



**Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing  
Classical Indian**

**CLASSICAL INDIAN DANCE:  
BHARATANATYAM  
VOCATIONAL SYLLABUS OUTLINE**

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## FOREWORD

Bharatanatyam originated many centuries ago in the temples of Tamil Nadu in South India. It is known for its strong lines that make geometric and symmetrical shapes as well as its turn-out position by which it is commonly recognised. The dance form is embellished with intricately expressive hand gestures and elaborate facial expressions that lend to the story-telling aspect of this style.

The *mārgam*, which is the format of a traditional Bharatanatyam presentation, was formalised by the Tanjore Quartet in the second half of the eighteenth century. Traditionally, the training programme for Bharatanatyam dancers has been organised around this *mārgam*. Bharatanatyam dancers, to this day, generally follow this format in a traditional presentation. The ISTD syllabus is designed closely to reflect traditional teaching whilst considering the needs and experiences of present-day students worldwide.

Students of classical Indian dance, other than those in India, are in an environment that may not necessarily complement their experience of Bharatanatyam training. This syllabus, therefore, is based on the investing of time and effort in the early Grades, to create the necessary physical and cultural infrastructure for the dancer in training.

The syllabus also accommodates some changes in the traditional learning progression of dance material. It promotes holistic dance experience at the initial stages, even before each aspect of the physical training has been mastered. Students are also encouraged to see dance performances in order to gain a cultural and critical understanding, and a lively interest in Bharatanatyam and in the wider horizons of dance.

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

The syllabus for each examination is presented in three sections:

- Ancillary Skills
- Technical Skills and Performance
- Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam, Theory and File

For essential information on good teaching practices related to the syllabus, and for the full detail and explanation of the syllabus content, see the Bharatanatyam Examination Specification available for purchase from the ISTD Shop.

<https://shop.istd.org/shop/examination-specifications/item-classical-indian-dance-bharatanatyam-primary-grades1-6-vocational/>

# VOCATIONAL GRADED EXAMINATIONS

## INTRODUCTION

### RATIONALE

The Vocational Graded Examinations in Bharatanatyam, from Intermediate Foundation through to Advanced 2, develop the candidate's expertise in such a way as to provide the basis for either professional employment as a dancer or further training as a dance teacher.

Throughout the study of the syllabus, candidates are following a vocational path, requiring a high level of commitment and with an increasing emphasis on safe dance practice. Successful candidates at this level should show virtuosity in performance, a high standard of technique and a sound knowledge and understanding of the Bharatanatyam genre, including an understanding of reference and context.

Candidates studying the Bharatanatyam Vocational Graded syllabus should also typically display a sense of self-awareness and be self-motivated in terms of their personal development. As distinct from the general Graded examinations, a greater degree of personal interpretation is encouraged, and the candidate is expected to show the potential to communicate effectively with an audience.

Candidates will need to show the qualities of professionalism, commitment and focus, with the ability to manage a greater workload than that required for the general Graded examinations. This would typically result in a successful candidate spending significant additional time each week in lessons, in practising and in studying independently.

The Vocational Graded Examinations are regulated qualifications on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). Intermediate Foundation is located at Level 2, Intermediate is located at Level 3, and Advanced 1 and Advanced 2 are located at Level 4.

### AIM

The aim of the ISTD Vocational Graded Examinations in Bharatanatyam is to provide an assessment scheme, which gives the basis for the measurement of the individual candidate's progress and development, in preparing to be a professional dance performer or teacher. There are four practical examinations graded to measure appropriate stages of development from a general standard of Bharatanatyam education to that of professional competence and readiness.

### OBJECTIVES

The syllabus objectives of the Bharatanatyam Vocational Graded Examinations are:

- To impart the practical skills in Bharatanatyam creation and performance, as they are manifest today, complemented by appropriate contextual knowledge and understanding, through a programme of education and assessment.
- To inculcate a holistic perception of Bharatanatyam in the context of the world of dance.
- To lay a foundation of personal resources to survive and succeed in the professional dance world.

## LEARNING AND PROGRESSION

All Bharatanatyam Graded Examinations are concerned with progressive mastery in defined stages. They also develop and demonstrate competence and artistry in, and communication through, the Bharatanatyam technique. The Vocational Graded Examinations are concerned specifically with the mastery of technique and underpinning understanding, to a level sufficient to prepare candidates for further vocational training and match current expectations in the employment sector.

## ENTRY CONDITIONS AND GENERAL INFORMATION

### AGE REQUIREMENTS

Lower age limits are set in the interests of the health and safety of the candidate within the demands of the syllabus.

Intermediate Foundation	minimum age 11
Intermediate	minimum age 12
Advanced 1	minimum age 13
Advanced 2	minimum age 13

### PRIOR LEARNING

Intermediate Foundation is an optional examination, otherwise the vocational examinations must be taken in the correct order.

**From 1st October 2026, candidates will be required to have achieved the ISTD Theory Examination (Level 3) to be certificated and have marks released for the Intermediate examination.**

Exemption from the Intermediate and Advanced 1 examinations may be obtained if the candidate is a student who already holds an equivalent genre Intermediate or Advanced 1 certificate of an Ofqual approved dance awarding body. Application for exemption must be made in writing to the Examinations department.

### GENDER DISTINCTIONS

All examinations do not require any dancer to make a gender specific presentation, and any candidates can be presented together.

### TIME ALLOWANCES / NUMBER OF CANDIDATES

Candidates are encouraged to be entered in pairs, although candidates may be examined individually. The candidate shows a prepared dance performance, following which they answer questions about the prepared performance, about other aspects of the syllabus, and may be asked to dance additional items to demonstrate understanding and skill. The examination of candidates takes the following time:

EXAMINATION	1 CANDIDATE	2 CANDIDATES
Intermediate Foundation	45 minutes	65 minutes
Intermediate	55 minutes	80 minutes
Advanced 1	65 minutes	95 minutes
Advanced 2	80 minutes	115 minutes

## MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

Teachers entering candidates must make their own arrangements for provision of music.

## DRESS REQUIREMENTS

There are no marks for grooming for the Vocational Graded Examinations; however, it is considered an essential aspect of training, giving poise and confidence. 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 dance practice *sāri* or suitably tailored *salwār kamīz*. or a *dhoti* or a suitably tailored *kurtā pyjāma*.
- All candidates should have their waist firmly bound.
- 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. If a head scarf is worn, please ensure that the hair and the scarf are tightly secured.
- No dance costume or jewellery should be worn.
- Body piercings should not be worn, unless for religious reasons. In such cases they should be properly secured and if needed, covered to prevent any potential injuries.
- Ankle bells should be worn.

## STUDIO LAYOUT FOR EXAMINATION

Teachers should select the most suitable studio layout for the examination, to allow candidates to demonstrate fully. Teachers should ensure mirrors are covered or made opaque and are asked to provide a large table and a comfortable chair with a cushion.

Teachers are also asked to provide a bell on the table which the examiner can ring to signify that they are ready for the next candidate/s to enter the studio. It would be helpful if the examiner could also be provided with an additional chair or small table to use as an overflow space for books and paperwork.

## SYLLABUS CONTENT

This syllabus outline must be applied in conjunction with the Bharatanatyam Vocational Examination Syllabus Specification (purchasable from the ISTD Shop) and the General Statement on Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and Level Descriptors from page 27.

## INTERMEDIATE FOUNDATION

### THIS OUTLINE SYLLABUS IS TO BE TAUGHT FOLLOWING A STUDY OF THE SYLLABUS SPECIFICATION

Candidates must perform all the vocational examinations with ankle bells; marks will be deducted if not worn.

Vocational candidates must all bring a *taṭṭukazhi* to the examination for the tasks of these grades and marks will be lost if not done so.

### Ancillary Skills

#### 1. Rhythm and *Tāla*

- 1.1 Introduction to the use of *taṭṭukazhi* to conduct *aḍavus* and practise in *pancajāti*.
- 1.2 Recitation, with *tāla* as well as with *taṭṭukazhi*, of the *Jatiswaram korvais* and *Alāriṭṭu aḍavus*.
- 1.3 Recitation, with *tāla* as well as with *taṭṭukazhi*, of any rhythmic patterns pertaining to the *Śabdham* and *Kīrtanam*.

#### 2. Music

- 2.1 Ability to sing the items learnt to *tāla* and demonstrating musicality. This may be demonstrated by following written *swaras / sāhitya*.
- 2.2 Knowledge of compositional structure ie: *pallavi*, *anupallavi* and of *rāgas* and *tālas* pertaining to the set dance pieces in this Grade.

### Technical Skills and Performance

#### 3. *Nritta* and *Nritya*

- 3.1 *Miśra Alāriṭṭu*.
- 3.2 *Jatiswaram*.
- 3.3 *Śabdham*.
- 3.3 *Kīrtanam*.

#### 4. Creative Exercise

- 4.1 Understanding composition of a *korvai* through tasks such as completing the missing part of a *korvai*, or creating the end of a *korvai* set to *renḍu kalai ādi* or *rūpaka tāla*, and then dancing it. The *śolkaṭṭu* will be a recitation of simple beats with apparent rhythms as opposed to words typically used in a *jati / tīrmāna*.

### Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam, Theory and File

#### 5. Safe Dance Practice

Please purchase from the ISTD Shop the Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam DVD to learn the exercises that will be examined in this section of the syllabus.

## 6. Theory

- 6.1 *Asamyuta hasta viniyoga ślokas - śloka* or Sanskrit names.
- 6.2 Literal meaning of the *sāhitya* and mythological background of the narrative content covered in the dance items.
- 6.3 Candidates will need to have knowledge of the content of the ISTD Bharatanatyam Grades 1-4.

## 7. File (A4 Ring Binder, clearly named in large on the front and spine of the binder – all contents of the file must be the student’s own work and can be in their own handwriting or typed.)

- 7.1 Repertoire list.
- 7.2 A record of musical notations.
- 7.3 A record, with notation, of the rhythmic structures in the items learnt.
- 7.4 A record of the *aḍavus / nrīta*, rhythm and *tāla*, theory and *abhinaya / nrītya* covered including knowledge of the *sāhitya* of the dances learnt and including details on any *sancāri*.
- 7.5 Candidates should also be encouraged to collect a rich variety of supporting material. Please refer to the Specifications for details of the requirements.

### The Intermediate Foundation examination consists of:

- Presentation of the file.
- Performance of a prepared dance sequence of twenty-five minutes’ duration only, demonstrating ability to perform the Intermediate Foundation syllabus through an appropriate proportion of *nrīta* and *nrītya*. The prepared performance can be put together using the items of this syllabus fully or in parts and it is recommended that the approximate length of the different components of the prepared performance is as follows:

*Miśra Alāriṣṭu* – 3 minutes  
*Jatiswaram* – 7 minutes  
*Śabdham* – 8 minutes  
*Kīrtanam* – 7 minutes.

Both candidates in the group perform same pieces simultaneously. A maximum of two candidates is normally examined simultaneously although a solo candidate can be presented where necessary.

All items must be learnt in full even if only parts of the items are used in the prepared piece. The examiner can request the candidate to demonstrate the item in full if it is edited in the performance. Music of the whole item of learnt compositions should be kept available by the teacher.

- Further individual demonstration if requested by the examiner, but this cannot be instead of the material required for inclusion in the prepared performance. Marks will be lost for material that is not included in the prepared performance and will not be requested separately.

- **Individual response to:**  
the creative exercise task  
demonstration of safe dance practice exercises  
theory questions  
questions generated from the file contents  
*tāla* and *taṭṭukazhi* tasks  
singing tasks

Candidates are encouraged to bring a small supply of still drinking water if needed following the prepared performance as well as a paper and pen to make brief notes for their creative exercise.

## INTERMEDIATE

### THIS OUTLINE SYLLABUS IS TO BE TAUGHT FOLLOWING A STUDY OF THE SYLLABUS SPECIFICATION

Candidates must perform all the vocational examinations with ankle bells; marks will be deducted if not worn. Vocational candidates must all bring a *taṭṭukazhi* to the examination for the tasks of these grades and marks will be lost if not done so.

#### Ancillary Skills

##### 1. Rhythm and *Tāla*

1.1 Recitation, with *tāla* as well as with *taṭṭukazhi* of the prescribed *korvai* and *Tillāna korvais*.

##### 2. Music

2.1 Ability to sing the items learnt to *tāla* and demonstrating musicality. This may be demonstrated by following written *swaras / sāhitya*.

2.2 Knowledge of compositional structure ie: *pallavi*, *anupallavi* and of *rāgas* and *tālas* pertaining to the set dance pieces in this Grade.

#### Technical Skills and Performance

##### 3. *Nritta* and *Nritya*

3.1 A *korvai* in a less commonly used *tāla*, such as *aṭa* and *jhampa*.

3.2 *Tillāna*.

3.3 *Padam*.

3.4 One item from the following selection – *Bhajan / Devarnāma / Tevāram* or any other devotional piece.

##### 4. Creative Exercise

4.1 Be able to demonstrate a varied interpretation of a part from the expressional material learnt in this Grade.

## Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam, Theory and File

### 5. Safe Dance Practice

Please purchase from the ISTD Shop the Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam DVD to learn the exercises that will be examined in this section of the syllabus.

### 6. Theory

- 6.1 *Samyuta hasta viniyoga ślokas - śloka* or Sanskrit names.
- 6.2 Understanding of *bhāva* and *rasa*, including *navarasas*.
- 6.3 *Nāyika* and *nāyaka bhedas*, also in relation to the items learnt, along with *aṣṭanāyika* and a description of each one.
- 6.4 Knowledge of the literal meaning of the *sāhitya* and mythological background of the narrative content covered in the dance items.
- 6.5 Candidates will need to have knowledge of the content of the ISTD Bharatanatyam Grades 1-4 and Intermediate Foundation although taking the Intermediate Foundation examination is not a pre-requisite.

### 7. File (A4 Ring Binder, clearly named in large on the front and spine of the binder – all contents of the file must be the student’s own work and can be in their own handwriting or typed.)

- 7.1 Repertoire list.
- 7.2 A record of musical notations.
- 7.3 A record, with notation, of the prescribed *korvai* and *Tillāna korvais*.
- 7.4 A record of the *aḍavus / nritta*, rhythm and *tāla*, theory and *abhinaya / nritya* covered including knowledge of the *sāhitya* of the dances learnt and including details on any *sancāri*.
- 7.5 Candidates should also be encouraged to collect a rich variety of supporting material. Please refer to the Specifications for details of the requirements.

### The Intermediate examination consists of:

- Presentation of the file.
- Performance of a prepared dance sequence of 30 minutes’ duration only, demonstrating ability to perform the Intermediate syllabus through an appropriate proportion of *nritta* and *nritya*.  
The prepared performance can be put together using the items of this syllabus fully or in parts and it is recommended that the approximate length of the different components of the prepared performance is as follows:

*korvai* – 2 minutes

*Tillāna* – 10 minutes

two *abhinaya* pieces – 18 minutes

Both candidates in the group perform same pieces simultaneously. A maximum of two candidates is normally examined simultaneously although a solo candidate can be presented where necessary.

All items must be learnt in full even if only parts of the items are used in the prepared piece. The examiner can request the candidate to demonstrate the item in full if it is edited in the performance. Music of the whole item of learnt compositions should be kept available by the teacher.

- Further individual demonstration if requested by the examiner, but this cannot be instead of the material required for inclusion in the prepared performance. Marks will be lost for material that is not included in the prepared performance and will not be requested separately.
- **Individual response to:**
  - the creative exercise task
  - demonstration of safe dance practice exercises
  - theory questions
  - questions generated from the file contents
  - tāla* and *taṭṭukazhi* tasks
  - singing tasks

Candidates are encouraged to bring a small supply of still drinking water if needed following the prepared performance as well as a paper and pen to make brief notes for their creative exercise.

## ADVANCED 1

**THIS OUTLINE SYLLABUS IS TO BE TAUGHT FOLLOWING A STUDY OF THE SYLLABUS SPECIFICATIONS**

Candidates wishing to enter Advanced 1 must have passed Intermediate.

Candidates must perform all the vocational examinations with ankle bells; marks will be deducted if not worn. Vocational candidates must all bring a *taṭṭukazhi* to the examination for the tasks of these grades and marks will be lost if not done so.

### **Ancillary Skills**

#### **1. Rhythm and Tāla**

1.1 Recitation, with *tāla* as well as with *taṭṭukazhi* of rhythmic structures in all items learnt as well as the *Varnam jatis / tirmānas* and *korvais* in *Varnam swaras*.

#### **2. Music**

2.1 Ability to sing the items learnt to *tāla* and demonstrating musicality. This may be demonstrated by following written *swaras / sāhitya*. It is not expected for the candidate to sing the *śloka*, but knowledge of the *sāhitya* and meaning may be tested under the theory section

2.2 Knowledge of compositional structure ie: *pallavi*, *anupallavi* and of *rāgas* and *tālas* pertaining to the set dance pieces in this Grade.

## Technical Skills and Performance

### 3. *Nritta and Nritya*

- 3.1 A minimum of one item from the following selection – *Mallāri / Puṣpānjali / Kavittuvam / Toḍayam* or similar invocation piece.
- 3.2 *Śloka*.
- 3.3 *Varnam* (Each line of the song should fit into one *āvartana* of *ādi tāla* or four *āvartanas* of *rūpaka tāla*).

### 4. Creative Exercise

- 4.1 Creating and performing a *nritta* sequence incorporating given *aḍavus* in suggested rhythmic structures set to two *reṇḍu kalai āvartanas* of *ādi tāla*. For this, *śolkattu* from a *jati / tīrmāna* will be given by the examiner and the *aḍavus* to be used will be indicated.
- 4.1 Creating *sancāri bhāva* as stipulated by the examiner. This will be to a song that is unknown to the candidate. The examiner will prescribe the content of the *sancāri bhāva*.

## Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam, Theory and File

### 5. Safe Dance Practice

Please purchase from the ISTD Shop the Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam DVD to learn the exercises that will be examined in this section of the syllabus.

### 6. Theory

- 6.1 *Gati Bhedas* and *Bāndhava Hastas*
- 6.2 Literal meaning and knowledge of the *sāhitya* and mythological background of the narrative content covered in the items learnt.
- 6.3 Understanding of a *mārgam*.
- 6.4 In-depth understanding of the four types of *abhinaya*.
- 6.5 Candidates will need to have knowledge of the content of the ISTD Bharatanatyam Grades 1- 4, Intermediate Foundation and Intermediate.

### 7. File (A4 Ring Binder, clearly named in large on the front and spine of the binder – all contents of the file must be the student's own work and can be in their own handwriting or typed.)

- 7.1 Repertoire list.
- 7.2 A record of musical notations.
- 7.3 A record, with notation, of *Varnam jatis / tīrmānas* and *korvais* in *Varnam swaras*.
- 7.4 A record of the *aḍavus / nritta*, rhythm and *tāla*, theory and *abhinaya / nritya* covered including knowledge of the *sāhitya* of the dances learnt and including details on any *sancāri*.
- 7.5 Information on different *bāṇis* of Bharatanatyam.
- 7.6 Researched material on requirements for dance costumes and make-up for traditional Bharatanatyam performance.
- 7.7 Candidates should also be encouraged to collect a rich variety of supporting material. Please refer to the Specifications for details of the requirements.

## The Advanced 1 examination consists of:

- Presentation of the file.
- Performance of a prepared dance sequence of of 35 minutes' duration only, demonstrating ability to perform the Advanced 1 syllabus through an appropriate proportion of *nritta* and *nriya* with a compulsory inclusion of at least part of the first half and part of the second half of the *varnam*.

The prepared performance can be put together using the items of this syllabus fully or in parts and it is recommended that the approximate length of the different components of the prepared performance is as follows:

One out of *Mallāri* / *Puṣpānjali* / *Kavittuvam* / *Toḍayam* – 9 minutes

*Śloka* – 4 minutes

*Varnam* – 22 minutes.

Both candidates in the group perform same pieces simultaneously. A maximum of two candidates is normally examined simultaneously although a solo candidate can be presented where necessary.

All items must be learnt in full even if only parts of the items are used in the prepared piece.

The examiner can request the candidate to demonstrate the item in full if it is edited in the performance.

Music of the whole item of learnt compositions should be kept available by the teacher.

- Further individual demonstration if requested by the examiner, but this cannot be instead of the material required for inclusion in the prepared performance. Marks will be lost for material that is not included in the prepared performance and will not be requested separately.
- **Individual response to:**
  - the creative exercise task
  - demonstration of safe dance practice exercises
  - theory questions
  - questions generated from the file contents
  - tāla* and *taṭṭukazhi* tasks
  - singing tasks

Candidates are encouraged to bring a small supply of still drinking water if needed following the prepared performance as well as a paper and pen to make brief notes for their creative exercise.

## ADVANCED 2

**THIS OUTLINE SYLLABUS IS TO BE TAUGHT FOLLOWING A STUDY OF THE SYLLABUS SPECIFICATIONS**

Candidates wishing to enter Advanced 2 must have successfully passed Advanced 1.

Candidates must perform all the vocational examinations with ankle bells; marks will be deducted if not worn.

Vocational candidates must all bring a *taṭṭukazhi* to the examination for the tasks of these grades and marks will be lost if not done so.

### **Ancillary Skills**

#### **1. Rhythm and *Tāla***

1.1 Recitation, with *tāla* as well as with *taṭṭukazhi* of rhythmic structures in all items learnt as well as the *Varnam jatis / tīrmānas* and korvais in *Varnam swaras*.

#### **2. Music**

2.1 Ability to sing the items learnt to *tāla* and demonstrating musicality. This may be demonstrated by following written *swaras / sāhitya*.

2.2 Knowledge of compositional structure ie: *pallavi, anupallavi* and of *rāgas* and *tālas* pertaining to the set dance pieces in this Grade.

### **Technical Skills and Performance**

#### **3. *Nritta* and *Nritya***

3.1 *Jāvali / Aṣṭapadi*

3.2 *Varnam* - a more complex one than previously done in Advanced 1, ie slower paced such as a Tanjore Quartet one, displaying maturity in *sancāri*. Instead of a *Varnam*, a similarly structured slow-paced item incorporating *jatis / tīrmānas* and *swaras* as well as equally elaborate *abhinaya* sections can be chosen. (Candidates may choose to perform a *Swarajati, Pancaratna, Nrityopahāra, an aṭa tāla tānavarnam, or even a Kīrtanam* such as *Bhāvayāmi Raghurāmam*, but these must display the required complexity and maturity and must be slow paced).

#### **4. Creative Exercise**

At this level, the examiner will expect to see evidence of *manodharma* which is the skill of improvisation.

4.1 Creating a narrative based on a given theme (applying *padārtha, vākyārtha* and *sancāri*) where the examiner will choose a song unfamiliar to the candidate.

4.2 Creating and performing a *jati / tīrmāna* facilitated by the examiner. In this, the examiner will recite the *jati / tīrmāna* and the candidate will be required to set movement to it and perform it. The examiner will not make suggestion to what *aḍavus* should be used.

## Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam, Theory and File

### 5. Safe Dance Practice

Please purchase from the ISTD Shop the Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam DVD to learn the exercises that will be examined in this section of the syllabus.

### 6. Theory

6.1 *Navagraha Hastas.*

6.2 Knowledge of the literal meaning of the *sāhitya* and mythological background of the narrative content covered in the items learnt.

6.3 Candidates will need to have knowledge of the content of the ISTD Bharatanatyam Grades 1-4, Intermediate Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced 1.  
(Candidates wishing to enter Advanced 2 must have passed Advanced 1.)

### 7. File (A4 Ring Binder, clearly named in large on the front and spine of the binder – all contents of the file must be the student's own work and can be in their own handwriting or typed.)

7.1 Repertoire list.

7.2 A record of musical notations.

7.3 A record, with notation, of the *Varnam's* or the alternative item's *jatis / tīrmānas* and *korvais* of the *Varnam swaras*.

7.4 A record of the *aḍavus / nrīta*, rhythm and *tāla*, theory and *abhinaya / nrītya* covered including knowledge of the *sāhitya* of the dances learnt and including details on any *sancāri*.

7.5 History of Bharatanatyam through the ages, and to the present day.

7.6 A study of the requirements for lighting, sound and set for traditional Bharatanatyam presentation.

7.7 Candidates should also be encouraged to collect a rich variety of supporting material. Please refer to the Syllabus Specifications for details of the requirements.

### The Advanced 2 examination consists of:

- Presentation of the file.
- Performance of a prepared dance sequence of 45 minutes' duration only, demonstrating ability to perform the Advanced 2 syllabus through an appropriate proportion of *nrīta* and *nrītya* with a compulsory inclusion of at least part of the first half and part of the second half of the *varnam*.

The prepared performance can be put together using the items of this syllabus fully or in parts and it is recommended that the approximate length of the different components of the prepared performance is as follows:

*abhinaya* item – 13 minutes

*Varnam* – 32 minutes.

In addition to these 45 minutes and separately the examiner will request to see a dance piece from previous Grades, choosing this from the repertoire list to be provided by the candidate.

Both candidates in the group perform same pieces simultaneously. A maximum of two candidates is normally examined simultaneously although a solo candidate can be presented where necessary.

All items must be learnt in full even if only parts of the items are used in the prepared piece. The examiner can request the candidate to demonstrate the item in full if it is edited in the performance. Music of the whole item of learnt compositions should be kept available by the teacher.

Further individual demonstration if requested by the examiner, but this cannot be instead of the material required for inclusion in the prepared performance. Marks will be lost for material that is not included in the prepared performance and will not be requested separately.

- **Individual response to:**  
the creative exercise task  
demonstration of safe dance practice exercises  
theory questions  
questions generated from the file contents  
*tāla* and *taṭṭukazhi* tasks  
singing tasks

Candidates are encouraged to bring a small supply of still drinking water if needed following the prepared performance as well as a paper and pen to make brief notes for their creative exercise.

**ASSESSMENT – BHARATANATYAM VOCATIONAL GRADE EXAMINATIONS**

**INTERMEDIATE FOUNDATION**

<b>ANCILLARY SKILLS</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
Music, rhythm and <i>tāla</i> - recitation and timekeeping of <i>tāla</i> , singing the items learnt with <i>tāla</i> , demonstrating use of <i>taṭṭukazhi</i>	20
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>TECHNICAL SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
<i>Miśra Alāriṭṭu &amp; Jatiswaram</i>	18
<i>Śabdham</i>	15
<i>Kīrtanam</i>	12
Creative exercise	5
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>SAFE DANCE PRACTICE FOR BHARATANATYAM, THEORY AND FILE</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam	5
Theory – response to questions	15
File – adequacy and presentation and response to questions generated from the file	10
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## ASSESSMENT – BHARATANATYAM VOCATIONAL GRADE EXAMINATIONS

### INTERMEDIATE

<b>ANCILLARY SKILLS</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
Music, rhythm and <i>tāla</i> - recitation and timekeeping of <i>tāla</i> , singing the items learnt with <i>tāla</i> , demonstrating use of <i>taṭṭukazhi</i>	20
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>TECHNICAL SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
<i>Korvai</i> in a less common <i>tāla</i>	5
<i>Tillāna</i>	15
<i>Abhinaya</i> <i>Padam</i> <i>Bhajan/Devarnāma/Tevāram</i> or any other devotional piece	25
Creative exercise	5
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>SAFE DANCE PRACTICE FOR BHARATANATYAM, THEORY AND FILE</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam	5
Theory – response to questions	15
File – adequacy and presentation and response to questions generated from the file	10
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## ASSESSMENT – BHARATANATYAM VOCATIONAL GRADE EXAMINATIONS

### ADVANCED 1

<b>ANCILLARY SKILLS</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
Music, rhythm and <i>tāla</i> - recitation and timekeeping of <i>tāla</i> , singing the items learnt with <i>tāla</i> , demonstrating use of <i>taṭṭukazhi</i>	20
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>TECHNICAL SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
<i>Mallāri/Puṣpānjali/Kavittuvam/Toḍayam</i>	10
<i>Varnam</i>	25
<i>Śloka</i>	5
Creative exercise	10
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>SAFE DANCE PRACTICE FOR BHARATANATYAM, THEORY AND FILE</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam	5
Theory – response to questions	15
File – adequacy and presentation and response to questions generated from the file	10
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## ASSESSMENT – BHARATANATYAM VOCATIONAL GRADE EXAMINATIONS

### ADVANCED 2

<b>ANCILLARY SKILLS</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
Music, rhythm and <i>tāla</i> - recitation and timekeeping of <i>tāla</i> , singing the items learnt with <i>tāla</i> , demonstrating use of <i>taṭṭukazhi</i>	20
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>TECHNICAL SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
<i>Varnam</i>	25
Expressional item such as <i>Jāvali/Aṣṭapadi</i>	10
Other items from the <i>mārgam</i>	5
Creative exercise	10
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>SAFE DANCE PRACTICE FOR BHARATANATYAM, THEORY AND FILE</b>	
<b>Title of component</b>	<b>Marks attainable</b>
Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam	5
Theory – response to questions	15
File - adequacy and presentation and response to questions generated from the file	10
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

Vocational Graded Examinations are assessed externally by visiting examiners recruited and trained by the ISTD. Assessment is carried out by means of a practical demonstration of the knowledge, understanding and skills required.

The examination is divided into Sections, and each Section is composed of several components, which are separately assessed and aggregated to give the total out of 100.

Candidates will, however, be unsuccessful if

1. 20% of the marks attainable or below are given for any one component
2. 40% of the marks attainable or below are given for any three components

This reflects the need to ensure competence across a wide range of components.

Results are indicated using the following attainment bands:

GRADE	MARKS
Distinction	80-100 marks
Merit	65-79 marks
Pass	50-64 marks
Not Attained	0-49 marks

Full attainment descriptors are given further below.

## CLASSIFICATION OF RESULTS

The principle of best fit is applied in deciding the appropriate classification for each candidate. It is not to be expected that a candidate in a particular category will necessarily demonstrate all of the characteristics listed in that category.

A candidate who achieves a '**Distinction**' classification (80-100 marks) is one who demonstrates the following attributes in performance:

- Flair, vitality and skill
- Fully appropriate style
- Incisively focussed dancing
- Precision in the technique of the genre
- Consistent, highly developed musicality
- Confident and accurate responses to questions asked and/or tasks set

A candidate who achieves a '**Merit**' classification (65-79 marks) is one who demonstrates the following attributes in performance:

- Skill and proficiency
- Largely appropriate style
- Focussed dancing
- Competence in the technique of the genre
- Evidence of developing musicality
- Relevant and appropriate responses to questions asked and/or tasks set

A candidate who achieves a **'Pass'** classification (50-64 marks) is one who demonstrates the following attributes in performance:

- Competence
- Basic ability to carry out the required movements
- Periodic moments of convincing focus
- Basic competence in most aspects of the technique of the genre
- Basic musicality
- Broadly relevant and appropriate response to questions asked and/or tasks set, but some prompting may be required

A candidate who achieves a **'Not attained'** classification (00-49 marks) is one who has not yet demonstrated the attributes required to gain at least a 'Pass' classification

## **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](http://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/](http://www.istd.org/examinations/uk-examinations/)

Email: [ukdanceteachers@istd.org](mailto:ukdanceteachers@istd.org)

#### **International Examinations**

Website: [www.istd.org/examinations/international-examinations/](http://www.istd.org/examinations/international-examinations/)

Email: [InternationalTeachers@istd.org](mailto: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](http://www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance)

For further guidance, please contact the Quality Assurance department at [csqa@istd.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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 candidates' 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:

<https://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: <https://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](http://www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance)

## QUALIFICATION REGULATION

### Regulation - UK

#### ISTD Graded Examinations are regulated by:

- Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) in England
- Qualifications Wales
- Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA Regulation) 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 38 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:

Guided Learning Hours (GLH) describes the amount of time the learner has spent in class under the direct supervision of their teacher.

Total Qualification Time (TQT) includes all the Guided Learning Hours plus further independent study undertaken by the learner 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
Intermediate Foundation	Level 2	Level 3
Intermediate	Level 3	Level 4
Advanced 1	Level 4	Level 5
Advanced 2	Level 4	Level 5

**Total Qualification Time (TQT). The ISTD's qualifications on the Regulated Qualifications Framework are as follows:**

Qualification Title	Qualification Number	Guided Learning Hours	Total Qualification Time (hours)	Credits
ISTD Level 2 Certificate in Vocational Graded Examination in Dance: <b>Intermediate Foundation</b> (Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam)	501/0764/1	150	275	28
ISTD Level 3 Certificate in Vocational Graded Examination in Dance: <b>Intermediate</b> (Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam)	501/0728/8	150	275	28
ISTD Level 4 Certificate in Vocational Graded Examination in Dance: <b>Advanced 1</b> (Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam)	501/0760/4	150	325	33
ISTD Level 4 Diploma in Vocational Graded Examination in Dance: <b>Advanced 2</b> (Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam)	501/0761/6	150	375	38

### 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.

Intermediate	Tariff Points	Advanced 1	Tariff Points	Advanced 2	Tariff Points
Distinction	20	Distinction	24	Distinction	24
Merit	14	Merit	20	Merit	20
Pass	8	Pass	16	Pass	16

### EQUIVALENCE OF QUALIFICATION LEVELS

Qualification level	Level	Equivalence
Intermediate Foundation	2	Equivalent to GCSE standard
Intermediate	3	Equivalent to A-Level and T-Level standard
Advanced 1	4	Equivalent to the first year of a degree or a Certificate of Higher Education or Higher National qualification at Level 4
Advanced 2	4	Equivalent to the first year of a degree or a Certificate of Higher Education or Higher National qualification at Level 4

## LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

### Intermediate Foundation: Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
<b>LO1:</b> Apply and demonstrate through performance a range of fundamental and relevant knowledge and understanding of the <b>vocabulary and technique</b> of <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate physical and technical competence safely</li> </ul>
<b>LO2:</b> Perform a range of movement sequences showing sound and secure <b>technical skills</b> in <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform exercises, sequences, and dances</li> </ul>
<b>LO3:</b> Perform a range of movement sequences <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform exercises and dances to music</li> <li>• Create short, coherent sequences of movement to music</li> </ul>
<b>LO4:</b> Apply and demonstrate a range of <b>performance skills</b> in <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recall, perform and present exercises and dances to an audience using a range of performance and presentational skills</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of style and theme</li> </ul>

### Intermediate: Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
<b>LO1:</b> Apply and demonstrate through performance a range of fundamental and relevant knowledge and understanding of the <b>vocabulary and technique</b> of <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate physical and technical competence safely</li> </ul>
<b>LO2:</b> Perform a range of movement sequences showing sound and secure <b>technical skills</b> in <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform exercises, sequences, and dances</li> </ul>
<b>LO3:</b> Perform a range of movement sequences showing an understanding of <b>musicality</b> in <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform exercises and dances to music</li> <li>• Create short, coherent sequences of movement to music</li> </ul>
<b>LO4:</b> Apply and demonstrate a range of <b>performance skills</b> in <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recall, perform and present exercises and dances to an audience using a range of performance and presentational skills</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of style and theme</li> </ul>

## LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

### Advanced 1: Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
<b>LO1:</b> Apply and demonstrate through performance a range of fundamental and relevant knowledge and understanding of the <b>vocabulary and technique</b> of <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate physical and technical competence safely</li> </ul>
<b>LO2:</b> Perform a range of movement sequences showing sound and secure <b>technical skills</b> in <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform exercises, sequences, and dances</li> </ul>
<b>LO3:</b> Perform a range of movement sequences showing an understanding of <b>musicality</b> in <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform exercises and dances to music</li> <li>• Create short, coherent sequences of movement to music</li> </ul>
<b>LO4:</b> Apply and demonstrate a range of <b>performance skills</b> in <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recall, perform and present exercises and dances to an audience using a range of performance and presentational skills</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of style and theme</li> </ul>

### Advanced 2: Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
<b>LO1:</b> Apply and demonstrate through performance a range of fundamental and relevant knowledge and understanding of the <b>vocabulary and technique</b> of <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate physical and technical competence safely</li> </ul>
<b>LO2:</b> Perform a range of movement sequences showing sound and secure <b>technical skills</b> in <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform exercises, sequences, and dances</li> </ul>
<b>LO3:</b> Perform a range of movement sequences showing an understanding of <b>musicality</b> in <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform exercises and dances to music</li> </ul>
<b>LO4:</b> Apply and demonstrate a range of <b>performance skills</b> in <b>Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recall, perform and present exercises and dances to an audience using a range of performance and presentational skills</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of style and theme</li> </ul>