kathak, candidates learn about co-operation and develop an understanding of the shaping of movement into artistic forms of expression.

There are six practical examination grades, numbered from 1 to 6, in order to indicate the increasing order of difficulty (6 represents the highest level of attainment).

Graded Examinations in Kathak are concerned with progressive mastery in defined stages within the context of safe dance practice.

Aims

The aim of the Graded Examinations is to provide an assessment scheme for dance, which gives the basis for the measurement of the individual candidate's progress and development, whether the candidate is pursuing dance as a leisure activity or as preparation for a professional career as a dance teacher or performer.

Objectives

The objectives of the Kathak Graded Examination syllabus are set out below:

- To impart practical skills in Kathak as it is manifest today in its traditional form, complemented by appropriate background knowledge and understanding of the art, through a programme of training and assessment
- To lay a holistic foundation either as an element in liberal education or as a preparation for vocational training in Kathak or other dance-based careers, integrating the major aspects of the art form, including the movement vocabulary, the experience of performance and an understanding of the relevant music and literature
- To develop an awareness and appreciation of Kathak in the context of a wider dance world

Learning and progression

Candidates develop the skill and understanding of Kathak, at the same time as building a sound technique, by developing the physical ability to communicate through movement in an expressive and artistic way.

A clearly defined structure allows learning to take place in the context of safe dance practice. The Graded Examinations build up progressively, ensuring that steps and skills learned at lower levels prepare for more complex movements as the candidate progresses.

Each Kathak Graded Examination allows candidates to progress to the next higher grade, promoting the development of physical and artistic skills, including posture, running, turning, gestures, timing, and rhythmic awareness, all of which are transferable to other dance genres.

Following on from the Graded Examinations, candidates may wish to progress to the Vocational Graded Examinations as preparation for employment as a professional dancer or as preparation for dance teaching qualifications.

The Graded Examinations in Kathak also allow for those participating solely for recreational purposes to produce quality work in a safe dance context.

11 Entry conditions and general information

Age requirements

There is no upper or lower age limit for entering the Kathak Graded Examinations. It is recommended, however, that teachers ensure that candidates are at an appropriate level of maturity to meet and enjoy the demands of the syllabus. It is recommended that children and adults are not entered at the same time.

Prior learning

The Graded Examinations in Kathak are intended to be taken consecutively and most candidates will wish to progress through them in sequence to develop and demonstrate the requisite skills. However, in cases where examinations are undertaken without success at the previous grade, the candidate needs to be at an appropriate level of physical and artistic development.

Before a candidate enrolls in a class leading to a Graded Examination, teachers are under a particular duty, therefore, to assess the achievement of the candidate, particularly regarding safe dance practice.

The examination does not require the candidates to make any gender specific presentations, and any candidates can be presented together.

From October 2026, candidates will be required to have achieved the Theory Examination in order to be certificated for Grade 6. Candidates who have not completed Theory examination by this point will not be able to receive a result.

Studio layout for examination

Teachers should select the most suitable studio layout for the examination, to allow candidates to demonstrate fully. Mirrors in the studio should be completely covered or made opaque and a tablecloth and bell should be arranged on the examiner's table.

Language

All exams and assessments are conducted in English.

Time allowances and number of candidates

Candidates are normally examined in groups of three. Where this is not possible, candidates should be entered in pairs. In exceptional circumstances, a single candidate can be entered, for example if the teacher is not entering any other Grade 1 candidates who have learnt the same prepared dance sequence.

The examination of the candidates takes the following total time:

Examination	1 Candidate	2 Candidates	3 Candidates
Grade 1	15 minutes	25 minutes	30 minutes
Grade 2	20 minutes	30 minutes	35 minutes
Grade 3	25 minutes	35 minutes	45 minutes
Grade 4	25 minutes	40 minutes	50 minutes
Grade 5	30 minutes	45 minutes	60 minutes
Grade 6	40 minutes	60 minutes	80 minutes

During all Graded Examinations, candidates perform their Prepared Dance Sequence together. Following directly afterwards, candidates will individually respond to questions given by the examiner regarding the Prepared Dance Sequence performed. After this additional questions will be requested for candidates to show their comprehension of the syllabus knowledge.

Musical accompaniment

The teacher is responsible for the provision of accompaniment. This may be a CD or other audio equipment, in which case an operator will be required, or it may be live as in the case for Grades 5 and 6.

On no account may the teacher, another candidate in the same session or the parent of a candidate to be present to operate or accompany any examinations.

Sample examination music is available from the ISTD website which where necessary, can be edited appropriately for the Prepared Dance Sequence.

Dress requirements

Although examination attire is not formally assessed in Kathak examinations, it remains an essential component of training. Wearing appropriate attire and maintaining well-groomed hair contribute to poise and confidence.

Candidates are expected to dress suitably in garments that allow the examiner clear visibility of the dance and enable the candidate to perform without distraction.

The following are expected:

- Candidates should wear a suitably tailored kamīz/kurtā and salwār/churidār/pyjāmā
- All candidates should have their waist firmly bound
- Wearing Dupatta is optional
- Hair should be pinned away from the face and, if necessary, drawn back in a single plait or bun
- A long plait should be secured at the back to prevent its movement distracting from the dance
- No dance costume or costume jewellery should be worn. Jewellery or body piercings should not be worn, unless for religious reasons. In such cases they should be properly secured and covered to prevent any potential injuries.
- All candidates from Grade 1 onwards are required to wear ghungrūs

12 Grade 1–6 Specification

Grade 1

Qualification title	Qualification number	Guided learning hours	Total qualification time (hours)	Credits
ISTD Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 1 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0755/0	60	70	7

Candidates demonstrate an increasing vocabulary of movement in the chosen technique. An understanding of the technique is reflected in the ability to coordinate simple movements to produce combinations of steps and quality of movement i.e. precision and control within the range of their own physical capacity.

Candidates communicate an increasing confidence in performance. They can interpret music and display sensitivity to musical content and style.

Candidates' performance should demonstrate an awareness of spatial awareness, an ability to work with others and responsiveness to an audience.

Grade 1 Examination

The Grade 1 examination consists of:

- Candidates perform together their **Prepared Dance Sequence of no more than 6 minutes duration**, covering both nritta and nritya aspects of Kathak, using the following as a guideline:

  a short invocation, tatkār/lari, three toṛās / ṭukṛās, two tihāis and kavitt

  Following the Prepared Dance Sequence individual responses to simple questions will be requested from:

  1 – Additional material directly from the Prepared Dance Sequence and Grade 1 syllabus

  2 – Definitions and contextual knowledge (from Section 8)

  3 – Movement – *nritta hasta* (Section 2) **Ang Kavya** (AK)

  4 – *Abhinaya* – *Asamyukta hastas* (Section 3)

  5 – *Laya-tāla* (Section 1)

  6 – Creative exercise (Section 6)
- Candidates will be required to perform two exercises from the Safe Dance Practice syllabus

Grade 1 Syllabus content

Technical skills

1. Laya and tāla

1.1. Paṛhant of teentāl ṭhékā in barābar and dugun laya showing tāli and khāli

1.2 Ability to do the paṛhant of the nritta compositions against the background of a steady pulse

2. Movement Vocabulary

2.1. The basic stance

2.2. Nritta movements / Arm and hand movements

Nritta hasta: naman, utpatti, sūchitā, samtal, puṣpak - ref: Ang Kavya (AK) by Pandit Birju Maharaj

2.3. Wrist movement – rotational mobility

2.4. Hand and arm movements combined with tā theī theī tat footwork

2.5. Travelling patterns in different directions, including diagonal walks

2.6. Ability to hold the sum through the sūchitā positions

2.7. Chakkar based on three and five steps turns maintaining central axis

2.8. Tatkār - ability to use the heel as well as the entire sole of foot

3. Abhinaya

3.1 Use of the face and body to communicate narrative

3.2 Five asamyukta hastas (ref: Abhinaya Darpana); two questions will be requested in the examination, and these will be individual candidate responses.)

Performance

4. Nritta

4.1 Tatkār in teentāl demonstrating the progression of tempo from barābar to dugun

4.2 Six ṭukṛās, four tihāis and a simple laṛi or tatkār ka palṭā in teentāl

4.3 Recite the learnt rhythmic compositions to a steady pulse and perform the ṭukṛās, tihāis, and laṛi or tatkār ke palṭā.

5. Nritya

5.1. One kavitt and one śloka or vandana or a simple devotional song incorporating abhinaya, with a basic understanding of the characters.

Creative Exercise, Safe Dance Practice, and Requested Additional Content

6. Creative Exercise

6.1 With instructions given from the examiner, the candidate is expected to create movements on simple ideas/narratives.

6.2 With instructions given from the examiner, the candidate is expected to create simple floor patterns using tatkār with any hastak.

7. Safe Dance Practice

For the Grade 1 Safe Dance Practice content please purchase the Safe Dance Practice DVD and manual, to learn the appropriate exercises that will be examined in this section of the syllabus.

In the examination two exercises will be requested from the SDP vocabulary for the candidates to perform correctly. If there are multiple candidates in an examination set it is at the examiners discretion to whether they assign either the same or different exercises.
shop.istd.org/shop/examination-specifications/item-classical-indian-dance-safe-dance-practice-pack/

8. Definitions and contextual knowledge

8.1. sum, tāla, ṭhékā, paṛhant, toṛa / ṭukṛā, tihāi, barābar, dugun and kavitt

8.2. recite and learn the meaning of the kavitt and śloka / vandanā learnt as part of the syllabus

8.3 Understanding of the function of the ghungrū

Grade 2

Qualification title	Qualification number	Guided learning hours	Total qualification time (hours)	Credits
ISTD Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 2 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0753/7	60	70	7

Candidates demonstrate an increasing vocabulary of movement in the chosen technique. An understanding of the technique is reflected in the ability to coordinate simple movements to produce combinations of steps and quality of movement, i.e. precision and control within the range of their own physical capacity.

Candidates communicate an increasing confidence in performance. They can interpret music and display sensitivity to musical content and style. Candidates' performance should demonstrate an awareness of spatial awareness, an ability to work with others and responsiveness to an audience.

Grade 2 Examination

The Grade 2 examination consists of:

- Candidates perform together their **Prepared Dance Sequence of no more than 8 minutes duration**, covering both *nritta* and *nritya* aspects of Kathak, using the following as a guideline:

  a short devotional song or Siva stuti, āmad, two toṛās, two chakkardār toṛās / ṭukṛās, two tihāi-s, laṛi and gat nikās

  Following the Prepared Dance Sequence individual responses to simple questions will be requested from:

  1 – Additional material directly from the Prepared Dance Sequence and Grade 2 syllabus

  2 – Definitions and contextual knowledge (from Section 8)

  3 – Movement – *nritta hasta* (Section 2) Ang Kavya (AK)

  4 – Abhinaya – *Samyukta hastas* (Section 3)

  5 – *Laya-tāla* (Section 1)

  6 – Creative exercise (Section 6)
- Candidates will be required to perform two exercises from the Safe Dance Practice syllabus

Grade 2 Syllabus content

Technical skills

1. Laya and tāla

1.1. Demonstration of teentāl ṭhékā in barābar, dugun and chaugun laya through paṛhant and tatkar

1.2. Paṛhant of all nritta and nritya compositions while maintaining the flow of tāla, showing tāli and khāli

2. Movement Vocabulary

2.1. Nritta hasta: sthir, palaṭ, hasta chakra (Ūrdhva, Madhya and Tala), Vyaapti – (Ref: AK)

2.2. Still poses: A variety of sam positions and an ability to hold them through standing and sitting positions

2.3. Chakkar based on four and eight step turns in addition to 5 and 3 step

2.4. Introduction to the basic technique of gat chāl/gat nikās

2.5. Introduction to sundarī grīva / ḍorā

2.6. Tatkār – claṛity of sound in all three speeds developing the heels as well as the entire sole of foot

3. Abhinaya

3.1. Introduction to āngika abhinaya communicated through a narrative and identifying the hastas used

3.2. Five samyukta hastas (ref: Abhinaya Darpana); two questions including meaning and usage, will be requested in the examination these will be individual candidate responses.

Performance

4. Nritta: Teentāl

4.1. Salāmi / rangmanch pūjā

4.2. One āmad, eight tukṛās/toṛās (including four chakkardār) and four tihāis (including one chakkardār) in addition to the ones covered in Grade 1

4.3. Footwork pattern / laṛi, incorporating a minimum of three variations, emphasizing the usage of heels and concluding with a tihāi

5. Nritya

5.1. Simple gat nikās

5.2. A kavitt/compositions to introduce the tāṇḍav and lāsya concepts

5.3. A short devotional song or Ṣiva Stuti – Āngikam Bhuvanam Yasya (ref: AD)

Creative Exercise, Safe Dance Practice, and Requested Additional Content

6. Creative Exercise

6.1. With instructions given from the examiner, candidates are expected to create simple floor and movement patterns using tā theī theī tat (tatkar step) and tig dhā dig dig theī

7. Safe Dance Practice

For the Grade 2 Safe Dance Practice content please purchase the Safe Dance Practice DVD and manual, to learn the appropriate exercises that will be examined in this section of the syllabus.

In the examination two exercises will be requested from the SDP vocabulary for the candidates to perform correctly. If there are multiple candidates in an examination set it is at the examiners discretion to whether they assign either the same or different exercises.

shop.istd.org/shop/examination-specifications/item-classical-indian-dance-safe-dance-practice-pack/

8. Definitions and contextual knowledge

8.1. Definitions ṭhékā, tāli, khāli, āvartan, vibhāg, chakkardār toṛā, gat chāl/gat nikās, tāṇḍav and lasya, nritta and nritya

8.2. Outline understanding of the origin and evolution of Kathak

8.3 Recite and learn the meaning of the kavitt and śloka / vandanā learnt as part of the syllabus

Grade 3

Qualification title	Qualification number	Guided learning hours	Total qualification time (hours)	Credits
ISTD Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 3 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0754/9	60	70	7

Candidates demonstrate an increasing vocabulary of movement in the chosen technique. An understanding of the technique is reflected in the ability to coordinate simple movements to produce combinations of steps and quality of movement i.e. precision and control within the range of their own physical capacity.

Candidates communicate an increasing confidence in performance. They can interpret music and display sensitivity to musical content and style. Candidates' performance should demonstrate an awareness of spatial awareness, an ability to work with others and responsiveness to an audience.

Grade 3 Examination

The Prepared Dance Sequence must be submitted as a Word or PDF document for presentation by the teacher on the examination day, with a printed copy provided for each sequence to the examiner.

For remote examinations, or if printing is not feasible on a face to face examination, the document is required to be emailed to the Examinations Department, at least a week before the examination session in order that it can be forwarded to the examiner..

The Grade 3 examination consists of:

- Candidates perform together their **Prepared Dance Sequence of no more than 10 minutes duration**, covering both nritta and nritya aspects of Kathak (approximately 3-4 min of nritya), using this as a guideline:

  One thāṭ, one āmad, two tihāis, chakkardār toṛā, one tiśra jāti composition, laṛi, paran, one gat nikās, a kavitt, śloka /bhajan / sort gat bhāv

  Following the Prepared Dance Sequence individual responses to simple questions will be requested from:

  1 – Additional material directly from the Prepared Dance Sequence, and Grade 3 syllabus

  2 – Definitions and contextual knowledge (from Section 8)

  3 – Movement – *nritta hasta* (Section 2) *Ang Kavya* (AK)

  4 – *Laya-tāla* (Section 1)

  5 – Creative exercise (Section 6)
- Candidates will be required to perform two exercises from the Safe Dance Practice syllabus

Grade 3 Syllabus content

Technical skills

1. Laya and tāla

1.1. Demonstration of nritta/nritya compositions confidently in teentāl through paṛhant showing tāli and khāli, appropriate to this level.

1.3. Demonstration of tiśra jāti through paṛhant

2 Movement Vocabulary

2.1 Hasta (ref: AK): Lavaśikhā, (e.g. tā theī tatta theī, dhātiṭa dhātiṭa dhā dhā tiṭa), jal bhramari, anjuri, ālingan and ardhālingan. Introduction to meend.

2.2 Still poses
Right wrist placed below waist on right side with palm out, held lightly by the fingertips of the left hand, and vice versa

2.3 Chakkars:

2.3.1 Chakkar - single heel turns,

2.3.2 Ardha pherī – half turns (ref: AK)

2.3.3 Palṭā- turn and reverse turn, typically used in gat nikās or gat bhāv

2.4 Tatkār - development of heel tatkār from grade 2 and ability to use different parts of the feet

3. Abhinaya

3.1. Ability to use appropriate movement and hand gestures with knowledge of all hand gestures used in the performance

3.2. Beginnings of sātvika abhinaya

Performance

4. Nritta (teentāl)

4.1. Thāṭ and āmad in teentāl vilambit laya using meend

4.2. Tatkār ke ṭukṛé and naṭwari ṭukṛé

4.3. Two bedam and two damdār tihāis

4.4. Six toṛās- including a minimum of 2 chakkardār

4.5. Two parans including at least one chakkardār

4.6. One simple toṛā and one tihāi in tiśra jāti

4.7. One simple tarānā or sargam in teentāl

5. Nritya

5.1. Two gat nikās using different chāls

5.2. One short gat bhāv

5.3. A kavitt/ śloka /bhajan, in addition to the ones covered in previous grades

Safe Dance Practice, Requested Additional Content and Creative Section

6. Creative Exercise

With words given from the examiner, candidates will be expected to create simple nritya phrases

7. Safe Dance Practice

For the Grade 3 Safe Dance Practice content please purchase the Safe Dance Practice DVD and manual, to learn the appropriate exercises that will be examined in this section of the syllabus.

In the examination two exercises will be requested from the SDP vocabulary for the candidates to perform correctly. If there are multiple candidates in an examination set it is at the examiners discretion to whether they assign either the same or different exercises.

shop.istd.org/shop/examination-specifications/item-classical-indian-dance-safe-dance-practice-pack/

8. Definitions and contextual knowledge

8.1. The meaning of the terms: tarānā, sargam , nagmā/leherā, śloka, gat bhāv, bedam and damdār tihāi

8.2. Brief knowledge of the Kathak gharānās

8.3 Recite and learn the meaning of the kavitt and śloka / Bhajan learnt as part of the syllabus

Grade 4

Qualification title	Qualification number	Guided learning hours	Total qualification time (hours)	Credits
ISTD Level 2 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 4 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0756/2	75	95	10

Candidates demonstrate an increasing vocabulary of movement in the chosen technique. An understanding of the technique is reflected in the ability to coordinate simple movements to produce combinations of steps and quality of movement i.e. precision and control within the range of their own physical capacity.

Candidates communicate an increasing confidence in performance. They can interpret music and display sensitivity to musical content and style. Candidates' performance should demonstrate an awareness of spatial awareness, an ability to work with others and responsiveness to an audience.

Grade 4 Examination

The Prepared Dance Sequence must be submitted as a Word or PDF document for presentation by the teacher on the examination day, with a printed copy provided for each sequence to the examiner.

For remote examinations, or if printing is not feasible on a face to face examination, the document is required to be emailed to the Examinations Department, at least a week before the examination session in order that it can be forwarded to the examiner.

The Grade 4 examination consists of:

- Candidates perform together their **Prepared Dance Sequence of no more than 12 minutes duration**, covering both nritta and nritya (approximately 7-8 minutes and 4-5 minutes respectively) aspects of Kathak using this as a guideline:

  one/two thāṭs, one āmad, two bol jāti compostions, one tishra jāti compostion, two toṛās, laṛi, one paran and one chakkardār paran, one gat nikās in teentāl; a ṭhumrī/bhajan

  Following the Prepared Dance Sequence individual responses to simple questions will be requested from:

  1 – Additional material directly from the Prepared Dance Sequence, and the Grade 4 syllabus

  2 – Definitions and contextual knowledge (from Section 8)

  3 – Movement - *nritta hasta* (Section 2) *Ang Kavya* (AK)

  4 – *Laya-tāla* (Section 1)

  5 – Creative exercise (Section 6)
- Candidates will be required to perform two exercises from the Safe Dance Practice syllabus

Grade 4 Syllabus content

Technical skills

1. Laya and tāla

1.1. Demonstration of teentāl ṭhékā in barābar, dugun, tigun and chaugun laya through paṛhant and tatkār

1.2 Knowledge and demonstration of panchajāti and various rhythmic phrases used to highlight them

1.3. Demonstration of jhaptāl ṭhékā in barābar, dugun and chaugun laya through paṛhant and tatkār

2. Movement Vocabulary, Chakkar, Tatkār and Footwork

2.1. Nritta hasta: execution and naming of all wrist movements (ref: AK)

2.2 Still poses:

2.2.1 Right fingertips lightly touching left shoulder with the left hand placed below right elbow and vice versa

2.2.2 Right hand crossing over to the left side of the face to form a semi-circular frame

2.3 Travelling Chakkars

2.4 Khari Tatkār: footwork emphasising nā dhin dhin nā, while travelling with one foot crossed behind the other

2.5 Tatkār/ladi with the use of heel and outer edges of the feet (dhin/ghin)

2.6 Zarab / vazan: emphasising various syllables of the tatkār

Zarab is an important practice that gives students more control over thatkar and mindful of each syllable separately. Examiner may request to demonstrate Zarab tatkar, emphasising any beat, within 1-8.

3. Abhinaya

3.1 Understanding of bhakti bhāva

Performance

4. Nritta

4.1. Two compositions in tiśra jāti- in addition to the ones learnt in Grade 3

4.2. Two tihai-s and a laṛi using jati bols

4.3. A nritta composition of rhythmic progression from vilambit to drut laya (barhat ki composition)

4.4 Teentāl: two thāṭ, one āmad, 4 toṛā/ tukṛā (including two chakkardār), four tihāis including 2 ginti ki tihais and two chakkardār parans

5. Nritya

5.1. One bhajan or devotional song

5.2. One ṭhumrī

5.3. A more elaborate gat nikās in addition to the one covered in Grade 3

6. Creative Exercise

6.1. With given instructions from the examiner, candidates are expected to create simple nritta or nritya phrases

Creative Exercise, Safe Dance Practice, and Requested Additional Content

7. Safe Dance Practice

For the Grade 4 Safe Dance Practice content please purchase the Safe Dance Practice DVD and manual, to learn the appropriate exercises that will be examined in this section of the syllabus.

In the examination two exercises will be requested from the SDP vocabulary for the candidates to perform correctly. If there are multiple candidates in an examination set it is at the examiners discretion to whether they assign either the same or different exercises.

shop.istd.org/shop/examination-specifications/item-classical-indian-dance-safe-dance-practice-pack/

8. Definitions and contextual knowledge

8.1 Definitions: Bhajan, thumri, śṛingāra rasa and bhakti bhāva

8.2 Learn the words and meaning of the bhajan and thumri meaning learnt as part of the syllabus

Grade 5

Qualification title	Qualification number	Guided learning hours	Total qualification time (hours)	Credits
ISTD Level 2 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 5 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0757/4	75	95	10

Candidates demonstrate an increasing vocabulary of movement in the chosen technique. An understanding of the technique is reflected in the ability to coordinate simple movements to produce combinations of steps and quality of movement, i.e. precision and control within the range of their own physical capacity.

Candidates communicate an increasing confidence in performance. They can interpret music and display sensitivity to musical content and style. Candidates' performance should demonstrate an awareness of spatial awareness, an ability to work with others and responsiveness to an audience.

Grade 5 Examination

The Prepared Dance Sequence must be submitted as a Word or PDF document for presentation by the teacher on the examination day, with a printed copy provided for each sequence to the examiner.

For remote examinations, or if printing is not feasible on a face to face examination, the document is required to be emailed to the Examinations Department, at least a week before the examination session in order that it can be forwarded to the examiner.

The Grade 5 examination consists of:

- Candidates perform together their **Prepared Dance Sequence of no more than 15 minutes duration**, with a balance of nritta and nritya aspects of Kathak (approximately 5-7 minutes to be devoted to nritya) using the following as a guideline:

  Jhaptāl: one/two thāṭ, one āmad, two tihāis, one toṛā, one chakkardār toṛā, one paran and one laṛi Teentāl: chakkardār paran, parmelu, Kavitt and ṭhumri/ ghazal

  Following the Prepared Dance Sequence individual responses to simple questions will be requested from:

  1 – Additional material directly from the Prepared Dance Sequence, and the Grade 5 syllabus

  2 – Definitions and contextual knowledge (from Section 8)

  3-Movement – *nritta hasta* (Section 2) *Ang Kavya* (AK)

  4 – *Laya-tāla* (Section 1)

  5 – Ancillary Skills (Section 9)

  6 – Creative exercise (Section 6)
- Candidates will be required to perform two exercises from the Safe Dance Practice syllabus

Grade 5 Syllabus content

Technical skills

1. Laya and tāla

1.1. Ability to perform teentāl nritta compositions in Vilambit, Madhya and Drut laya ṭhékā

1.2 Ability to demonstrate teentāl ṭhékā in barābar, dugun, tigun and chaugun laya through paṛhant and tatkār with confidence

1.3. Ability to demonstrate laya jāti compositions and bol jāti tihāis through paṛhant

1.4. Ability to do paṛhant of jhaptāl compositions with rhythmic accuracy and correct pronunciation of bols

1.5. Introduction to dhamār tāla: ṭhékā in barābar, dugun and chaugun laya through paṛhant and tatkār

2. Movement Vocabulary

2.1. Double chakkar

2.2. Knowledge and execution of 'ornamental hand movements' and 'finishing positions' (ref: AK)

3. Abhinaya

3.1. Understanding of śabdārth and vākyārth

3.2. Exploration of two rasas appropriate to the age group

Performance

4. Nritta

4.1. Jhaptāl: one/two thāṭ, one āmad, four toṛās (including two chakkardār), four tihāis, a laṛi, two parans (including one chakkardār)

4.2. One tarānā or sargam in jhaptāl

4.3. Teentāl : Thāt, vilambit āmad, sangeet kā tukṛā, 2 additional tihais, one farmaishī toṛā /tukṛā / paran, two chakkardār parans, parmelu, 2 additional tishrajati (laya jāti) compositions, 3 tihais in boljati and sawāl jawāb

5. Nritya

5.1. A ṭhumri or ghazal

5.2. An elaborate gat bhāva based on a mythological story/concept

5.3. An elaborate kavitt

Creative Exercise, Safe Dance Practice, and Requested Additional Content

6. Creative Exercise (one task)

6.1. Ability to change movement dynamics of rhythmic compositions as requested by the examiner or to express narrative using śabdārth and vākyārth as requested by the examiner

7. Safe Dance Practice

For the Grade 5 Safe Dance Practice content please purchase the Safe Dance Practice DVD and manual to learn the appropriate exercises that will be examined in this section of the syllabus.

In the examination two exercises will be requested from the SDP vocabulary for the candidates to perform correctly. If there are multiple candidates in an examination set it is at the examiners discretion to whether they assign either the same or different exercises.

shop.istd.org/shop/examination-specifications/item-classical-indian-dance-safe-dance-practice-pack/

8. Definitions and contextual knowledge

8.1. Definitions: Ghazal, tarana, śabdārth and vākyārth, parmelu, farmaishī

8.2. Ability to explain the words and meaning of all Nritya material.

8.3. Ability to tell the story of the learnt gat bhava and the Kavitt

9. Ancillary Skills

Basic ability to sing musical compositions with tāli/khāli and correct tune, such as a thumri/ ghazal, sargam or tarānā.

Grade 6

Qualification title	Qualification number	Guided learning hours	Total qualification time (hours)	Credits
ISTD Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 6 (Classical Indian Dance: Kathak)	501/0758/6	90	130	13

Candidates demonstrate an increasing vocabulary of movement in the chosen technique. An understanding of the technique is reflected in the ability to coordinate simple movements to produce combinations of steps and quality of movement i.e. precision and control within the range of their own physical capacity.

Candidates communicate an increasing confidence in performance. They can interpret music and display sensitivity to musical content and style. Candidates' performance should demonstrate an awareness of spatial awareness, an ability to work with others and responsiveness to an audience.

From October 2026, candidates will be required to have achieved the Theory Examination in order to be certificated for Grade 6. Candidates who have not completed the Theory examination by this point will not be able to receive a result.

Grade 6 Examination

The Prepared Dance Sequence must be submitted as a Word or PDF document for presentation by the teacher on the examination day, with a printed copy provided for each sequence to the examiner.

For remote examinations, or if printing is not feasible on a face to face examination, the document is required to be emailed to the Examinations Department, at least a week before the examination session in order that it can be forwarded to the examiner..

The Grade 6 examination consists of:

- Candidates perform together their **Prepared Dance Sequence of no more than 20 minutes duration**, with a balance of nritta and nritya aspects of Kathak (approximately 7-9 minutes to be devoted to nritya) using the following as a guideline:

  Dhamār: that, āmad, toṛā, bedam and damdār tihāi, one paran, one chakkardār paran and laṛi Teentāl or jhaptāl: tihāi, toṛā/paran/parmelu/laya jāti-bol jāti composition, laṛi, one nayika composition, one ghazal

  Following the Prepared Dance Sequence individual responses to simple questions will be requested from:

  1 – Additional material directly from the Prepared Dance Sequence, and the Grade 6 syllabus

  2 – Definitions and contextual knowledge (from Section 8)

  3 – Movement - nritta hasta (Section 2) Ang Kavya (AK)

  4 – Laya-tāla (Section 1)

  5 – Ancillary Skills (Section 9)

  6 – Creative exercise (Section 6)
- Candidates will be required to perform two exercises from the Safe Dance Practice syllabus

Grade 6 Syllabus content

Technical skills

1. Laya and tāla

1.1. Ability to demonstrate dhamār ṭhékā in barābar, dugun and chaugun laya through paṛhant and tatkār

1.2 Demonstration of teentāl and jhaptāl ṭhékā in barābar, dugun, tigun and chaugun laya through paṛhant and tatkār

1.3. Paṛhant of all compositions against the steady flow of tāla, showing tāli and khāli

1.4. Demonstration through tatkār of panchgun laya (5 layas) in teentāl

2. Movement Vocabulary

2.1. Full knowledge of all AK movements 'stances' or thāṭ (ref: AK)

3. Abhinaya

3.1. Full understanding of characters in the learnt pieces

Performance

4. Nritta

4.1. Dhamār tāla: tatkār, two thāṭ, one āmad, six toṛās / tukṛās, four tihāis (bedam and damdār), laṛi, two parans, a parmelu and one chakkardār paran

4.2. Further development of teentāl compositions; thāṭ, āmad, tiśra jāti laṛi, two chakkardār parans, 2 bol jāti tihais using various jāti syllables (other than grade 5), one Khanda or Mishra laya jati composition, one farmaishī toṛā / tukṛā /paran and further developed ginti tehai and sawāl jawāb

4.3. Jhaptāl: thāṭ, āmad, laṛi, tatkār, tiśra jāti compositions, parmelu, two chakkardār parans, four tihāis - including 2 bol jāti and sawāl jawāb

4.4. One tarānā in any choice tāla

5. Nritya

5.1. One ṭhumri or a similar semi-classical composition (kajri, Chaitī, dadra, hori and so on) based on one of the aṣṭanāyikā

5.2. One ghazal

5.3. Any two gat chāls / nikās from the selection of: rukhsār, ghunghaṭ, bānsuri or ālingan

Creative Exercise, Safe Dance Practice, and Requested Additional Content

6. Creative Exercise (one task)

Ability to create movements of nritta compositions as instructed by the examiner or the ability to create a variety of movements for the same narrative or create nritya sequence as requested.

7. Safe Dance Practice

For the Grade 6 Safe Dance Practice content please purchase the Safe Dance Practice DVD and manual to learn the appropriate exercises that will be examined in this section of the syllabus.

In the examination two exercises will be requested from the SDP vocabulary for the candidates to perform correctly. If there are multiple candidates in an examination set it is at the examiners discretion to whether they assign either the same or different exercises.

shop.istd.org/shop/examination-specifications/item-classical-indian-dance-safe-dance-practice-pack/

8. Definitions and contextual knowledge

8.1. Definitions: kajri, Chaitī, dadra, hori, thumri, ghazal

8.2. Knowledge of aṣṭanāyika

8.3 Learn the words and meaning of the ghazal and thumri

9. Ancillary skills

Ability to sing musical compositions with tāli/khāli and correct tune, such as a thumri/ ghazal, sargam or tarānā.

13 Scheme of assessments: Graded Examinations

Method of assessment

Graded Examinations are assessed by an Examiner who is recruited, trained, and monitored by the ISTD.
ISTD Examiners:

- are selected for their expertise and undergo rigorous training which continues throughout their career for marking both face-to-face and remote examinations.
- create a welcoming and reassuring environment at the exam venue, ensuring a positive experience for candidates.
- complete a check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (or equivalent body where available) and adhere to ISTD policies and procedures, including equality and diversity, safeguarding and data protection.

The examinations are divided into Sections, and each Section is composed of several components which are separately assessed and aggregated, with the marks totaling 100.

Candidates must gain at least 25% of the marks attainable in each Section, in order to pass the examination overall.
If all Sections are passed, then the overall result is indicated as follows:

Grade	Marks
Distinction	80-100 marks
Merit	60-79 marks
Pass	40-59 marks
Not Attained	0-39 marks

Levels of response mark bands

The lower mark in each band indicates that the student has just met the requirements described in the band, the upper mark indicates that the evidence is clear but that the student has not quite met the requirements set out in the next mark band. The candidate is marked against all components of assessment.

Classification of results

Candidates are assessed on their ability to show:

- Technical accuracy with correct placement to the best of their physical facility.
- Appropriate use of limbs showing an understanding of the purpose or significance of each movement or sequence of movements.
- A sense of line and well-coordinated movements.
- An assured performance showing the different qualities of movement required by each section of the examination structure.
- Musicality and rhythmic awareness.

Candidates receive both a final mark and an attainment grade. It is not expected that a candidate in a particular attainment grade will necessarily demonstrate all the characteristics listed in that band but will demonstrate most.

Attainment grade descriptors

Distinction: 80-100 marks

A candidate who achieves a '**Distinction**' will demonstrate the following attributes in performance:

- extremely strong technique
- high clarity of intention in execution of the movement
- excellent precision in the technique of the genre
- excellent use of dynamics and spatial elements
- very confident and accurate responses to instructions, questions asked and/or tasks set.
- very strong performing skills.

Merit: 60-79 marks

A candidate who achieves a '**Merit**' will demonstrate the following attributes in performance:

- well established technique
- good clarity of intention in execution of the movement
- good precision in the technique of the genre confident use of dynamics and spatial elements
- confident and accurate responses to instructions, questions asked and/or tasks set.
- strong performing skills.

Pass: 40-59 marks

A candidate who achieves a '**Pass**' will demonstrate the following attributes in performance:

- generally established technique
- some clarity of intention in execution of the movement
- some precision in the technique of the genre
- fair understanding of the use of dynamics and spatial elements
- broadly relevant and mostly appropriate responses to questions asked and/or tasks set.
- secure performing skills.

Not attained: 00-39 marks

A candidate who achieves a '**Not attained**' will demonstrate the following attributes in performance:

- poor or limited technical accomplishment
- limited clarity of intention in execution of the movement
- poor or limited grasp of the technique of the genre
- limited understanding of the use of dynamics and spatial elements
- weak or limited response to questions asked and/or tasks set.
- weak or limited performing skills.

14 Grade 1 and 2

Technical skills

Title of component	Marks
Laya and Tāla **Laya:** *demonstrates accurate recitation of time cycle through tali and khali* **Tāla:** *demonstrates accurate time keeping of tāla in recitation, padhant and demonstration of Kathak todā/tukrā compositions*	10
Tatkār *-demonstrate tatkār in teentāl with correct placement of feet, hand positioning and posture control*	10
Chakkar *-demonstrates balance, coordination and control with an awareness of "spotting"/ use of head.* *Turns of five steps and three steps are required for Grade 1* *Turns of four steps and eight steps are required for Grade 2*	5
Movement *-demonstrates accurately (3 marks) and neatness of execution*	5
Section Total	**30**

Performance skills

Title of component	Marks
Nritta: *-demonstrates accurate recall of the prepared sequence* *-demonstrates with appropriate content, coverage and timing*	20
Nritya compositions: *-demonstrates accurate recall of chosen kavitt, śloka or vandanā incorporating abhinaya, with a basic understanding of the characters*	10
Performance quality: *-demonstrates natural engagement throughout* *-performs with projection and enthusiasm throughout*	10
Section Total	**40**

Safe dance practice, creative exercise and additional requested content section

Title of component	Marks
Safe Dance Practice for Kathak: *-responds correctly and safely the movement requested within the individual's range* *-demonstrates movements requested with correct dynamics and accuracy*	5
Creative Exercise: *-demonstrates ability to follow instructions* *-demonstrate appropriate use of space, hand gestures and imagination within the examiners given task*	5
Additional Requested Content **Section 1**: *Additional physical content requested by the examiner from the relevant Grade vocabulary* **Section 2:** *Question 1 will be In direct connection to the Prepared Sequence performed* *Question 2 will be a general question from the relevant Grade syllabus (practical or contextual)*	20
Section Total	**30**
OVERALL TOTAL	**100**

15 Grade 3 and 4

Technical skills

Title of component	Marks
Laya and Tāla -demonstrates accurate recitation of theka, clarity of parhant and execution of compositions with accurate time keeping	15
Tatkār/footwork: -demonstrates rhythmic precision, strength, clarity and accuracy of sound	5
Movement -demonstrates accurate detail and neatness of execution	5
Section Total	**25**

Performance skills

Title of component	Marks
Nritta: -demonstrates accurate recall of the prepared sequence -demonstrates with appropriate content, coverage and timing	20
Nritya: -demonstrates correct content, appropriate facial expression, character portrayal and involvement throughout	15
Performance quality: -demonstrates and maintains good posture, natural engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout	10
Section Total	**45**

Safe dance practice, creative exercise and additional requested content (ARC) section

Title of component	Marks
Safe Dance Practice for Kathak: *-responds correctly and safely the movement requested within the individual's range* *-demonstrates movements requested with correct dynamics and accuracy*	5
Creative Exercise: *-demonstrates ability to follow instructions* *-demonstrate appropriate use of space, hand gestures and imagination within the examiners given task*	5
Additional Requested Content **Section 1**: *Additional physical content requested by the examiner from the relevant Grade vocabulary* **Section 2:** *Question 1 will be In direct connection to the Prepared Sequence performed* *Question 2 will be a general question from the relevant Grade syllabus (practical or contextual)*	20
Section Total	**30**
OVERALL TOTAL	**100**

16 Grade 5 and 6

Technical skills

Title of component	Marks
Laya and Tāla -*demonstrates accurate recitation of theka, clarity of parhant and execution of compositions with accurate time keeping*	15
Movement -*demonstrates accurate detail and neatness of execution*	5
Section Total	**20**

Performance and ancillary skills

Title of component	Marks
Nritta: -*demonstrates accurate recall of the prepared dance sequence* -*demonstrates with appropriate content, coverage and timing*	20
Nritya: - *demonstrates correct content, appropriate facial expression, and character portrayal*	15
Performance quality: -*demonstrates and maintains good posture, natural engagement, projection, enthusiasm and presence throughout*	10
Ancillary skills – singing with tāla; -demonstrates ability to sing musical compositions with tāla and correct tune such as a thumri, ghazal, sargam or tarānā	5
Section Total	**50**

Safe dance practice, creative exercise and additional requested content (ARC) section

Title of component	Marks
Safe Dance Practice for Kathak: *-responds correctly and safely the movement requested within the individual's range* *-demonstrates movements requested with correct dynamics, accuracy and simple explanation*	5
Creative Exercise: *-demonstrates ability to follow instructions* *-demonstrate appropriate use of space, hand gestures and imagination within the examiners given task*	5
Additional Requested Content **Section 1**: *Additional physical content requested by the examiner from the relevant Grade vocabulary* **Section 2:** *Question 1 will be In direct connection to the Prepared Sequence performed* *Question 2 will be a general question from the relevant Grade syllabus (practical or contextual)*	20
Section Total	**30**
OVERALL TOTAL	**100**

17 Grade 1–6 Marking Allocation and Indicative Content

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 1 Examination – Kathak

Section	Technical skills (30 marks)				Performance (40 marks)			Safe dance practice, creative exercise and requested additional content (30 marks)		
Component titles	**Laya and Tāla (10 marks)**	**Tatkār (10 marks)**	**Chakkar (5 marks)**	**Movement (5 marks)**	**Nritta (20 marks)**	**Nritya compositions (10 marks)**	**Overall Performance Quality (10 marks)**	**Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)**	**Creative Exercise (5 marks)**	**Additional Requested Content (20 marks)**
Indicative content	**Laya:** demonstrates accurate recitation of timecycle through tali and khali **Tāla**: demonstrates accurate time keeping of tāla in recitation and demonstration of Kathak compositions, with correct response to tasks requested.	Demonstrate two kinds of tatkār with correct placement of feet, hand positioning and posture completed in a teentāl time cycle and correct foot rhythms.	Demonstrates balance, coordination and control with an awareness of "spotting" and use of head.Turns of five steps and three steps are required for Grade 1 & for Grade 2 - 4 and 8 step turns 2.	Demonstrates accurate detail and neatness of execution. Correct response to examiners questions.	Accurate recall through the prepared sequence with appropriate content, coverage and timing.	Accurate recall of chosen kavitt, śloka or vandanā incorporating abhinaya, with a basic understanding of the characters.	Demonstrates correct posture and naturual engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout all examination.	**Safe Dance Practice:** Responds with correct and accurately the range of movement within the individuals capacity and in a safe manner.	**Technical:** responds accurately and confidently to the given tasks with imagination and appropriate use hand gestures and arm movements **Performance:** demonstrates suitable and expressive skills throughout.	**Response and Quality:** Responds accurately and confidently to the examiners questions regarding the Prepared Sequence and Syllabus vocabulary.
Marks allocated	**4 marks** - demonstrates Tintal theka in two layas with correct pronunciation of rhythmic syllables and accuracy of time keeping **3 marks** - demonstrates accurate time keeping with correct pronunciation of Kathak compositions, **3 marks** - maintaining the correct time keeping while executing the same composition.	**4 marks** - correct timing, **4 marks** - demonstrate clarity and strength of sound of foot rhythmns and poise **2 marks** -correct placement of feet and alignment .	**3 marks** - demonstrates correct technique, coordination **2 marks** - control and centered throughout.	**3 marks** - performs accurate movements **2 marks** - quality and neatness of execution.	**2 marks** - demonstrates correct content throughout. **5 marks** - neatness of execution, **5 marks** - timing, **4 marks** - control and focus, **4 marks** - involvement	**5 marks** - demonstrates correct content **5 marks** - performs with involvement and expression.	**5 marks** - demonstrates correct posture throughout **5 marks** - performs with natural engagement, enthusiasm, enjoyment and projection throughout.	**2 marks** - responds accurately and safely the movement requested, within the individuals range. **3 marks** - demonstrates movements requested with the quality and correct dynamics.	**2 marks** - demonstates ability to follow instructions **3 marks** - use of space, hand gestures and imagination within the examiners given tasks.	**Additional Requested Content Section 1:** Additional physical content requested by the examiner from the relevant Grade vocabulary - **10 marks** **Section 2:** Question 1 will be In direct connection to the Prepared Sequence performed - **5 marks** Question 2 will be a general question from the relevant Grade syllabus (practical or contextual) - **5 marks**

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 2 Examination – Kathak

Section	Technical skills (30 marks)				Performance (40 marks)			Safe dance practice, creative exercise and requested additional content (30 marks)		
Component titles	**Laya and Tāla (10 marks)**	**Tatkār (10 marks)**	**Chakkar (5 marks)**	**Movement (5 marks)**	**Nritta (20 marks)**	**Nritya compositions (10 marks)**	**Performance Quality (10 marks)**	**Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)**	**Creative Exercise (5 marks)**	**Additional Requested Content (20 marks)**
Indicative content	**Laya:** demonstrates accurate recitation of timecycle through tali and khali **Tāla:** demonstrates accurate recitation of Kathak compositions through tali and with correct response to tasks requested.	Demonstrate two kinds of tatkār with correct placement of feet, hand positioning and posture completed in a teentāl time cycle and correct foot rhythms.	Demonstrates balance, coordination and control with an awareness of "spotting" and use of head.Turns of five steps, three steps, 4 and 8 step turns with technique and alignment	Demonstrates accurate detail and neatness of execution. Correct response to examiners questions.	Accurate recall through the prepared sequence with appropriate content, coverage and timing.	Accurate recall of chosen kavitt, śloka or vandanā incorporating abhinaya, with a basic understanding of the characters.	Demonstrates correct posture and naturual engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout all examination.	**Safe Dance Practice:**Responds with correct and accurately the range of movement within the individuals capacity and in a safe manner.	**Technical:** responds accurately and confidently to the given tasks with appropriate use hand gestures, arm movements and foot positions **Performance:** demonstrates suitable and expressive skills throughout.	**Response and Quality:** Responds accurately and confidently to the examiners questions regarding the Prepared Sequence and Syllabus vocabulary.
Marks allocated	**4 marks -** demonstrates Tintal theka in two layas with correct pronunciation of rhythmic syllables and accuracy of time keeping **3 marks -** demonstrates accurate time keeping with correct pronunciation of Kathak compositions. **3 marks -** maintains correct time keeping while executing the same composition.	**4 marks -** demonstrates correct timing **4 marks -** demonstrates correct use of heels, strength of sound, of foot rhythmns and poise **2 marks -** demonstrates correct placement of feet and alignment.	**3 marks -** demonstrates correct technique and coordination **2 marks -** demonstrates control and centered throughout.	**3 marks -** performs accurate movements **2 marks -** quality and neatness of execution.	**2 marks -** demonstrates correct content throughout. **5 marks -** demonstrates neatness of execution **5 marks -** correct timing **4 marks -** demonstrates control and focus **4 marks -** performs with involvement and expression.	**5 marks -** demonstrates correct content **5 marks -** performs with involvement and expression.	**5 marks -** demonstrates correct posture throughout **5 marks** - performs with natural engagement, enthusiasm, enjoyment and projection throughout.	**2 marks -** responds accurately and safely the movement requested, within the individuals range. **3 marks -** demonstrates movements requested with the quality and correct dynamics.	**2 marks -** demonstates ability to follow instructions **3 marks -** demonstrated appropriate use of space, hand gestures and imagination within the examiners given tasks	**Additional Requested Content Section 1:** Additional physical content requested by the examiner from the relevant Grade vocabulary **(10 marks)** **Section 2:** Question 1 will be In direct connection to the Prepared Sequence performed **- 5 marks** Question 2 will be a general question from the relevant Grade syllabus (practical or contextual) **- 5 marks**

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 3 Examination – Kathak

Section	Technical skills (30 marks)			Performance (40 marks)			Safe dance practice, creative exercise and requested additional content (30 marks)		
Component titles	**Laya and Tāla (15 marks)**	**Tatkār/footwork (5 marks)**	**Movement (5 marks)**	**Nritta (20 marks)**	**Nritya compositions (15 marks)**	**Performance Quality (10 marks)**	**Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)**	**Creative Exercise (5 marks)**	**Additional Requested Content (20 marks)**
Indicative content	**Laya and Tāla:** demonstrates accurate recitation of theka, rhythmic syllables with time keeping and clarity of parhant, with correct response to tasks requested.	Demonstrates accurate tatkār/ lari with rhythmic precision, strength, control and accuracy of sound.	Demonstrates accurate detail, clarity and neatness of execution. Correct response to examiners questions.	Accurate recall through the prepared sequence with appropriate content, coverage, timing and neatness of execution.	Demonstrates correct content, appropriate facial expression, character portrayal and involvement throughout.	**Technical and Performance:** demonstrates correct posture and naturual engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout all examination.	**Safe Dance Practice:** Responds with correct and accurately the range of movement within the individuals capacity and in a safe manner.	**Technical:** responds accurately and confidently to the given tasks with appropriate use of hand gestures, arm movements and expression **Performance**: demonstrates suitable and expressive skills throughout.	**Response and Quality:** Responds accurately and confidently to the examiners questions in both sections regarding the Prepared Sequence and Syllabus vocabulary.
Marks allocated	**4 marks -** demonstrates accurate recitation of parhant of Tishrajati/ paran composition with timekeeping and **4 marks -** for consistency of dancing the same, with control and correct time keeping **3 marks -** demonstrates accurate recitation and clarity of Tukra/ paran/tehai/sections of ladi/kavit and **4 marks** - for consistency of dancing the same, with control and correct time keeping.	**5 marks -** demonstrates Lari/tatkar in the prepared sequence with rhythmic precision **3 marks -** demonstrates strength and accuracy of sound **2 marks -** performs with appropriate speed for Grade 3.	**3 marks -** Correct response to examiners 3 questions. **2 marks:** performs accurate detail and neatness of execution.	**5 marks -** demonstrates correct content throughout. **5 marks -** neatness of execution and control **5 marks -** demonstrates correct timing and alignment **5 marks -** performs with focus and involvement.	**2 marks -** demonstrates correct content **3 marks -** appropriate gestures and movements **5 marks -** performs with involvement, characterisation and with appropriate facial and body expressions **5 marks -** correct expression and involvement of second shorter piece.	**2 marks -** demonstrates correct posture throughout **3 marks -** performs with natural engagement and projection.	**2 marks -** responds accurately and safely the movement requested, within the individuals range. **3 marks -** demonstrates movements requested with the correct dynamics.	**2 marks -** demonstates abilty to follow instructions. **3 marks -** demonstrates suitable use of hand gestures, imagination and expressive skills throughout.	**Additional Requested Content Section 1:** Additional physical content requested by the examiner from the relevant Grade vocabulary **- 10 marks Section 2:** Question 1 will be In direct connection to the Prepared Sequence performed **- 5 marks** Question 2 will be a general question from the relevant Grade syllabus (practical or theoretical) **- 5 marks**

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 4 Examination – Kathak

Section	Technical skills (30 marks)			Performance (40 marks)			Safe dance practice, creative exercise and requested additional content (30 marks)		
Component titles	**Laya and Tāla (15 marks)**	**Tatkār/footwork (5 marks)**	**Movement (5 marks)**	**Nritta (20 marks)**	**Nritya compositions (15 marks)**	**Performance Quality (10 marks)**	**Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)**	**Creative Exercise (5 marks)**	**Additional Requested Content (20 marks)**
Indicative content	**Laya and Tāla:** demonstrates accurate recitation of theka, rhythmic syllables with time keeping and clarity of parhant within correct response to tasks requested.	Demonstrates accurate tatkār with rhythmic precision, strength, clarity, control and accuracy of sound.	Demonstrates accurate detail, clarity and neatness of execution and a correct response to the examiners questions.	Accurate recall through the prepared sequence with appropriate content, coverage, timing and neatness of execution.	Demonstrates correct content and appropriate facial expression and character portrayal throughout the Prepared Dance Sequence	Technical and Performance: demonstrates correct posture and natural engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout all examination.	**Safe Dance Practice:** Responds with correct and accurately the range of movement within the individuals capacity and in a safe manner.	**Technical:** responds accurately and confidently to the given tasks with appropriate use of floor patterns, varyng hand gestures, arm movements and foot positions **Performance**: demonstrates suitable and expressive skills throughout.	**Response and Quality:** Responds accurately and confidently to the examiners questions in two sections, regarding the Prepared Sequence and Syllabus vocabulary.
Marks allocated	**4 marks -** demonstrates accurate recitation of Jhaptal theka in 3 layas/tintal tigun laya/naming of all jati with syllables and **4 marks** - for consistency of dancing the same, with control and correct time keeping **3 marks -** demonstrates accurate recitation and clarity of Tishrajati compositions/paran/ tehai/sections of Ladi and **4 marks -** for consistency of dancing the same, with control and correct time keeping.	**5 marks -** demonstrates Lari/ tatkar in the prepared sequence with rhythmic precision **3 marks -** performs with strength and accuracy of sound **2 marks -** performs with appropriate speed for Grade 4.	**3 marks -** Correct response to examiners questions **2 marks:** performs accurate detail with neatness of execution.	**5 marks -** demonstrates correct content throughout **5 marks** - neatness of execution and control **5 marks -** performs accurate timing **5 marks -** performs with focus and involvement.	**2 marks -** demonstrates correct content **3 marks** - appropriate gestures and movements **5 marks -** appropriate facial expressions and character portrayal **5 marks -** performs with expression and involvement of second shorter piece.	**2 marks -** demonstrates correct posture throughout **3 marks -** performs with natural engagement and projection.	**2 marks -** responds accurately and safely the movement requested, within the individuals range. **3 marks -** demonstrates movements requested with the correct dynamics.	**2 marks -** demonstates abilty to follow instructions. **3 marks -** demonstrates suitable use of hand gestures, imagination and expressive skills throughout.	**Additional Requested Content Section 1:** Additional physical content requested by the examiner from the relevant Grade vocabulary **- 10marks Section 2:** Question 1 will be In direct connection to the Prepared Sequence performed **- 5 marks** Question 2 will be a general question from the relevant Grade syllabus (practical or contextual) **- 5 marks**

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 5 Examination – Kathak

Section	Technical skills (20 marks)		Performance and ancillary skills (50 marks)				Safe dance practice, creative exercise and requested additional content (30 marks)		
Component titles	**Laya and Tāla (15 marks)**	**Movement (5 marks)**	**Nritta (20 marks)**	**Nritya (15 marks)**	**Performance Quality (10 marks)**	**Ancillary skills – singing with tāla (5 marks)**	**Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)**	**Creative Exercise (5 marks)**	**Additional Requested Content (20 marks)**
Indicative content	**Laya and Tāla:** demonstrates accurate recitation of theka, rhythmic syllables with time keeping and clarity of parhant, with correct response to tasks requested.	**Movement:** demonstrates clarity and correct detail in execution, and correct technical response to requested movement vocabulary.	**Nritta:** accurate recall of the Prepared Sequence, coverage of syllabus content following the given guidance,appropriate compositions, accuracy, control and execution.	**Nritya:** demonstrates content with appropriate facial expressions and character portrayal.	**Technical and Performance:** demonstrates correct posture and natural engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout all examination.	Basic ability to sing musical compositions with tāla such as a bhajan, sargam or tarānā.	**Safe Dance Practice:** responds with correct and accurately the range of movement within the individuals capacity and in a safe manner.	**Technical:** responds accurately and confidently to the given task with appropriate use of floor patterns, varyng hand gestures, arm movements and foot positions **Performance**: demonstrates suitable and expressive skills throughout.	**Response and Quality:** responds accurately and confidently to the examiners questions in the two sections, regarding the Prepared Sequence and Syllabus vocabulary.
Marks allocated	**4 marks -** demonstrates accurate recitation of Dhamar theka in 3 layas/tintal tigun laya/boljati-laya jati compositions **4 marks -** for consistency of dancing the same with control and correct time keeping **3 marks -** demonstrates accurate recitation of any jhaptal and teental compositions from the syllabus **4 marks -** for consistency of dancing the same with control and correct time keeping.	**3 marks -** Correct response to examiners questions regarding the Anga Kavya **2 marks -** performs with accurate detail and neatness of execution.	**5 marks -** demonstrates correct content throughout **5 marks -** demonstrates appropriate speed and technical skills **5 marks -** performs with focus, control and neatness of execution **5 marks -** demonstrates artistry and musicality	**2 marks -** demonstrates correct content **3 marks -** demonstrates with appropriate gestures and movements **5 marks -** performs with involvement, characterisation and with appropriate facial and body expressions **5 marks -** performs with expression and involvement of second shorter piece.	**5 marks -** demonstrates correct posture throughout **5 marks -** performs with natural engagement and projection.	**3 marks -** for maintaining the tali khali correctly while singing **2 marks -** performing with musicality.	**2 marks -** responds accurately and safely the movement requested, within the individuals range. **3 marks -** demonstrates understanding of the benefits of those exercises for own practice.	**One task requested 2 marks -** demonstrate the ability to follow the examiners instructions **- 2 marks 3 marks -** demonstrate appropriate use of space, hand gestures and imagination within the given task.	**Additional Requested Content Section 1:** Additional physical content requested by the examiner from the relevant Grade vocabulary **- 10marks Section 2:** Question 1 will be In direct connection to the Prepared Sequence performed **- 5 marks** Question 2 will be a general question from the relevant Grade syllabus (practical or contextual) **- 5 marks**

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 6 Examination – Kathak

Section	Technical skills (20 marks)		Performance and ancillary skills (50 marks)				Safe dance practice, creative exercise and requested additional content (30 marks)		
Component titles	**Laya and Tāla (15 marks)**	**Movement (5 marks)**	**Nritta (20 marks)**	**Nritya (15 marks)**	**Performance Quality (10 marks)**	**Ancillary skills – singing with tāla (5 marks)**	**Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)**	**Creative Exercise (5 marks)**	**Additional Requested Content (20 marks)**
Indicative content	**Laya and Tāla:** demonstrates accurate recitation of theka, rhythmic syllables with time keeping, clarity and dynamics of parhant, with correct response to tasks requested.	Demonstrates accurate detail, clarity and neatness of execution. Correct response to examiners questions (ang kavya).	Accurate recall through the prepared sequence with appropriate content, coverage, timing and neatness of execution.	Demonstrates correct content and appropriate facial expression and character portrayal throughout the preapred dance sequence.	**Technical and Performance:** demonstrates correct posture and naturual engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout all examination.	Basic ability to sing musical compositions with tāla such as a Ghazal/Thumri/Kajri/ tarānā.	**Safe Dance Practice:** Responds with correct and accurately the range of movement within the individuals capacity and in a safe manner.	**Technical:** responds accurately and confidently to the given task with appropriate use of floor patterns, varyng hand gestures, arm movements and foot positions **Performance**: demonstrates suitable and expressive skills throughout.	**Response and Quality:** Responds accurately and confidently to the examiners questions regarding the Prepared Sequence and Syllabus vocabulary.
Marks allocated	**3 marks -** Correct response to examiners questions regarding the Anga Kavya **2 marks:** performs accurate detail with neatness of execution.	**5 marks -** demonstrates correct content throughout **5 marks -** demonstrates appropriate speed and technical skills **5 marks -** performs with focus, control and neatness of execution **5 marks -** performs with artistry and musicality.	**2 marks -** demonstrates correct content **3 marks -** demonstrates appropriate gestures and movements **5 marks -** performs with involvement, characterisation and with appropriate facial and body expressions **5 marks -** performs with expression and involvement of second shorter piece.	**5 marks -** demonstrates correct posture throughout **5 marks -** performs with natural engagement and projection.	**3 marks -** for maintaining the tali khali correctly while singing **2 marks -** performing with musicality.	**3 marks -** for maintaining the tali khali correctly while singing **2 marks -** performing with musicality.	**2 marks -** responds accurately and safely the movement requested, within the individuals range. **3 marks -** demonstrates understanding of the benefits of those exercises for their practice	**One task requested 2 marks -** demonstrate the ability to follow the examiners instructions – **2 marks 3 marks -** demonstrate appropriate use of space, hand gestures and imagination within the given task	**Additional Requested Content Section 1:** Additional physical content requested by the examiner from the relevant Grade vocabulary - **10marks Section 2:** Question 1 will be In direct connection to the Prepared Sequence performed - **5 marks** Question 2 will be a general question from the relevant Grade syllabus (practical or contextual) - **5 marks**

18 Classical Indian Dance Theory Examination – Kathak

Qualification purpose and entry conditions

- Classical Indian Dance Theory Examination offers a learning opportunity that builds the knowledge and understanding that is intrinsic to our Bharatanatyam and Kathak genres, thus developing the theoretical skills that underpin the technical and artistic elements required for our regulated examinations.
- Classical Indian Dance Theory Examination allows for those participating for recreational purposes to produce quality work but also enables dancers to progress through the ISTD graded examinations into the vocational levels if they so wish.
- The Classical Indian Dance Theory Examination is mandatory to complete before the Grade 6 practical examination or the Intermediate practical examination for those taking the vocational route.
- The Classical Indian Dance Theory Examination uses the theoretical knowledge and content from our training programme laid out in the specifications and remains a central part of the physical training programme for teachers to impart and for students to progress to the regulated practical examinations.
- From October 2026, candidates will be required to have achieved the Theory Examination in order to be certificated for Grade 6. Candidates who have not completed the Theory examination by this point will not be able to receive a result.

Examination Sets

1 Candidate
30 minutes

Entry conditions and general information

Entries must be submitted via a teacher who holds a Full Teaching Membership with the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

Language

All exams and assessments are conducted in English.

Minimum age

There is a recommended minimum age of 11+ to ensure candidates are developed sufficiently to meet the demands of the syllabus. However, this is just a guideline and teachers are allowed to use their discretion to enter candidates when they feel it is appropriate.

Prior learning

Understanding of the theoretical content from Grade 1 to 6 is required for the Classical Indian Theory Examination.

This examination is to be taken after the Grade 5 practical examination, after which candidates can progress through the training programme of Grade 6 and onto the vocational and teaching qualifications levels. From October 2026, candidates will be required to have the Theory Examination in order to be certified for Grade 6. Candidates who have not completed the Theory examination by this point will not be able to receive a result.

Summary information

Guided Learning Hours and Total Qualification Time

Qualification title	Qualification number	Guided learning hours	Total qualification time (hours)	Credits
ISTD Level 3 Certificate in Classical Indian Dance Theory: Kathak	Level 3	70	130	13

Examination format

The Classical Indian Dance Theory examination: Kathak is a 30minute viva examination delivered in five key sections, with questions requested by the ISTD Kathak examiner.

Bring to the examination two compositions, in different tālas notated in Bhatkhande talalipi. Candidates are expected to bring this annotation on a document for the examiner either handwritten or typed. For remote examination this will need to be emailed ahead of the examination.

Examination delivery

All Classical Indian Dance Faculty examiners are specially trained by the ISTD to mark and assess candidates within the relevant theory qualification. As such, examiners will be specialists in Kathak and able to examine in this chosen style.

Examination content

Candidates will be required to learn all the grade theoretical syllabus with full understanding in all areas of the theoretical content, ensuring candidates have covered all elements of the syllabus before entering the theory examination.

Please refer to the Kathak Primary, Grade 1-6, and Vocational Technical Examination Specification for full syllabus content.

Preparation for examination

Candidates must be ready to answer questions from all Grade content. They should be able to discuss, analyse, and identify topics as outlined in the assessment criteria and indicative content. Preparation of this knowledge is essential before the theory examination.

It is advisable for all candidates to practice with their teacher in answering questions, in order to gain experience of this format before entering for examinations.

Candidates should answer all questions as fully as possible, showing an awareness of the marking requirements, and criteria. This will allow candidates to demonstrate their knowledge for the examiner to give full and appropriate credit when marking.

Kathak assessment criteria and learning outcomes

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria	Marks
LO1 Section 1 (12 marks) Established understanding and delivery of pre-observed performance, with key stagecraft elements.	• **1.1** Demonstrate consistent understanding and delivery of pre-prepared explanation from an observed performance, with consistent understanding of the performer's technique, artistry and performance qualities, as well as the overall presentation including discussion on perfection and clarity in movement.	6
	• **1.2** Demonstrate consistent understanding, with a critical eye, of the style, character, story, themes and repertoire of the chosen performance.	4
	• **1.3** Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of their choice of one stage craft element (listed below) from their chosen performance, 1) use of stage 2) use of set 3) use of props 4) use of lighting 5) use of costumes.	2
LO2 Section 2 (8 marks) Established understanding and delivery of the Grade 1-3 Nritta and Nritya theoretical syllabus vocabulary knowledge.	• **2.1** Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of theoretical syllabus knowledge within the two questions requested.	4
	• **2.2** Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of the theoretical syllabus knowledge within the two questions requested.	4
LO3 Section 3 (8 marks) Established understanding and delivery of the theoretical syllabus knowledge and definitions of the higher Grades 4–6.	• **3.1** Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of the theoretical syllabus knowledge within the two questions requested.	4
	• **3.2** Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of the theoretical syllabus knowledge within the two questions requested.	4
LO4 Section 4 (12 marks) Established knowledge and understanding of recitations, compositions, and annotations.	• **4.1** Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of recitations through the requested discussions and questions.	4
	• **4.2** Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of compositions with reference to the learnt pieces through the requested discussions and questions.	4
	• **4.3** Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of annotations and their musical structures, through the requested discussions and questions.	4
LO5 Section 5 (10 marks) Established understanding and delivery of the nine classical Indian dance genres with their historical origins and their distinct features. Evolution of Kathak including a study of the gharanas.	• **5.1** Demonstrate consistent understanding and application through discussions and questioning, of gharanas and their specific characteristics, historical origins and evolution of Kathak, along with reference to pioneering dancers. Kathak gharanas – historical characteristics and names of eminent dancers their own gharanas, distinct features and connections.	5
	• **5.2** Demonstrate an established understanding and knowledge through discussions and questioning, of the nine classical Indian dance genres – their geographic origins, prominent characteristics of the form, key features of costume and names of eminent dancers of each (current and pioneering.	5

Kathak Indicative Content

Section 1 – Pre-prepared explanation of an observed performance with live music of a minimum of 40minutes.

1.1 Stating performer's technical, stylistic (including gharanas) and artistic abilities/performance qualities and overall presentation including discussion on perfection and clarity in movement.

1.2 With a critical eye, state/discuss the style, character and story, themes of the chosen performance, choice of music/composition and choice of repertoire for the mārgam.

1.3 With a critical eye state observations and the use of one stage craft element listed below, in the use of the: stage, set, props, lighting or costumes

Section 2 – Established understanding and delivery of the theoretical syllabus vocabulary knowledge of lower Grades 1–3.

2.1 Two questions requested regarding the following: Toda, Tihai, Nritta hasta, Lari, Tandav and Lasya, Nritta and Nritya, Sholka, Bhajan, Gat-Nikas

2.2 Two questions requested regarding the following: Natwari Tukra, Tatkar Ke Tukre, That, āmad, Satvik Abhinaya, Gat-Bhava, Tarana, Sargam

Section 3 – Established understanding and delivery of the theoretical syllabus vocabulary knowledge of higher Grades 4–6.

3.1 Two questions requested from the following: Ang, Pratyang and Upang, Sangat, Shabdarth and Vakyarth, Sthayee and Sanchari

3.2 Two questions requested from the following: Thumri, Kajri, Chaitī, Dadra, Hori, and Ghazal

Section 4 – Demonstrate an established understanding regarding recitations, compositions, and annotations.

4.1 Discussion and questioning on the candidates understanding of Recitation. This will include questions regarding sloka; Natya Kramaha/Yatho hasta, Patra-prana, Angikama and Shantakaram.

4.2 Discussion and questioning on the candidates understanding of: Navarasa, Ashta Nayika, Abhinaya Darpana and Natya Shastra.

4.3 Discussions and questioning on annotations. This will include questions regarding differences in stylistic approach and musical structure between any two contrasting forms e.g. thumri and ghazal or kajri and ghazal.
Bring to the examination two compositions (in different talas) notated in Bhatkhande talalipi. Candidates are expected to bring this annotation on a document for the examiner which can be hand written.

Section 5 – Established understanding and delivery of the nine classical Indian dance genres with their historical origins and their distinct features. Evolution of Kathak including a study of the gharanas.

5.1 Discussion and questioning regarding Kathak Gharanas, demonstrating understanding of the characteristics of each gharanas, how they developed through the ages and names of eminent dancers (current and pioneering). The candidates should demonstrate the ability to discuss their own gharanas with distinct features and role models/artists.

5.2 Discussions and questioning regarding the candidate's knowledge and understanding of the nine classical Indian dance genres; their origins, characteristics of the form, key features of costume and names of eminent dance personalities. More established knowledge on the origin and evolution of Kathak.

Kathak marking components and mark scheme

Candidates will be graded using the following marking components. Marks are based on all evidence shown in all sections of the exam.

Section 1	Marks	Mapped ACs
Candidates to discuss their chosen performance, analysing the performer's technical, stylistic, and artistic abilities (including banis/ gharanas), performance qualities and overall presentation including a discussion on perfection and clarity of movement.	6	1.1
With a critical eye, candidates identify the style, character, story, themes of the chosen performance and discuss choice of repertoire.	4	1.2
With a critical eye, candidates to discuss their observations of the performance in regard to the use of stage craft elements as listed: *use of stage, set, props, accompaniment, lighting and costumes.*	2	1.3
Section 2	**Marks**	**Mapped ACs**
Candidates demonstrate consistent understanding and application of theoretical syllabus knowledge within the two syllabus questions requested from the lower grade levels.	4	2.1
Candidates demonstrate consistent understanding and application of theoretical syllabus knowledge within the two syllabus questions requested from the lower grade levels.	4	2.2
Section 3	**Marks**	**Mapped ACs**
Candidates demonstrate consistent understanding and application of theoretical syllabus knowledge within the two syllabus questions requested from the higher grade levels.	4	3.1
Candidates demonstrate consistent understanding and application of theoretical syllabus knowledge within the two syllabus questions requested from the higher grade levels.	4	3.2
Section 4	**Marks**	**Mapped ACs**
Candidates demonstrate consistent understanding and application of recitations through the requested questions.	4	4.1
Candidates demonstrate consistent understanding , knowledge and application to the requested questions of compositions/vocabularies	4	4.2
Candidates to demonstrate consistent understanding and application of annotations and their musical structures, through the requested discussions and questions.	4	4.3
Section 5	**Marks**	**Mapped ACs**
Demonstrate consistent understanding and application through discussions and questioning, of gharanas and their specific characteristics, how they developed through the ages, naming eminent dancers both current and pioneering.	4	4.1
Demonstrate consistent understanding and application through discussion of their own gharanas with distinct features and connections to their role model artist(s).	5	5.1
	Overall Pass Mark 40%	**TOTAL = 50**

19 Assessment delivery

Examinations are assessed by an examiner who is recruited, trained, and monitored by the ISTD.

ISTD examiners:

- Are selected for their expertise and undergo rigorous training which continues throughout their career for marking both face-to-face and remote examinations
- Create a welcoming and reassuring environment at the exam venue, ensuring a positive experience for candidates
- Complete a check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (or equivalent body where available) and adhere to ISTD policies and procedures, including equality and diversity, safeguarding and data protection
- Within Component 1 and 4 the examiner awards a mark between 0-12. In Component 2 and 3 the examiner awards a mark between 0-8 and in Component 5 the examiner awards a mark between 0-10
- The examination consists of five sections that are individually marked, with a maximum of 50 marks available.
- A mark of 0 indicates that nothing was evidenced for assessment

Standard setting and maintenance

Examiners are standardised annually to maintain examinations standards and marking criteria. Examiners are also monitored by the Lead Examiner Team and the ISTD Examinations Management Team.

Classification of results

Students receive both a final mark and an attainment outcome. It is not expected that a student in a particular attainment grade will necessarily demonstrate all the characteristics listed in that band but will demonstrate most.

Grade	Attainment outcome	Marks out of 50
80-100 %	Distinction	40-50
60-79 %	Merit	30-39
40-59 %	Pass	20-29
0-39 %	Not attained	0-19

20 Examinations and quality assurance

Examination booking information

Examination bookings are only permitted to be made by members with the requisite active membership status of the ISTD who conduct themselves in accordance with the Member Agreement/Professional Code of Conduct. www.istd.org/documents/rules-and-standing-orders/

The examinations take place either at the examination venues hosted by the members such as the teacher's dance studio or at the ISTD Examination Centre sessions. Details of how to book an examination, cancellation fees, guidance, and examination regulations are available at:

UK Examinations

Website: www.istd.org/examinations/uk-examinations/

Email: ukdanceteachers@istd.org

International Examinations

Website: www.istd.org/examinations/international-examinations/

Email: InternationalTeachers@istd.org

Policies and Quality assurance

The Society has put in place a set of policies and procedures to ensure that our examinations and assessments are inclusive and accessible, and students completing our qualifications are issued a fair grade based on their performance.

Our quality assurance processes are in place to safeguard the integrity of our qualifications by ensuring that high standards are always delivered in our examinations.

The detailed information about the quality assurance of our qualifications and the related policies can be found at www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance/

For further guidance, please contact the Quality Assurance department at csqa@istd.org

Reasonable adjustment

The Society is committed to promoting an environment where all individuals are encouraged to achieve their full potential and develop their skills in dance and in examinations and we encourage teachers to maintain an open approach towards the different abilities offered by all their students.

Reasonable adjustments are changes or adaptations made to an assessment or to the way an assessment is conducted to reduce or remove a barrier caused by disability or individual learning or medical need. The teacher acting on behalf of a candidate can request the Society to make reasonable adjustments to the assessment processes and examination requirements, to make the assessment more accessible and alleviate a barrier to allow the candidate to show what they know and can do.

To request reasonable adjustments, the teacher making the application on behalf of the candidate should send their completed application form and supporting documents to ara@istd.org a minimum of 28 days before the date of the examination.

Further guidance for reasonable adjustments can be found in the ISTD Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustment Policy which is available on: www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance/

Teachers can request any adjustments that are appropriate for the needs of their candidates, and these will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Special consideration

Special consideration is given after an assessment has taken place for learners who have been affected by adverse circumstances. The Society has a process in place for special consideration for candidates who participated in an examination but may have been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury, indisposition, or adverse circumstances which arose immediately before or during the examination.

Enquiries and appeals about results

The Society endorses the principle of the right to enquire about a candidate's result. These appeals may relate to an unexpected examination result, assessment decisions being incorrect, or assessment not being conducted fairly.
We ensure that enquiries are dealt with swiftly and fairly within the specified timescales. Through the ISTD Enquiry and Appeal about a Result Policy, it is ensured that enquiries about results are processed correctly, fairly and in a timely manner.
A copy of the Enquiry and Appeal About a Result Policy can be downloaded from:
www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance/policies-and-related-documents/

Malpractice

The Society will act in accordance with the published documentation and will take all reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any malpractice, or maladministration, in the development, delivery and award of its qualifications.

Malpractice refers to acts that undermine the integrity and validity of assessment, the certification of qualifications, and/or actions that may damage the authority of those responsible for delivering the assessment and certification. The Society will take any form of malpractice very seriously.

Registered members and candidates must follow the requirements set out in this specification, examination regulations and all other ISTD policies about the delivery of our examinations. In cases where registered members or candidates have committed malpractice, a sanction or penalty may be given.

For further information, please refer to the ISTD Malpractice Policy on:
www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance/policies-and-related-documents/

Results and certification

All ISTD examinations are single performances at one moment in time, with a detailed marking system awarded according to the mark schemes given for each examination.

The Quality Assurance Department will check the examination results for any errors before issuing the awarded results and certificates direct to the primary organiser, unless requested otherwise.

Examination session results and examination report sheets can be accessed online on the ISTD examination management portal, usually within 21 days of the date of the examination.

All examination result documents are subject to robust quality assurance checks, to ensure that they are correct and complete before dispatch.

The primary organiser will receive their candidates' examination report sheets, containing the overall result. Successful candidates will also be issued with a qualification certificate displaying the qualification title, and the subject that they have been examined in, date of award and the overall result achieved.

This section focuses on the administrative requirements for delivering the examinations and related quality assurance processes. **www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance.**

Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing
Classical Indian

Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing
22/26 Paul Street, London EC2A 4QE
istd.org **@ISTDdance**