



Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing
Classical Indian

Bharatanatyam 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

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1 Foreword and faculty history

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 storytelling 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.

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 recognised 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 internationally 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

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 Bharatanatyam 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 Bharatanatyam as well as the wider horizons of dance.

The ISTD Bharatanatyam syllabus:

- Promotes correct posture and safe dance practice
- Develops an understanding of Bharatanatyam 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, singing, footwork and movement within the Bharatanatyam genre
- Develops understanding of the cultural, mythological and storytelling aspects of Bharatanatyam

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

In each examination the syllabus is presented in three sections:

- Ancillary Skills
- Technical and Performance Skills
- Safe Dance Practice, Requested Additional Content and Creative Section

It is essential for all teachers to purchase the full Bharatanatyam Primary, Grade 1-6 and Vocational Technical Examination Syllabus Book available from our ISTD shop.

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

3 Qualification purpose

Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam offers a range of learning opportunities that build technique and understanding of the Bharatanatyam 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Artistry• Communication• Dynamic and rhythmic awareness• Expression• Fluency• Phrasing• Focus• Musicality• Projection• Sensitivity to others• Spatial awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 (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: Bharatanatyam)	501/0755/0	60	70	7
ISTD Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 2 (Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam)	501/0753/7	60	70	7
ISTD Level 1 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 3 (Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam)	501/0754/9	60	70	7
ISTD Level 2 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 4 (Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam)	501/0756/2	75	95	10
ISTD Level 2 Award in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 5 (Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam)	501/0757/4	75	95	10
ISTD Level 3 Certificate in Graded Examination in Dance: Grade 6 (Classical Indian Dance: Bharatanatyam)	501/0758/6	90	130	13
ISTD Level 3 Certificate in Classical Indian Dance Theory - Bharatanatyam	610/7228/X	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

UCAS points

In the UK, our Grade 6, Theory and Vocational 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. For the full UCAS information for our Vocational Graded qualifications, download for free the Vocational Specification on the ISTD website.

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 – Bharatanatyam	3	Equivalent to KS5 Year 12/13 - A-Level and T-Level standard

6 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 operator.

Dress requirements

Although examination attire is not formally assessed in Bharatanatyam 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 *salwār* or *curidār* with a suitably tailored *kurtā* or *kamīz*
- All candidates should have their waist firmly bound
- Hair should be pinned away from the face and, if possible, 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. If a head scarf is required, please ensure the hair and the scarf are tightly secured
- No dance costume 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 are not required

7 Primary Class 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 candidate's ability to follow and respond to the teacher's 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 be a sequence of dance movements, which need not be genre specific. i.e. *skipping, galloping, running*.
- 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 has 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/timing, accuracy in foot beats and clapping	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 – Bharatanatyam

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	<p>Rhythm: demonstrates accurate use of hand clapping, foot beating</p> <p>Timing: demonstrates accurate timings in relationship to tāla.</p>	<p>Body Awareness: demonstrate an awareness of balance and coordination</p> <p>Control: demonstrate control throughout the body (torso and limbs)</p>	<p>Spatial Awareness: demonstrates a basic understanding of the use of directions relating to the body.</p> <p>Use of Space: demonstrates an understanding of pattern and direction within the performance space.</p>	<p>Dynamics: Variations of these dynamics listed below should be demonstrated appropriately: Firm & Gentle Quick & Slow Rising & Sinking Action & Stillness</p>	<p>Movement Memory: demonstrates accurate recall, detail and accuracy of execution.</p>	<p>Performance: demonstrates correct posture and projection throughout the examination</p>	<p>Expression: demonstrates natural engagement and enthusiasm throughout</p>	<p>Response: recalls and responds accurately to the teacher's instructions in the first part of the examination</p>
Marks allocated	<p>5 marks - demonstrates accurate hand clapping 5 marks - demonstrates correct foot beating 5 marks - demonstrates correct timing in dance performance.</p>	<p>5 marks - demonstrates awareness of balance 5 marks - demonstrates awareness of coordination 5 marks - demonstrates an awareness of control throughout the whole body</p>	<p>5 marks - demonstrates a basic understanding of the use of directions relating to the body (ie forwards, backwards, right and left) 5 marks - demonstrates an understanding of pattern and direction within the performance space, including length and breadth.</p>	<p>10 marks - demonstrates appropriately the variations and contrasts of the dynamics listed below: 5 marks - for Firm, Gentle, Quick and Slow 5 marks - for Rising, Sinking, Action and Stillness</p>	<p>5 marks - demonstrates accurate recall 5 marks - demonstrates detail and accuracy of execution.</p>			

10 Grade 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. Candidates should take examinations only once the learning and teaching content have been covered in full.

Rationale

Bharatanatyam makes a distinctive contribution to the education of all students, in that it uses movement, which is the fundamental mode 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 Bharatanatyam, candidates learn about co-operation and develop an understanding of the shaping of movement into artistic forms of expression.

Graded examinations in Bharatanatyam are concerned with progressive mastery in defined stages within the context of safe dance practice. There are six practical examination grades, numbered from 1 to 6, to indicate the increasing order of difficulty (6 represents the highest level of attainment).

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 Bharatanatyam Graded Examination Syllabus are set out below:

- To impart practical skills in Bharatanatyam 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 a liberal education or as a preparation for vocational training in Bharatanatyam 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 Bharatanatyam in the context of a wider dance world

Learning and progression

Candidates develop the skill and understanding of Bharatanatyam 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 Bharatanatyam graded examination allows candidates to progress to the next higher grade. Also, a range of transferable skills to other dance genres becomes possible as the candidate develops physically and learns common skills such as running, gesture, posture, timing and rhythmic awareness. In this way, with additional teaching input, the candidate can develop a broad base of dancing skills.

Following on from the graded examinations, candidates may wish to progress to the vocational graded examinations and teaching qualifications as preparation for employment as a professional dancer or teacher.

The graded examinations in Bharatanatyam 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 Bharatanatyam 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 Bharatanatyam 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, which must be in a recorded format for which an operator will be required.

On no account may the teacher or another candidate in the same session be present to operate or accompany for the six graded 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 Bharatanatyam 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 dance practice *sāri* or suitably tailored *salwār kamīz* or wear 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 possible, 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. If a head scarf is required, please ensure the hair and the scarf are tightly secured
- No dance costume or costume 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 are **not** required for Grades 1-3 examinations. However they are **optional** for Grade 4, 5 and 6 examinations (they are compulsory for vocational levels)

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: Bharatanatyam)	501/0755/0	60	70	7

Grade 1 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. Grade 1 candidates' performance should demonstrate an awareness of spatial awareness, an ability to work with others and responsiveness to an audience.

Grade 1 Examination

Teacher's notes

- **Teacher's notes must be provided to the examiner in advance of the examination.**
- For remote exams the teacher's notes must be submitted one week in advance.
- The teacher's notes **MUST** include the singing notes of the music component of this grade, the words and meaning of the ślokas used in this grade, and the śolkattu of the korvai to tāla.

The Grade 1 examination consists of:

- Presentation of teacher's notes to the examiner
- Performance of a **Prepared Dance Sequence of 6 minutes duration only**, demonstrating ability to perform the aḍavus in two speeds, the korvai and ślokas as prescribed in the syllabus. The Prepared Dance Sequence should include as many different varieties as possible of aḍavus from this grade. No aḍavus of higher grades can be included. The approximate length of the different components of the Prepared Dance Sequence is as follows:
 - aḍavus from this grade – 3.5 minutes
 - korvai – 1 minute
 - ślokas – 1.5 minutes
- A maximum of three candidates can be examined and they perform the same Prepared Dance Sequence simultaneously. However, the examiner will decide if the requested additional dance content is performed individually or together
- The Prepared Dance Sequence must include all the specified components. If any component is not included in the sequence, not all marks can be awarded
- After the Prepared Dance Sequence, the examiner will ask candidates for individual responses/performances for the:
 - creative exercise task
 - demonstration of safe dance practice exercises
 - requested additional dance content from this grade, any aḍavus up to this grade, and any contextual material relating to both
 - tāla and singing tasks

Grade 1 Syllabus content

Ancillary Skills

1. Rhythm and Tāla

- 1.1 Recitation of śolkaṭṭu for aḍavus in two kālas and appropriate tāla. This must be in both ādi tāla and rūpaka tāla.
- 1.2 Recitation of śolkaṭṭu for the korvai with ādi tāla.
- 1.3 Recitation of jātis covered.

2. Music

These may be sung by following written notation, so students must bring these notes with them to the examination.

Although assessment of the singing is based on the candidate's adherence to tāla as opposed to pitch or melody, it is required for the candidate to sing, not simply recite the notes / words to rhythm.

- 2.1 A minimum of twelve Saraḷi Varisai in either Māyamālavagowla or Śankarabharana, to be sung in two speeds to ādi tāla.
- 2.2 One gīta in rūpaka tāla.
It is not necessary to sing the whole varisai; the examiner can request a part of each speed. Also, with the gīta, if there are 2/3 candidates present, each may be asked to sing a couple of lines following on from the previous candidate.

Technical and Performance Skills

Below are the aḍavus for this grade.

3. Aḍavus

Assessed in first and second speed only, recommended to be practised in all three speeds – below are some examples of aḍavus for each category.

- 3.1 Taṭṭu aḍavu – a minimum of seven varieties of stamping in sthānaka and araimaṇḍi.
- 3.2 Kaṭṭu aḍavu – three varieties using crossing and stamping patterns (using kaṭakāmukha and alapadma or tripatāka hasta).
- 3.3 Meṭṭu aḍavu – stamping on the ball of the foot.
- 3.4 Nāṭṭu aḍavu – eight varieties of stretching the leg.
- 3.5 Paraval aḍavu – three varieties of tā tai tai ta

3.6 Di di tai – in sequences exploring various arm movements for one step, different foot positions for the same rhythm and a variety of floor patterns.

3.7 Naḍai – the basic Bharatanatyam walk incorporating awareness of three jātis - caturaśra, tiśra and miśra.

4. Nritta Compositions

4.1 One korvai spanning a minimum of four āvartanas of ādi tāla, in first and second speed only and employing at least two jātis where each jāti is properly established with a minimum of two repetitions, using the aḍavu vocabulary of this grade.

This must be presented in the Prepared Dance Sequence in a distinctly separate manner for easy identification by the examiner and should be preceded by a voice recording stating “korvai”.

5. Abhinaya / Nritya

5.1 Gestures and expression for two ślokas – Guru vandana, Siva stuti, sahanāvavatu, or any other śloka. These should be performed as free verse only, and not to rhythm/pulse. .

Safe Dance Practice, Requested Additional Content and Creative Section

6. 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. Only the specific exercises provided in this resource will be accepted in the examination.

Two exercises will be requested from the SDP vocabulary in the examination. If the cool-down is requested, this will be one section of a cool down sequence.

There will also be a contextual question requested to demonstrate an understanding of the exercise performed.

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7. Requested Additional Content

- 7.1 Ślokas – Guru vandana, Siva stuti, sahanāvavatu, or any other śloka – knowing the words and meaning of the ślokas danced. Candidates are expected to be prepared for a total of at least two ślokas for Grade 1 including the ones in the Prepared Dance Sequence.
- 7.2 Hand gestures and what they stand for, relating to ślokas learnt.
- 7.3 Description of the physical characteristics of the gods/goddesses in the ślokas
- 7.4 Nomenclature and śolkaṭṭu of aḍavus up to this grade, and their physical demonstration in first and second speed only.
- 7.5 Names of hastas and pāda bhedas used in this grade.
- 7.6 Understanding of jātis covered.

Examination format:

Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform from Grade 1 syllabus dance content. This will be requested after the Prepared Dance Sequence.

Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions from Grade 1 syllabus after the Prepared Dance Sequence.

The first question will have a direct connection to the Prepared Dance Sequence, and the second question will relate to the additional physical material. For Grade 1 this may include questions on sāhitya, meaning of śloka, gestures in the śloka and what they stand for, description of the physical characteristics of the gods or goddesses in the śloka, nomenclature of steps, names of hastas and pāda bhedas used, and jātis covered.

8. Creative Exercise

- 8.1 With instructions given from the examiner, and using di di tai, a candidate will be expected to create a variety of floor patterns using different hand gestures with arm movements, and foot positions on instruction from the examiner.

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: Bharatanatyam)	501/0753/7	60	70	7

Grade 2 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.

Grade 2 candidates communicate an increasing confidence in performance and 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

Teacher's notes

- **Teacher's notes must be provided to the examiner in advance of the examination**
- For remote exams the teacher's notes must be submitted one week in advance
- The teacher's notes **MUST** include the singing notes of the music component of this grade, the words and meaning of the śloka used in this grade, and the śolkaṭṭu of the swara korvai to tāla

The Grade 2 examination consists of:

- Presentation of teacher's notes to the examiner
- Performance of a **Prepared Dance Sequence of 8 minutes' duration only**, demonstrating ability to perform the aḍavus of this grade in three speeds, a swara korvai and a more complex śloka compared to Grade 1. This should include as many different varieties of aḍavus from this grade with a leeway to include a limited number of aḍavus of the previous grade. No aḍavus of higher grades should be included
- The approximate length of the different components of the the Prepared Dance Sequence is as follows:
 - aḍavus from this grade – 4 minutes
 - swara korvai – 2 minutes
 - abhinaya – 2 minutes
- A maximum of three candidates can be examined and they perform the same Prepared Dance Sequence together. However, the examiner will decide if the requested additional dance content is performed individually or together
- The Prepared Dance Sequence must include all the specified components listed above. If any component is not included in the sequence, not all marks can be awarded
- After the Prepared Dance Sequence, the examiner will ask candidates for individual responses/performances for the:
 - creative exercise task
 - demonstration of safe dance practice exercises
 - requested additional dance content from this grade, any aḍavus up to this grade, and any contextual material relating to both
 - tāla and singing tasks

Grade 2 Syllabus content

Ancillary Skills

1. Rhythm and Tāla

- 1.1 Recitation of śolkaṭṭu for aḍavus in trikāla and appropriate tāla in ascending and descending speeds.
- 1.2 Recitation of śolkaṭṭu for the korvai with tāla.
- 1.3 Knowledge of pancajāti and recitation to the appropriate eka tāla in two speeds.
- 1.4 Knowledge of tāla and its angas (limited to ādi tāla and rūpaka tāla).

2. Music

These may be sung by following written notation, so students should bring these notes with them to the examination.

Although assessment of the singing is based on the candidate's adherence to tāla as opposed to pitch or melody, it is required for the candidate to sing, not simply recite the notes / words to rhythm.

- 2.1 Janṭa Varisai – students will be expected to sing a minimum of seven exercises in two speeds, in ādi tāla.
- 2.2 At least two gītas, each in a different tāla but not in rūpaka tāla. These must be in addition to the one learnt in Grade 1.

It is not necessary to sing the whole varisai; the examiner can request a part of each speed. Also, with the gītas, if there are 2/3 candidates present, each may be asked to sing a couple of lines following on from the previous candidate.

Technical and Performance Skills

Below are the aḍavus for this grade

3. Aḍavus – in three speeds – below are some examples of aḍavus for each category.
 - 3.1 Taṭṭu aḍavu – a minimum of seven varieties in ascending and descending tempi.
 - 3.2 Śimir aḍavu – two varieties in tiśra jāti.
 - 3.3 Paravaḷ aḍavu – four varieties of tā tai tai ta.

- 3.4 Periya / rangakramaṇa / uśī aḍavu – Series of off-beat steps covering space in a variety of floor patterns.
- 3.5 Egarmeṭṭu / kudittameṭṭu aḍavu – a minimum of four varieties of tai hat tai hi.
- 3.6 Cil / jāru / sarikkal aḍavu – five varieties of taiya taihi in which the sthānaka position is used.
- 3.7 Bhramari – two varieties of eka pāda.
- 3.8 Utplavana – three varieties, of which one includes use of kartari hasta.
- 3.9 Taṭṭu meṭṭu / jāti aḍavu demonstrating pancajāti.
- 3.10 Mukṭāya / tīrmāna aḍavu – ta dhin gi ṇa tom series.

4. Nritta Compositions

- 4.1 A nritta composition based on a swara korvai displaying two speeds and a variation of at least three jātis where each jāti is properly established with a minimum of two repetitions.

5. Abhinaya / Nritya

- 5.1 A śloka more complex than those prescribed for Grade 1. This should be performed as free verse only. Examples of ślokas that can be used include, mūshika vāhana, śantākāram, yākundendu. The sāhitya of a simple gīta can also be used as free verse.

Safe Dance Practice, Requested Additional Content and Creative Section

6. 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. Only the specific exercises provided in this resource will be accepted in the examination.

Two exercises will be requested from the SDP vocabulary in the examination. If the cool-down is requested, this will be one section of a cool down sequence.

There will also be a contextual question requested to demonstrate an understanding of the exercise performed.

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7. Requested Additional Content

- 7.1 Śloka – knowing the words and meaning.
- 7.2 Hand gestures and what they stand for, relating to śloka learnt.
- 7.3 Description of the physical characteristics of the god/goddess in the śloka.
- 7.4 Nomenclature of aḍavus - recitation of śolkaṭṭu and performance of aḍavus up to and including this grade.
- 7.5 Names of hastas and pāda bhedas used in this grade.
- 7.6 Understanding of jātis covered.

Examination format:

Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform from Grade 2 syllabus dance content and aḍavus from Grade 1. This will be requested after the Prepared Dance Sequence.

Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions from Grade 2 syllabus after the Prepared Dance Sequence. The first question will have a direct connection to the Prepared Dance Sequence, and the second question will relate to the additional physical material. For Grade 2 this may include questions on sāhitya, meaning of śloka, gestures in the śloka and what they stand for, description of the physical characteristics of the god or goddess in the śloka, nomenclature of steps, names of hastas and pāda bhedas used, and jātis covered.

8. Creative Exercise

- 8.1 On instruction from the examiner, development of a brief narrative displaying every day human emotions whilst employing commonly used hand gestures.

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: Bharatanatyam)	501/0754/9	60	70	7

Grade 3 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.

Grade 3 candidates communicate an increasing confidence in performance and 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

Teacher's notes

- **Teacher's notes must be provided to the examiner in advance of the examination.**
- For all exams the teacher's notes must be submitted one week in advance.
- The teacher's notes **MUST** include the singing notes of the music component of this grade, the lyrics and meaning of all pieces of repertoire and *korvais / jatis to tāla* of this grade.

The Grade 3 examination consists of:

- Presentation of teacher's notes to the examiner
- Performance of a **Prepared Dance Sequence of 10 minutes duration only**, demonstrating ability to perform the *aḍavus*, the prescribed *korvai* and *kuraippu* as well as the invocation. The *aḍavu* section should include as many different varieties as possible of *aḍavus* from this grade. However, any *aḍavus* up to this grade can be used in the invocation
- No *aḍavus* of higher grades can be included. The approximate length of the different components of the Prepared Dance Sequence is as follows:
 - *aḍavus* from this grade – 3.5 minutes
 - *korvai*, *kuraippu* and *nritta* sections of the invocation – 4 minutes
 - *abhinaya* – 2.5 minutes
- A maximum of three candidates can be examined and they perform the same Prepared Dance Sequence together. However, the examiner will decide if the requested additional dance content is performed individually or together
- The Prepared Dance Sequence must include all the specified components listed above. If any component is not included in the sequence, not all marks can be awarded
- After the Prepared Dance Sequence, the examiner will ask candidates for individual responses/performances for the:
 - creative exercise task
 - demonstration of safe dance practice exercises
 - requested additional dance content from this grade, any *aḍavus* up to this grade, and any contextual material relating to both
 - *tāla* and singing tasks

Grade 3 Syllabus content

Ancillary Skills

1. Rhythm and Tāla

- 1.1 Recitation of śolkaṭṭu for aḍavus in trikāla and appropriate tāla in ascending and descending speeds.
- 1.2 Recitation with tāla of śolkaṭṭu of the tīśra Alāriṭṭu korvai and a kuraippu and knowledge of their rhythmic structures.
- 1.3 Understanding of tāla structure of the invocation and recitation of any nrīta sections included in the invocation.

2. Music

These may be sung by following written notation, so students should bring these notes with them to the examination.

Although assessment of the singing is based on the candidate's adherence to tāla as opposed to pitch or melody, it is required for the candidate to sing, not simply recite the notes / words to rhythm.

- 2.1 Ability to sing alankāras in sapta tāla and in two speeds, demonstrating knowledge of the structure of the sapta tāla.
- 2.2 Ability to sing the invocation to tāla.

It is not necessary to sing the whole alankāra; the examiner can request a part of each speed. Also, with the invocation, if there are 2/3 candidates present, each may be asked to sing a couple of lines following on from the previous candidate.

Technical Skills and Performance

Below are the aḍavus for this grade

3. Aḍavus (in three speeds – below are some examples of aḍavus for each category.)
 - 3.1 Eṭṭa aḍavu – five varieties of tat tai tām / tat tai tā ha.
 - 3.2 Pakka aḍavu – five varieties of tat tai tā ha including three varieties done on the spot and two varieties of travelling movement.
 - 3.3 Tā hata jham tari tā.

- 3.4 Maṇḍi aḍavu – two combinations in which the muzhumaṇḍi position is used.
- 3.5 Sarikkal aḍavu – in which the starting position is muzhumaṇḍi.
- 3.6 Mei aḍavu – two varieties.
- 3.7 Mukṭāya / tīrmāna aḍavu – ki ṭa ta ka dha ri ki ṭa tom series.

4. Nrīta Compositions

- 4.1 Tā hata jham tari tā korvai of tīśra Alāriṭṭu.
- 4.2 Kuraippu set to a suitable time cycle, 2nd speed fitting into a maximum of two avartanams.

5. Abhinaya / Nrītya

- 5.1 An invocatory item with both nrīta and abhinaya, for example, Kavittuvam, Stuti, Vandana. The abhinaya performed in this grade must be set to a time cycle as opposed to free verse and has a melodic element to the music composition.

Safe Dance Practice, Requested Additional Content and Creative Section

6. 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. Only the specific exercises provided in this resource will be accepted in the examination.

One exercise will be requested from the SDP vocabulary in the examination. If the cool-down is requested, this will be one section of a cool down sequence.

There will also be a contextual question requested to demonstrate an understanding of the exercise performed.

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7. Requested Additional Content

- 7.1 Knowing words and meanings of sahitya/lyrics, used in the invocation
- 7.2 Description of the physical characteristics of the god/goddess in the invocation
- 7.3 Hand gestures and what they stand for, relating to the expressive part of the invocation learnt.
- 7.4 Nomenclature - recitation of śolkaṭṭu and performance of aḍavus up to and including this grade.
- 7.5 Names of hastas and pāda bhedas used in this grade.

Examination format:

Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform from Grade 3 syllabus dance content and aḍavus from Grade 1 and 2. This will be requested after the Prepared Dance Sequence.

Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions from Grade 3 syllabus after the Prepared Dance Sequence.

The first question will have a direct connection to the Prepared Dance Sequence, and the second question will relate to the additional physical material. For Grade 3 this may include questions on sahitya in the invocation, gestures in the invocation and what they stand for, description of the physical characteristics of the god or goddess in the invocation, nomenclature of steps, names of hastas and pāda bhedas used.

8. Creative Exercise

- 8.1 The candidate will be expected to apply any jāti to any aḍavu as requested by the examiner. This task will be set as a continuous sequence of consecutive aḍavus in varying jātis and / or speeds as opposed to just one jāti applied to one aḍavu in one speed.

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: Bharatanatyam)	501/0756/2	75	95	10

Grade 4 candidates demonstrate consolidated technical skills and an increased range of movements in sequences of increased length and complexity. They show a clear understanding of mechanics and purpose of the required vocabulary.

Grade 4 candidates show the ability to sustain an appropriate sense of style throughout with more complex sequences and an increased sensitivity to varying musical qualities. Technical facility and improved spatial awareness lead to an increased assurance of presentation.

Grade 4 Examination

Teacher's notes

- **Teacher's notes must be provided to the examiner in advance of the examination.**
- For remote exams the teacher's notes must be submitted one week in advance.
- The teacher's notes **MUST** include a repertoire list covering Grade 3 and Grade 4, the singing notes of the music component of this grade, and *korvais / jatis* to *tāla* of this grade.
- Lyrics and the meaning of all pieces of the repertoire from Grade 4 and from Grade 3.

The Grade 4 examination consists of:

- Presentation of teacher's notes to the examiner
- Performance of a **Prepared Dance Sequence of 12 minutes duration only**, demonstrating the ability to perform the *aḍavus*, *Alāriṭṭu*, *Jatiswaram* and *Śabdham*. This should be put together showing first the *aḍavus* of this Grade, and then the three items fully or in parts, with the approximate length of the different components of the Prepared Dance Sequence is as follows:
 - *aḍavus* from this grade – 1 minute
 - *Alāriṭṭu* – 3 minutes
 - *Jatiswaram* – 4 minutes
 - *Śabdham* – 4 minutes
- A maximum of three candidates can be examined and they perform the same Prepared Dance Sequence together. However, the examiner will decide if the requested additional dance content is performed individually or together
- The Prepared Dance Sequence must include all the specified components listed above. If any component is not included in the sequence, not all marks can be awarded
- The examiner can request the candidate to demonstrate any part of the whole item whether it is performed fully or not. The Teacher should have available the music for the entirety of the learnt compositions, including the music from the previous grade's repertoire
- Candidates may bring a small supply of still drinking water if needed following the prepared performance. A paper and pen can be brought in to assist with making brief notes for the creative exercise. After the Prepared Dance Sequence, the examiner will ask candidates for individual responses/performances for the:
 - creative exercise task
 - demonstration of safe dance practice exercises
 - requested additional dance content from this grade, any *aḍavus* up to this grade, the invocation from the previous grade, and any contextual material relating to all
 - *tāla* and singing tasks

Grade 4 Syllabus content

Ancillary Skills

1. Rhythm and Tāla

- 1.1 Recitation of *śolkāṭṭu* for *aḍavus* in *trikāla* and appropriate *tāla* in ascending and descending speeds.
- 1.2 Recitation, with *tāla*, of the *tiśra Alāriṭṭu* and of the *Jatiswaram korvais*.

2. Music

These may be sung by following written notation, so students must bring these notes with them to the examination.

Although assessment of the singing is based on the candidate's adherence to *tāla* as opposed to pitch or melody, it is required for the candidate to sing, not simply recite the notes / words to rhythm.

- 2.1 Ability to sing the dance items learnt in this grade, with *tāla*.

Technical and Performance Skills

3. Aḍavus (in three speeds)

- 3.1 Miscellaneous *aḍavus* – a selection of four should be made, each demonstrating a different movement quality. Suggested *aḍavus* – *ḍola* or *vīsu*, *kattī*, *eṭṭa* and complex *maṇḍi aḍavus*. These are only suggested *aḍavus*; teachers can use any other complex *aḍavus* not taught in previous grades.

4. Nritta and Nriya Compositions

- 4.1 *Tiśra Alāriṭṭu*.
- 4.2 *Jatiswaram*.
- 4.3 *Śabdām*.

Safe Dance Practice, Requested Additional Content and Creative Section

5. 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. Only the specific exercises provided in this resource will be accepted in the examination.

One exercise will be requested from the SDP vocabulary in the examination. If the cool-down is requested, this will be one section of a cool down sequence.

There will also be a contextual question requested to demonstrate an understanding of the exercise performed.

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6. Requested Additional Content

- 6.1 Nomenclature of *aḍavus*.
- 6.2 Names of *hastas* and *pāda bhedas* used in this grade.
- 6.3 Knowledge of *sāhitya* for items learnt for this grade – words and meanings.
- 6.4 *Hasta* useage from the *Śabdām* and what the hand gestures stand for.
- 6.5 Stories about the god/goddess in the *Śabdām* of which one story is depicted in the piece and another is based on the candidate's own research.
- 6.6 The musical structure of the *Jatiswaram* and *Śabdām* including *rāgas* and *tālas*.
- 6.7 Candidates must have prior understanding of the contextual and dance demonstration of invocation material from Grade 3, and *aḍavus* from previous grades.

Examination format:

Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform from Grade 4 syllabus dance content and may request from Grade 3. This will be requested after the Prepared Dance Sequence.

Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions from Grade 4 syllabus after the Prepared Dance Sequence.

The first question will have a direct connection to the Prepared Dance Sequence, and the second question will relate to the additional physical material.

For Grade 4 this may include questions on nomenclature of steps, names of *hastas* and *pāda bhedas* used, *sāhitya* meaning in the *Śabdām*, *hastas* used in the *Śabdām* and in the additional requested performance of the Grade 3 invocation and what they stand for, stories about the god or goddess in the *Śabdām* of which one story is depicted in the piece and another isn't, the musical structure of the *Jatiswaram* and *Śabdām* including *rāgas* and *tālas*.

7. Creative Exercise

- 7.1 The examiner will prescribe, in English, a simple narrative of a *Śabdām* and the candidate will be expected to demonstrate this through movement and applying their working knowledge of *hasta* usage. The words for the narrative will be a description / translation in English and not *sāhitya* from a song.

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: Bharatanatyam)	501/0757/4	75	95	10

Grade 5 candidates demonstrate consolidated technical skills and an increased range of movements in sequences of increased length and complexity. They show a clear understanding of mechanics and purpose of the required vocabulary.

Grade 5 candidates show the ability to sustain an appropriate sense of style throughout with more complex sequences and an increased sensitivity to varying musical qualities. Technical facility and improved spatial awareness lead to an increased assurance of presentation.

Grade 5 Examination

Teacher's notes

- **Teacher's notes must be provided to the examiner in advance of the examination.**
- For remote exams the teacher's notes **MUST** be submitted one week in advance.
- The teacher's notes **MUST** include a repertoire list covering Grade 4 and Grade 5, the singing notes of the music component of this grade, and *korvais / jatis* to *tāla* of this grade.
- Lyrics and the meaning of all pieces of the repertoire from Grade 5 and Grade 4.

The Grade 5 examination consists of:

- Presentation of teacher's notes to the examiner
- Performance of a **Prepared Dance Sequence of 15 minutes duration only**, demonstrating ability to perform a *Kīrtanam*, a *Tillāna* and a *Padam* (involving a *sancāri* as described below). This can be put together using the three items full or in part with an approximate duration of the different components of the Prepared Dance Sequence as follows:
 - *Kīrtanam* – 5 minutes
 - *Tillāna* – 5 minutes
 - *Padam* – 5 minutes
- A maximum of three candidates can be examined and they perform the same Prepared Dance Sequence together. However, the examiner will decide if the requested additional dance content is performed individually or together
- The Prepared Dance Sequence must include all the specified components listed above. If any component is not included in the sequence, not all marks can be awarded
- The examiner can request the candidate to demonstrate any part of the whole item whether it is performed fully or not
- The Teacher should have available the music for the entirety of the learnt compositions, including the music from the previous grade's repertoire
- Candidates may bring a small supply of still drinking water if needed following the prepared performance. A paper and pen can be brought in to assist with making brief notes for the creative exercise
- After the Prepared Dance Sequence, the examiner will ask candidates for individual responses/performances for the:
 - creative exercise task
 - demonstration of safe dance practice exercises
 - requested additional dance content from this grade, any *aḍavus* from previous grades, repertoire of the previous grade, and any contextual material relating to all
 - *tāla* and singing tasks

Grade 5 Syllabus content

Ancillary Skills

1. Rhythm and Tāla

- 1.1 Recitation, with tāla, of all rhythmic structures learnt within the Tillāna and the Kīrtanam.

2. Music

These may be sung by following written notation, so students must bring these notes with them to the examination.

Although assessment of the singing is based on the candidate's adherence to tāla as opposed to pitch or melody, it is required for the candidate to sing, not simply recite the notes / words to rhythm.

- 2.1 Ability to sing the dance items learnt in this grade, with tāla.

Technical and Performance Skills

3. Nritta and Nritya Compositions

- 3.1 Kīrtanam – must have some nritta incorporated.
- 3.2 Tillāna.
- 3.3 Padam (involving a sancāri over a minimum of 4 repeats of the line of the song).

Safe Dance Practice, Requested Additional Content and Creative Section

4. 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. Only the specific exercises provided in this resource will be accepted in the examination.

One exercise will be requested from the SDP vocabulary in the examination. If the cool-down is requested, this will be one section of a cool down sequence.

There will also be a contextual question requested to demonstrate an understanding of the exercise performed.

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5. Requested Additional Content

- 5.1 Names of hastas and pāda bhedas used in this grade.
- 5.2 Knowledge of sāhitya for items learnt for this grade – words and meanings.
- 5.3 Hasta usage from the items and what the hand gestures stand for.
- 5.4 Stories about the characters in the items of which one story is depicted in the piece and another is based on the candidate's own research.
- 5.5 Explanation of nāyika bheda and navarasa applicable to the dances performed.
- 5.6 The musical structure of the dances of this grade, including rāgas and tālas.
- 5.7 Discussion on composers or music forms of the dances in this grade.
- 5.8 An understanding of the difference between a Kīrtanam and Padam.
- 5.9 Candidates must have prior understanding of the contextual and dance demonstration of Grade 4 repertoire items.

Examination format:

Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform from Grade 5 syllabus dance content and may request from Grade 4. This will be requested after the Prepared Dance Sequence.

Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions

from Grade 5 syllabus after the Prepared Dance Sequence.

The first question will have a direct connection to the Prepared Dance Sequence, and the second question will relate to the additional physical material. For Grade 5, this can include questions on sāhitya in all the dances in this grade, hastas used in the dances and what they stand for, stories of the characters in the dances of which one story is depicted in the piece and another isn't, nāyika bheda and navarasa applicable to the dances performed, the musical structure of the dances including rāgas and tālas, notes on composers/ music forms of the dances in this grade, the difference between a Kīrtanam and Padam. May also include questions on Grade 4 items including hastas used in the dances and what they stand for as well as sāhitya meaning in these dances.

6. Creative Exercise

- 6.1 Two renḍu kalai āvartanas of śolkaṭṭu will be given by the examiner and the candidate will be expected to set aḍavus to the sequence and perform it whilst the examiner recites the given śolkaṭṭu.

The śolkaṭṭu will be a recitation of simple beats as opposed to words typically used in a jati / tīrmāna.

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: Bharatanatyam)	501/0758/6	90	130	13

Grade 6 candidates demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the vocabulary of a particular style through a wide range of movements performed with technical strength. Along with confidence, candidates convey self-awareness, resulting in a sensitive personal interpretation of musical mood.

Grade 6 candidates demonstrate a mature awareness of audience as well as subtleties of performance combined with expression and fluidity of movement involving dynamics and use of space.

Grade 6 Examination

Teacher's notes

- **Teacher's notes must be provided to the examiner in advance of the examination.**
- 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 the result.
- For remote exams the teacher's notes must be submitted one week in advance.
- The teacher's notes **MUST** include a repertoire list covering this grade and the previous ones, the singing notes of the music component of this grade, and *korvais* / *jatis* to *tāla* of this grade.
- Lyrics and the meanings of all pieces of the repertoire items from Grade 3 and up to and including Grade 6.

The Grade 6 examination consists of:

- Presentation of teacher's notes
- Performance of a **Prepared Dance Sequence of 20 minutes duration only**, demonstrating the ability to perform an appropriate proportion of *nritta* and *nritya* as required by the Grade 6 syllabus, with compulsory inclusion of at least part of the first half and part of the second half of the *Varnam*. The *Varnam* must include a *sancāri* as described below. It is recommended that the approximate length of the different components of the Prepared Dance Sequence is as follows:
 - *Varnam* – 13.5 minutes
 - one out of *Jāvali* / *Aṣṭapadi* / *Bhajan* / *Devarnāma* – 6.5 minutes
- A maximum of three candidates can be examined and they perform the same Prepared Dance Sequence together. However, the examiner will decide if the requested additional dance content is performed individually or together
- The Prepared Dance Sequence must include all the specified components listed above. If any component is not included in the sequence, not all marks can be awarded
- The Teacher should have available the music for the entirety of the learnt compositions, including the music from the previous grade's repertoire
- Candidates may bring a small supply of still drinking water if needed following the Prepared Dance Sequence. A paper and pen can be brought in to assist with making brief notes for the creative exercise
- After the Prepared Dance Sequence, the examiner will ask candidates for individual responses/performances for the:
 - creative exercise task
 - demonstration of safe dance practice exercises
 - requested additional dance content from this grade, any *aḍavus* from previous grades, repertoire of the previous grade, and any contextual material relating to all.
 - *tāla* and singing tasks

Grade 6 Syllabus content

Ancillary Skills

1. Rhythm and Tāla

- 1.1 Recitation, with tāla, of all rhythmic structures of the Varnam.

2. Music

These may be sung by following written notation, so students must bring these notes with them to the examination.

Although assessment of the singing is based on the candidate's adherence to tāla as opposed to pitch or melody, it is required for the candidate to sing, not simply recite the notes / words to rhythm.

- 2.1 Ability to sing the dance items learnt in this grade, with tāla.

Technical and Performance Skills

3. Nritta and Nritya Compositions

- 3.1 Varnam – involving a sancāri over a minimum of 8 repeats of the line of the song.
- 3.2 A minimum of one item from the following selection – Jāvali / Aṣṭapadi / Bhajan / Devarnāma.

The candidate is required to present at least one item out of 3.1 and 3.2 in the nāyaka / nāyika mode.

Safe Dance Practice, Requested Additional Content and Creative Section

4. 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. Only the specific exercises provided in this resource will be accepted in the examination.

One exercise will be requested from the SDP vocabulary in the examination. If the cool-down is requested, this will be one section of a cool down sequence.

There will also be a contextual question requested to demonstrate an understanding of the exercise performed.

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

5. Requested Additional Content

- 5.1 Names of hastas and pāda bhedas used in this grade.
- 5.2 Knowledge of sāhitya for items learnt for this grade – words and meanings.
- 5.3 Hasta usage from the items and what the hand gestures stand for.
- 5.4 Stories of the characters in the dances and in-depth study of these characters including a description of a sancāri shown in the dance and one more story about the character based on the candidate's own research.
- 5.5 Explanation of nāyika bheda and navarasa applicable to the dances performed.
- 5.6 The musical structure of the dances of this grade, including rāgas and tālas.
- 5.7 Discussion on the characters of the full mārgam learnt by the candidate, as well as the candidate's understanding of the mārgam format.
- 5.8 Discussion on composers or music forms of the dances in this grade.
- 5.9 Candidates must have prior understanding of the contextual and dance demonstration of Grade 5 repertoire items.

Examination format:

Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform from Grade 6 syllabus dance content and may request from Grade 5. This will be requested after the Prepared Dance Sequence.

Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions from Grade 6 syllabus after the Prepared Dance Sequence.

The first question will have a direct connection to the Prepared Dance Sequence, and the second question will relate to the additional physical material.

For Grade 6 this may include questions on sāhitya in all the dances in this grade, hastas used in the dances and what they stand for, stories of the characters in the dances and an in-depth study of these characters including a description of a sancāri shown in the dance and one more story about the character that was not in the dance sequence, nāyika bheda and navarasa applicable to the dances performed, the musical structure of the dances including rāgas and tālas, notes on composers or music forms of the dances in this grade.

Questions may also be requested around the characters of the mārgam learnt by the candidate, as well as the candidate's understanding of the mārgam format, nāyika bheda and navarasa applicable to the dances performed, the musical structure of the dances including rāgas and tālas, notes on composers, music forms of the dances in this grade, and the difference between a Kīrtanam and Padam.

May also include questions on Grade 5 items including hastas used in the dances and what they stand for as well as sāhitya meaning in these dances.

6. Creative Exercise

- 6.1 The examiner will give the candidate a line of a familiar song along with its meaning. This will be taken from repertoire of either this or previous grades, therefore lyrics from previous grades should be included in the teacher's notes. The candidate will be asked to create movement and expression to this applying padārtha, vākyārtha and elements of sancāri. The actual sāhitya will be used.

12 Grade 1–6 examination formats

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 in-person and remote examinations
- create a welcoming and reassuring environment at the examination 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

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

13 Scheme of assessments: Graded Examinations

Grades 1, 2 and 3

Ancillary Skills

Title of component	Marks
Rhythm and tāla – recitation and time keeping of tāla	10
Music – singing while keeping tāla	10
Section Total	20

Technical and Performance Skills

Title of component	Marks
Aḍavus – assessing the separate performance of aḍavu in the prepared performance: stance, integrity of movement, rhythm, tempo, coordination and neatness of execution	20
Korvai / Nritta composition	15
Abhinaya Expression throughout the presentation	10
Overall Performance Quality	5
Section Total	50

Safe dance practice, creative task and additional requested content section

Title of component	Marks
Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam	5
Requested Additional Material	20
Creative Exercise	5
Section Total	30
OVERALL TOTAL	100

Grade 4

Ancillary Skills

Title of component	Marks
Rhythm and tāla – recitation and time keeping of tāla	10
Singing of the dance repertoire learnt with tāla	10
Section Total	20

Technical and Performance Skills

Title of component	Marks
Aḍavus – assessing the separate performance of aḍavu in the prepared performance: stance, integrity of movement, rhythm, tempo, coordination and neatness of execution	5
Alāriḍḍu	10
Jatiswaram	15
Śabdam	15
Overall Performance Quality	5
Section Total	50

Safe dance practice, creative task and additional requested content section

Title of component	Marks
Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam	5
Requested Additional Material	20
Creative Exercise	5
Section Total	30
OVERALL TOTAL	100

Grade 5

Ancillary Skills

Title of component	Marks
Rhythm and tāla – recitation and time keeping of tāla for all rhythmic components learnt	10
Singing of the dance repertoire with tāla	10
Section Total	20

Technical and Performance Skills

Title of component	Marks
Kīrtanam	15
Tillāna	15
Padam	15
Overall Performance Quality	5
Section Total	50

Safe dance practice, creative task and additional requested content section

Title of component	Marks
Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam	5
Requested Additional Material	20
Creative Exercise	5
Section Total	30
OVERALL TOTAL	100

Grade 6

Ancillary Skills

Title of component	Marks
Rhythm and tāla – recitation and time keeping of tāla for all rhythmic components learnt	10
Singing of the dance repertoire with tāla	10
Section Total	20

Technical and Performance Skills

Title of component	Marks
Varnam	30
Jāvali/Aṣṭapadi/Bhajan/Devarnāma	15
Overall Performance Quality	5
Section Total	50

Safe dance practice, creative task and additional requested content section

Title of component	Marks
Safe Dance Practice for Bharatanatyam	5
Requested Additional Material	20
Creative Exercise	5
Section Total	30
OVERALL TOTAL	100

14 Marking allocation and indicative content

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 1 Examination – Bharatanatyam

Section	Ancillary skills (20 marks in total)		Technical and performance skills (50 marks in total)				Safe dance practice, requested additional content and creative section (30 marks in total)		
Component titles	Rhythm & Tāla (10 marks)	Music (10 marks)	Aḍavus Prepared Sequence (20 marks)	Korvai / Nritta (15 marks)	Abhinaya (10 marks)	Overall Performance Quality (5 marks)	Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)	Requested Additional Material (20 marks)	Creative Exercise (5 marks)
Indicative content	<p>Rhythm: demonstrates accurate recitation and timing of rhythms.</p> <p>Tāla: demonstrates accurate recitation and time keeping of tāla for aḍavus and the korvai.</p>	<p>Music: demonstrates accurate recitation of singing. Demonstrates correct timings of singing in relationship with tāla. .</p>	<p>Technical: Accurate recall of aḍavus of the prepared sequence with accurate tempo. Appropriate stance and torso/ limb coordination. Neatness of execution.</p> <p>Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement and rhythm.</p>	<p>Technical: demonstrates accurate stance, recall, detail and coordination of korvai.</p> <p>Performance: performs korvai with intergrity of movement, correct rhythm and tempo</p>	<p>Technical & Performance: performs technically correct detail and appropriate gestures and expressions for both ślokas performed.</p>	<p>Technical & Performance: Demonstrates natural engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout the examination.</p>	<p>Safe Dance Practice: Responds with accuracy and with correct range of movements within the individual's capacity and in a safe manner.</p>	<p>Response & Quality: Responds accurately and confidently to the examiner's questions regarding the dances/ movements performed.</p>	<p>Technical: responds accurately and confidently to the given task with appropriate use of: hand gestures, foot positions, body movements and floor patterns</p> <p>Performance: demonstrates suitable choice of movement throughout.</p>
Marks allocated	<p>7 marks - demonstrates with tāla correct detail of korvai</p> <p>3 marks - demonstrates any tāla task pertaining to aḍavus, accurately displaying correct kālāpramāṇam.</p> <p>Demonstrates with accuracy any exercise with ādi or rūpaka tāla which must involve keeping tāla.</p>	<p>5 marks for Sarali Varisai sung to tāla in 2 speeds</p> <p>5 marks for a gīta.</p>	<p>5 marks - demonstrates accurate stance throughout</p> <p>5 marks - performs with integrity of movement</p> <p>5 marks - demonstrates correct rhythm, tempo and coordination</p> <p>5 marks - performs with detail, clarity and neatness of execution</p>	<p>5 marks - accurate recall of the composition</p> <p>2 marks - demonstrates correct stance throughout</p> <p>2 marks - demonstrates integrity of movement</p> <p>2 marks - performs correct rhythm and tempo</p> <p>2 marks - demonstrates all movements with coordination</p> <p>2 marks - performs with detail, clarity and neatness of execution.</p>	<p>3 marks - demonstrates correct technical detail of ślokas including accuracy of hasta</p> <p>3 marks - demonstrates appropriate expression throughout the ślokas</p> <p>4 marks - performs throughout the presentation with pleasantness and smile where appropriate.</p>	<p>2 marks - demonstrates natural engagement throughout the examination.</p> <p>3 marks - performs with projection and enthusiasm throughout the examination.</p>	<p>3 marks - responds accurately and safely to the movement requested, within the individual's range, demonstrating the correct exercise requested with accurate dynamics and accuracy.</p> <p>2 marks - responds to a contextual question which demonstrates an understanding of the exercise performed.</p>	<p>20 marks - responds accurately and with confidence to the examiner's questions in 2 sections</p> <p>Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform, from Grade 1 syllabus dance content (10 marks).</p> <p>Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions from Grade 1 syllabus (10 marks)</p>	<p>2 marks - demonstrates accuracy and correctness of movement within the examiner's given tasks (quality not assessed here)</p> <p>3 marks - demonstrates appropriate use of varying floor patterns, hand gestures, arm movements and foot positions.</p>

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 2 Examination – Bharatanatyam

Section	Ancillary skills (20 marks in total)		Technical and performance skills (50 marks in total)				Safe dance practice, requested additional content and creative section (30 marks in total)		
Component titles	Rhythm & Tāla (10 marks)	Music (10 marks)	Aḍavus-Prepared Sequence (20 marks)	Korvai / Nritta (15 marks)	Abhinaya (10 marks)	Overall Performance Quality (5 marks)	Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)	Requested Additional Material (20 marks)	Creative Exercise (5 marks)
Indicative content	<p>Rhythm: demonstrates accurate recitation and timing of rhythms.</p> <p>Tāla: demonstrates accurate recitation and time keeping of tāla for aḍavus and the korvai.</p>	<p>Music: demonstrates accurate recitation of singing. Demonstrates correct timings of singing in relationship with tāla.</p>	<p>Technical: Accurate recall of aḍavus of the prepared sequence with accurate tempo. Appropriate stance and torso/limb coordination. Neatness of execution.</p> <p>Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement and rhythm.</p>	<p>Technical: demonstrates accurate stance, recall, detail and coordination of korvai</p> <p>Performance: performs korvai with intergrity of movement, correct rhythm and tempo</p>	<p>Technical & Performance: performs technically correct detail and appropriate gestures and expressions for the śloka performed.</p>	<p>Technical & Performance: Demonstrates natural engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout the examination.</p>	<p>Safe Dance Practice: Responds with accuracy and with correct range of movements within the individual's capacity and in a safe manner.</p>	<p>Response & Quality: Responds accurately and confidently to the examiner's questions regarding the dances/ movements performed.</p>	<p>Technical: responds accurately and confidently to the given task with appropriate use of: hand gestures, foot positions, body movements and floor patterns</p> <p>Performance: demonstrates suitable and expressive skills throughout.</p>
Marks allocated	<p>7 marks - demonstrates with tāla correct detail of korvai</p> <p>3 marks - recitation of jāti śolkattu with the appropriate eka tāla</p>	<p>5 marks for a jaṅṭa varisai sung to tāla in 2 speeds</p> <p>5 marks for a gīta.</p>	<p>5 marks - demonstrates accurate stance throughout</p> <p>5 marks - performs with integrity of movement</p> <p>5 marks - demonstrates correct rhythm, tempo and coordination</p> <p>5 marks - performs with detail, clarity and neatness of execution.</p>	<p>5 marks - accurate recall of the composition</p> <p>2 marks - demonstrates correct stance throughout</p> <p>2 marks - demonstrates integrity of movement</p> <p>2 marks - perform correct rhythm and tempo</p> <p>2 marks - demonstrates all movements with coordination</p> <p>2 marks - performs with detail, clarity and neatness of execution</p>	<p>3 marks - demonstrates correct technical detail of śloka including accuracy of hasta</p> <p>3 marks - demonstrates appropriate expression throughout the śloka</p> <p>4 marks - performs throughout the presentation with pleasantness and smile where appropriate</p>	<p>2 marks - demonstrates natural engagement throughout</p> <p>3 marks - performs with projection and enthusiasm throughout</p>	<p>3 marks - responds accurately and safely to the movement requested, within the individual's range, demonstrating the correct exercise requested with accurate dynamics and accuracy.</p> <p>2 marks - responds to a contextual question which demonstrates an understanding of the exercise performed.</p>	<p>20 marks - responds accurately and with confidence to the examiner's questions in 2 sections</p> <p>Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform, from Grade 2 syllabus dance content (10 marks).</p> <p>Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions from Grade 2 syllabus (10 marks)</p>	<p>2 marks - demonstrates accuracy and correctness of movement within the examiner's given task</p> <p>3 marks - demonstrates appropriate use of hand gestures, facial expressions, foot positions, arms, body and spatial movements.</p>

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 3 Examination – Bharatanatyam

Section	Ancillary skills (20 marks in total)		Technical and performance skills (50 marks in total)				Safe dance practice, requested additional content and creative section (30 marks in total)		
Component titles	Rhythm & Tāla (10 marks)	Music (10 marks)	Aḍavus- Prepared Sequence (20 marks)	Korvai / Nritta (15 marks)	Abhinaya (10 marks)	Overall Performance Quality (5 marks)	Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)	Requested Additional Material (20 marks)	Creative Exercise (5 marks)
Indicative content	<p>Rhythm: demonstrates accurate recitation and timing of rhythms.</p> <p>Tāla: demonstrates accurate recitation and time keeping of tāla for the korvai, kuraippu and rhythmic sections of the invocation.</p>	<p>Music: demonstrates accurate recitation of singing. Demonstrates correct timings of singing in relationship with tāla. These may be sung by following written notations.</p>	<p>Technical: Accurate recall of aḍavus of the prepared sequence with accurate tempo. Appropriate stance and torso/ limb coordination. Neatness of execution.</p> <p>Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement and rhythm.</p>	<p>Technical: demonstrates accurate stance, recall, detail and coordination of korvai, kuraippu and the invocation</p> <p>Performance: performs korvai, kuraippu and the invocation with intergrity of movement, correct rhythm and tempo</p>	<p>Technical and Performance: performs technically correct detail and appropriate gestures and expressions for the invocation performed.</p>	<p>Technical & Performance: Demonstrates natural engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout the examination.</p>	<p>Safe Dance Practice: Responds with accuracy and with correct range of movements within the individual's capacity and in a safe manner.</p>	<p>Response & Quality: Responds accurately and confidently to the examiner's questions regarding the dances/movements performed.</p>	<p>Technical: responds accurately and confidently to the given task with appropriate use of rhythm and tempo in relation to the movements that incorporate floor patterns, varying hand gestures, arm movements and foot positions.</p> <p>Performance: demonstrates suitable movements and rhythmic / tempo accuracy throughout.</p>
Marks allocated	<p>7 marks - demonstrates with tāla correct detail of the korvai and kuraippu in 3 speeds</p> <p>3 marks - demonstrates with tāla a section from the invocation with detail and accuracy. For example reciting to tāla the aḍavu pattern of a given part.</p>	<p>7 marks - demonstrates with detail and clarity an alankāra to tāla in 2 speeds</p> <p>3 marks - demonstrates with tāla a requested part of the invocation.</p>	<p>5 marks - demonstrates accurate stance throughout</p> <p>5 marks - performs with integrity of movement</p> <p>5 marks - demonstrates correct rhythm, tempo and coordination</p> <p>5 marks - performs with detail, clarity and neatness of execution.</p>	<p>8 marks – Invocation: demonstrates accurate stance, correct rhythm and tempo, and all movements with coordination and integrity. Performs with detail, clarity and neatness of execution.</p> <p>7 marks – Korvai and Kuraippu: performs correct rhythm, tempo, and all movements with coordination and integrity. Performs with detail, clarity and neatness of execution.</p>	<p>7 marks - demonstrates correct technical detail of sāhitya (set to tāla) including accuracy of hasta (4 marks) and demonstrates appropriate expression throughout the sāhitya (3 marks)</p> <p>3 marks - performs the presentation with pleasantness and smile where appropriate.</p>	<p>2 marks - demonstrates natural engagement throughout</p> <p>3 marks - performs with projection and enthusiasm throughout.</p>	<p>3 marks - responds accurately and safely to the movement requested, within the individual's range, demonstrating the correct exercise requested with accurate dynamics and accuracy.</p> <p>2 marks - responds to a contextual question which demonstrates an understanding of the exercise performed.</p>	<p>20 marks - responds accurately and with confidence to the examiner's questions in 2 sections</p> <p>Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform, from Grade 3 syllabus dance content and may request aḍavus from Grade 1 and 2 (10 marks).</p> <p>Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions from Grade 3 syllabus. (10 marks)</p>	<p>2 marks - demonstrates appropriate use of varying floor patterns, hand gestures, arm movements and foot positions. (Quality of movement not assessed here).</p> <p>3 marks - demonstrates accuracy and correctness of rhythm and tempo within the examiner's given tasks (quality of movement not assessed here).</p>

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 4 Examination – Bharatanatyam

Section	Ancillary skills (20 marks in total)		Technical and performance skills (50 marks in total)				Safe dance practice, requested additional content and creative section (30 marks in total)		
Component titles	Rhythm & Tāla (10 marks)	Music (10 marks)	Aḍavus (5 marks)	Alāriḍippu (10 marks)	Jatiswaram (15 marks)	Śabdam (15 marks)	Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)	Requested Additional Material (20 marks)	Creative Exercise (5 marks)
Indicative content	Rhythm & Tāla: demonstrates accurate recitation with tāla, of the Alāriḍippu and Jatiswaram korvais and any other rhythmic structures learnt within the items.	Music: demonstrates accurate recitation of singing in relationship to tāla. The ability to sing the dance items learnt with tāla: Jatiswaram and Śabdam.	Technical: Accurate recall of aḍavus of the prepared sequence with accurate tempo. Appropriate stance and torso/limb coordination. Neatness of execution. Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement and rhythm.	Technical: demonstrates accurate recall and detail of Tiśra Alāriḍippu with appropriate stance and torso/limb coordination, use of space, stamina and neatness of execution. Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement, rhythm and tempo.	Technical: demonstrates accurate recall and detail of Jatiswaram with appropriate stance and torso/limb coordination, use of space, stamina and neatness of execution. Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement, rhythm, tempo and musicality.	Technical: demonstrates accurate recall and detail of Śabdam with appropriate facial expression and hand gestures, stance and torso/limb coordination, use of space, stamina and neatness of execution. Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement, rhythm, tempo, musicality and expressive skills.	Safe Dance Practice: Responds with accuracy and with correct range of movements within the individual's capacity and in a safe manner.	Response & Quality: Responds accurately and confidently to the examiner's questions regarding the dances/movements performed.	Technical: responds accurately and confidently to the given task, with appropriate use of: rhythm and tempo in relation to the movements, incorporating the various hand gestures, facial expressions, foot positions, body movements and floor patterns. Performance: demonstrates suitable and expressive skills throughout.
Marks allocated	5 marks - demonstrates tāla and recitation for Alāriḍippu with correct detail and accuracy 5 marks - demonstrates tāla and recitation of Jatiswaram korvais with correct detail and accuracy.	5 marks - demonstrates singing of the Jatiswaram with detail and clarity 5 marks - demonstrates singing of the Śabdam with detail and clarity	1 mark - demonstrates accurate stance throughout 1 mark - performs with integrity of movement 1 mark - demonstrates correct rhythm, tempo and coordination 2 mark - performs with detail, clarity and neatness of execution.	5 marks - Presentation: demonstrates correct recall and appropriate presentation skills; use of space and stamina 5 marks - Quality and Accuracy: demonstrates correct stance, coordination and neatness of execution with accurate rhythm, tempo and integrity of movement.	5 marks - Presentation: demonstrates correct recall and appropriate presentation skills; use of space, musicality and stamina 5 marks - Quality: demonstrates correct stance, coordination and neatness of execution 5 marks - Accuracy: demonstrates accurate rhythm, tempo, and integrity of movement.	5 marks - Presentation: demonstrates correct recall and appropriate presentation skills; use of space and musicality 5 marks - Quality and Accuracy: demonstrates correct stance, coordination, neatness of execution, accurate rhythm, tempo and integrity of movement 5 marks - Abhinaya: demonstrates appropriate facial expression and accurate hand gestures.	3 marks - responds accurately and safely to the movement requested, within the individual's range, demonstrating the correct exercise requested with accurate dynamics and accuracy. 2 marks - responds to a contextual question which demonstrates an understanding of the exercise performed.	20 marks - responds accurately and with confidence to the examiner's questions in 2 sections Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform, from Grade 4 syllabus dance content and may request from Grade 3 (10 marks) . Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions from Grade 4 syllabus. (10 marks)	2 marks - demonstrates accuracy and correctness of movement within the examiner's given task 3 marks - demonstrates appropriate hand gestures, facial expressions, foot positions, arms, body and spatial movements.

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 5 Examination – Bharatanatyam

Section	Ancillary skills (20 marks in total)		Technical and performance skills (50 marks in total)				Safe dance practice, requested additional content and creative section (30 marks in total)		
Component titles	Rhythm & Tāla (10 marks)	Music (10 marks)	Kīrtanam (15 marks)	Tillāna (15 marks)	Padam (15 marks)	Overall Performance Quality (5 marks)	Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)	Requested Additional Material (20 marks)	Creative Exercise (5 marks)
Indicative content	<p>Rhythm & Tāla: within the tāla task demonstrates accurate recitation with tāla, the korvais of the tillana and any other rhythmic structures learnt relating to the Kīrtanam.</p>	<p>Music: demonstrates accurate recitation of singing in relationship to tāla. The ability to sing the dance items learnt with tāla: Tillāna or Kīrtanam (with swara/śolkāṭṭu parts) and Kīrtanam or Padam (with sāhitya parts).</p>	<p>Technical: demonstrates accurate recall and detail of Kīrtanam with appropriate facial expression and hand gestures, stance and torso/limb coordination, use of space, stamina and neatness of execution.</p> <p>Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement, rhythm, tempo, musicality and expressive skills.</p>	<p>Technical: demonstrates accurate recall and detail of Tillāna with appropriate stance and torso/limb coordination, use of space, stamina and neatness of execution.</p> <p>Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement, rhythm, tempo and musicality</p>	<p>Technical: demonstrates accurate recall and detail of Padam with appropriate facial expression and hand gestures, stance and torso/limb coordination, use of space and neatness of execution.</p> <p>Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement, rhythm, tempo, musicality and expressive skills. Candidates should demonstrate a sancāri over a minimum of 4 repeats of the song line.</p>	<p>Technical & Performance: Demonstrates natural engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout the examination.</p>	<p>Safe Dance Practice: Responds with accuracy and with correct range of movements within the individual's capacity and in a safe manner.</p>	<p>Response & Quality: Responds accurately and confidently to the examiner's questions regarding the dances/movements performed.</p>	<p>Technical: Responds accurately and confidently to the given task with clear understanding of tāla and appropriate use of rhythms and tempo, setting movements to this that incorporate the varying hand gestures, foot positions, body movements and floor patterns.</p> <p>Performance: demonstrates an understanding of rhythmic calculations within tāla.</p>
Marks allocated	<p>5 marks - demonstrates tāla and recitation of korvais of the tillāna with correct detail and accuracy 5 marks - demonstrates tāla and recitation of any tāla task relating to the Kīrtanam with correct detail and accuracy.</p>	<p>5 marks - demonstrates singing with detail and clarity Tillāna or Kīrtanam (with swara/śolkāṭṭu parts) 5 marks - demonstrates singing with detail and clarity Kīrtanam or Padam (with sāhitya parts).</p>	<p>5 marks - Presentation: demonstrates correct recall and appropriate presentation skills; use of space, musicality and stamina 5 marks - Quality and Accuracy: demonstrates correct stance, coordination, neatness of execution, accurate rhythm, tempo and integrity of movement 5 marks - Abhinaya: - demonstrates appropriate facial expression and accurate hand gestures.</p>	<p>5 marks - Presentation: demonstrates correct recall and appropriate presentation skills; use of space, musicality and stamina 5 marks - Quality: demonstrates correct stance, coordination and neatness of execution 5 marks - Accuracy: demonstrates accurate rhythm, tempo, and integrity of movement.</p>	<p>5 marks - Presentation: demonstrates correct recall and appropriate presentation skills; use of space, musicality and stamina 5 marks - Quality and Accuracy: demonstrates correct stance, coordination, neatness of execution, accurate rhythm, tempo and integrity of movement 5 marks - Abhinaya: - demonstrates appropriate facial expression and accurate hand gestures.</p>	<p>2 marks - demonstrates natural engagement throughout 3 marks - performs with projection and enthusiasm throughout.</p>	<p>3 marks - responds accurately and safely to the movement requested, within the individual's range, demonstrating the correct exercise requested with accurate dynamics and accuracy. 2 marks - responds to a contextual question which demonstrates an understanding of the exercise performed.</p>	<p>20 marks - responds accurately and with confidence to the examiner's questions in 2 sections Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform from Grade 5 syllabus dance content and may request from Grade 4. (10 marks) Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions from Grade 5 syllabus. (10 marks)</p>	<p>3 marks - demonstrates an understanding of calculation within tāla as well as accuracy and correctness of rhythm and tempo within the examiner's given task 2 marks - demonstrates appropriate use of varying floor patterns, hand gestures, foot positions, arms, body and spatial movements.</p>

Classical Indian Dance Faculty Grade 6 Examination – Bharatanatyam

Section	Ancillary skills (20 marks in total)		Technical and performance skills (50 marks in total)			Safe dance practice, requested additional content and creative section (30 marks in total)		
Component titles	Rhythm & Tāla (10 marks)	Music (10 marks)	Varnam (30 marks)	Jāvali / Aṣṭapadi / Bha-jan / Devarnāma (15 marks)	Overall Performance Quality (5 marks)	Safe Dance Practice (5 Marks)	Requested Additional Material (20 marks)	Creative Exercise (5 marks)
Indicative content	Rhythm & Tāla: demonstrates accurate recitation with tāla, the śolkaṭṭu of varnam jatis and korvais of the varnam jatis or swaras	Music: demonstrates accurate recitation of singing in relationship to tāla. The ability to sing the dance items learnt with tāla: Varnam swaram with the corresponding sāhitya, and either the expressional part of the first half of the varnam (sāhitya) or the expressional piece.	Technical: demonstrates accurate recall and detail of the Varnam with appropriate facial expression and hand gestures, stance and torso/limb coordination, use of space, stamina and neatness of execution. Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement, rhythm, tempo, musicality and expressive skills. Candidates should demonstrate a sancāri over a minimum of 8 repeats of the song line.	Technical: demonstrates accurate recall and detail of the chosen expressional item with appropriate facial expression and hand gestures, stance and torso/limb coordination, use of space and neatness of execution. Performance: demonstrates integrity of movement, rhythm, tempo, musicality and expressive skills.	Technical & Performance: Demonstrates natural engagement, projection and enthusiasm throughout the examination.	Safe Dance Practice: Responds with accuracy and with correct range of movements within the individual's capacity and in a safe manner.	Response & Quality: Responds accurately and confidently to the examiner's questions regarding the dances/ movements performed.	Technical: responds accurately and confidently to the given task with appropriate use of hand gestures, floor patterns, arm movements and foot positions. Performance: demonstrates suitable and expressive skills throughout and a thorough understanding of the lyrics involved.
Marks allocated	5 marks - demonstrates tāla and recitation of the śolkaṭṭu of varnam jatis with correct detail and accuracy 5 marks - demonstrates with tāla and recitation of any tāla task relating to the korvais of varnam jatis or swara korvais of the varnam with correct detail and accuracy	5 marks - demonstrates singing with detail and clarity the varnam swara with corresponding sāhitya 5 marks - demonstrates singing with detail and clarity sāhitya from first half of varnam or of the expressional item of this grade.	10 marks - Presentation: demonstrates correct recall and appropriate presentation with musicality, good use of space and stamina for Varnam 10 marks - Nritta: demonstrates neatness of execution, accurate rhythm, correct tempo, coordination and integrity of movement. 10 marks - Abhinaya: demonstrates appropriate facial expression and accurate hand gestures.	5 marks - Presentation: demonstrates correct recall with appropriate presentation, use of space and musicality 10 marks - Abhinaya: demonstrates appropriate facial expression, accurate hand gestures, correct stance and integrity of movement. Demonstrates correct rhythm, tempo, coordination and neatness of execution.	2 marks - demonstrates natural engagement throughout 3 marks - performs with projection and enthusiasm throughout.	3 marks - responds accurately and safely to the movement requested, within the individual's range, demonstrating the correct exercise requested with accurate dynamics and accuracy. 2 marks - responds to a contextual question which demonstrates an understanding of the exercise performed.	20 marks - responds accurately and with confidence to the examiner's questions in 2 sections Section 1: The examiner will request additional physical material for the candidate to perform from Grade 6 syllabus dance content and may request from Grade 5. (10 marks) Section 2: The examiner will request two contextual questions from Grade 6 syllabus. (10 marks)	2 marks - demonstrates adequate understanding of the lyrics involved and of the accuracy and correctness of movement within the examiner's given task 3 marks - demonstrates appropriate use of hand gestures, floor patterns, arm movements, foot positions and expression.

15 Classical Indian Dance Theory Examination – Bharatanatyam

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.
- There is one theory examination that 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 January 2027, 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.

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 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 Dance 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 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 .

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 – Bharatanatyam	Level 3	70	130	13

Examination set

1 Candidate

30 minutes

Examination format

The Classical Indian Dance Theory Examination – Bharatanatyam is a viva examination delivered in five key sections, as laid out below, with questions requested by the ISTD Bharatanatyam examiner.

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 Bharatanatyam 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 Bharatanatyam 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.

Bharatanatyam 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.2 Demonstrate consistent understanding, with a critical eye, of the style, character, story, themes and repertoire of the chosen performance. 	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.3 Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of their choice of one stage craft element 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 theoretical syllabus vocabulary knowledge of lower Grades 1-3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.1 Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of theoretical syllabus knowledge in response to the two questions requested. 	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.2 Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of the theoretical syllabus knowledge in response to the two questions requested. 	4
LO3 Section 3 (8 marks) Established understanding and delivery of the theoretical syllabus vocabulary knowledge of higher Grades 4-6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.1 Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of theoretical syllabus knowledge in response to the two questions requested. 	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.2 Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of the theoretical syllabus knowledge in response to the two questions requested. 	4
LO4 Section 4 (12 marks) Established knowledge and understanding of recitations, compositions, and annotations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.1 Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of recitations through the requested discussions and questions. 	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.2 Demonstrate consistent understanding and application of compositions with reference to the learnt pieces through the requested discussions and questions. 	4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Bharatanatyam including a study of the bāṇis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.1 Demonstrate consistent understanding and application through discussions and questioning of the mythological origin of the Natya Veda, the historical origins and evolution of Bharatanatyam, along with reference to pioneering dancers. Bharatanatyam bāṇis – historical characteristics of each, names of eminent dancers of each (current and pioneering) of all bāṇis. 	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

Bharatanatyam Indicative Content

Section 1 – Established understanding and delivery of pre-observed performance, with key stagecraft elements.

- 1.1 From an observed live performance of a minimum of 40 minutes, the candidate pre-prepares a detailed explanation of the performance including the performer's technique, artistry, and 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 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 regarding the significance of namaskāram, Nātya Kramaha śloka, rāgam and tālam of Saralī Varisai / Jaṅṭa Varisai and gītams learnt, musical accompaniment for Bharatanatyam, aḍavu nomenclature.
- 2.2 Two questions regarding the following: Pātraprāṇa śloka, tālam of alankārams, sapta tālas, aḍavu nomenclature, definition of nritta / nritya / nātya.

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

- 3.1 Two questions from the following: definitions of padārtha / vākyārtha / sancāri, descriptions of Alāriṇṇu, Jatiswaram, Śabdham, Kīrtanam, Padam, Tillāna, nomenclature of aḍavu.
- 3.2 Two questions from the following: mārgam, descriptions of Varnam and one more abhinaya piece e.g. Jāvalī / Aṣṭapadi.

Section 4 – Established knowledge and understanding of recitations, compositions, and annotations.

- 4.1 Discussion and questioning on the candidate's understanding of recitation. This will include questions regarding head, neck eye movements, hastās, pāda bheda, samyuta and asamyuta hasta viniyogas (not the Sanskrit verses for the viniyogas, but simply a demonstration of the practical uses of the hand gestures as they appear in the dances learnt).
- 4.2 Discussion and questioning on the candidates' understanding of compositions. This will include discussions and understanding of nāyika and nāyaka bheda including aṣṭanāyika, bhāva and rasa, character study of any gods/ goddesses studied in the mārgam, daśāvatāra hastās and related stories.
- 4.3 Discussions and questioning on annotations. This will include questions regarding the four types of abhinaya, Abhinaya Darpana and Natya Shastra, content difference between a Padam and Kīrtanam, as well as musical structures of compositions danced in the mārgam.

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

- 5.1 Discussion and questioning regarding the main Bharatanatyam bāṇis, demonstrating understanding of the characteristics of each bāṇi, how they developed through the ages and names of eminent dancers (current and pioneering). The candidate should demonstrate the ability to discuss their own bāṇi with distinct features and role model artist(s).
- 5.2 Discussions and questioning regarding the candidate's knowledge and understanding of the nine classical Indian dance genres including their geographic origins, characteristics of the form, key features of costume and names of eminent dance personalities (current and pioneering). More established knowledge on the origin and evolution of Bharatanatyam. Awareness of the mythological story of the origin of the Natya Veda.

Bharatanatyam marking components and mark scheme

Candidates are graded based on evidence shown across the five sections.

Section 1	Marks	Mapped ACs
Candidates to discuss their chosen performance, analysing the performer's technical, stylistic and artistic abilities (including bāṅis), 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 (Grade 1-3).	4	2.1
Candidates demonstrate consistent understanding and application of theoretical syllabus knowledge within the two syllabus questions requested from the lower grade levels (Grade 1-3).	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 (Grade 4-6).	4	3.1
Candidates demonstrate consistent understanding and application of theoretical syllabus knowledge within the two syllabus questions requested from the higher grade levels (Grade 4-6).	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 and application of the requested questions of compositions.	4	4.2
Candidates 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 bāṅis and their specific characteristics, how they developed through the ages, naming eminent dancers both current and pioneering.	5	5.1
Demonstrate consistent understanding and application through discussion of their own bāṅis with distinct features and connections to their role model artist(s).		
Demonstrate an established understanding and knowledge through discussions and questioning, of the nine classical Indian dance genres including their origins, and evolution of Bharatanatyam, and awareness of the mythological story of the origin of the Natya Veda.	5	5.2

TOTAL = 50

Overall Pass Mark 40%

16 Assessment delivery

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

The following are expected:

- 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 examination consists of five sections with specific components, and 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

17 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

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