



Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing
Dancesport

Country Western and Line Dance Qualifications

Specification



September 2026

Version 1.0

SYLLABUS OUTLINE OF COUNTRY WESTERN and LINE DANCE QUALIFICATIONS

DISCO / FREESTYLE / ROCK 'N' ROLL FACULTY

September 2026

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General Information

Dance Sport examinations cover Modern Ballroom, Latin American, Sequence, Disco/ Freestyle, Rock 'n' Roll, Country Western, Street Dance and Club Dance. These dance genres provide a wide diversity in both teaching and learning in dance education.

On the one level they form the basis of what may sometimes be referred to as 'social ' dancing and there is a range of examinations that provides those learning to dance as a recreational activity, the scope to develop quality within performance.

At other levels students may pursue their training further through the range of examinations in order to develop the higher artistic and technical skills necessary for competition dancing, stage performance or dance teaching. The examinations offered in all Dance Sport genres enable teachers in differing situations to provide a safe and structured programme for pupils of all ages and abilities.

For Country Western and Line Dance we offer the following Professional qualifications:

Professional Examinations	Associate
Higher Professional Examinations	Licentiate Professional Dancing Diplomas

This syllabus outline gives information about the examinations structure for Country Western and Line Dance examinations only. Syllabi for the other DanceSport genres are obtainable from ISTD Headquarters and the ISTD web-site. Separate syllabi for some other genres are also available for the Diploma in Dance Instruction and Diploma in Dance Education.

Examination Entry – All Levels

1. Teachers entering candidates for ISTD examinations in Dancesport should hold the appropriate ISTD teaching qualifications. Further information can be obtained either from the UK Examinations Department or International Development Co-ordinator as appropriate.
2. Application forms for UK examination sessions are available from ISTD Headquarters or downloadable from the website at www.istd.org/examinations/ukexaminations and completed forms should be received at Headquarters at least 12 weeks prior to the date required.
3. There must be an interval of at least 3 months from the date of the original examination if the candidate wishes to retake it for any reason.

Professional Teaching Examinations

Introduction

Candidates will be examined in the Theory, Demonstration and Teaching of Line and Country Western Dance. The ability to convey knowledge with confidence and clarity will be of prime importance. Voice projection, personality and appearance are particularly relevant to this dance style.

A good basic knowledge and demonstration showing country styling of authentic Western Dancing encompassing LINE, CIRCLE, PARTNER and COUPLES/FREESTYLE is required. Candidates should show an awareness of current trends in Western music, also use of non-country music and its effect on modern Western Dance choreography.

For all examinations and tests, which include Partner/Couples work, candidates must provide their own partners who may be amateur or professional.

The examination will be conducted using accepted Line and Country Western Dance terminology as listed in the 'Country Western Associate Examination Study Notes' available from ISTD Shop as well as the 'Country Western Associate Set Line Dances'.

The Examiner will require the following:-

- a) A list of the dances prepared and presented by the candidate for their Associate Examination in Line and Country Western Dance.
- b) Dance scripts for all Line and Partner Dances selected by the candidate for their Licentiate Examination.

Associate Syllabus Content

Duration of examination is 75 minutes

Candidates must be 17 years of age or over.

The Examiner will require the candidate to present a portfolio containing lists and dance scripts of the dances they have studied for this examination. Lists giving the names of the following routines should be included.

LINE DANCES	Four Beginner Dances Four Improver Dance Four Intermediate Dances Own Choice Line Dance
PARTNER DANCES	One Partner Dance One Party or Mixer Dance
COUPLES FREESTYLE	State name of dance selected

PART ONE Line Dancing

Demonstration – Set Line Dances

Candidates are required to select and study four dances from each of the three lists as shown below, (total of twelve dances). The dances chosen should include dances of different styles as described in 'LINE AND COUNTRY WESTERN DANCE STYLES and MOVEMENTS' listed at end of this Syllabus Outline. Dancing to music of their choice, candidates will perform one dance, (chosen by the Examiner), from each section of their selected Set Line Dances. Total: three Set Dances

Beginners

Electric Slide
Free and Easy
Freeze
Fuzzy Duck Slide
Cotton Eye Jo
Ziggy
Stompin' It Out
Sorebone Strut
California Freeze
Black Velvet
Cheyenne
Texas Stomp
Western Express
Charmane aka Cowboy Strut
Cowgirl Twist

Improvers

Latin Wiggle
One Step Forward/ Two Steps Back
Waltz Across Texas
The Skip
County Line
Slappin' Leather
Double Duchess Hustle
Chattahoochie
Hooked on Country
Tush Push
Grundy Gallop
Saloon Scissor Stomp
Kelly's Cannibals

Intermediate

Cruisin'
J.T. Jacks
Watch Me
No Way Jose
Snap Jack
CMT Jammin' Country Strut
Ko Ko Mo
Twister
Easy Come, Easy Go
Black Coffee
Lamtarra Rumba
Buffalo Bill
Midnight Waltz
Fly Like A Bird
Crazy Legs
Smokey Places
Louisiana Hot Sauce

One Dance

Candidate's free choice, not from the set list, any style will be permitted for this routine, which may be performed to non-country music. * The standard of this routine should be Gold/Intermediate level, not exceeding 64 beats. After performing this routine twice, candidates may, if they wish, freestyle according to normal rules, adding styling, embellishments or alternative footwork providing that the basic pattern and rhythm remain unaltered.

*Country alternative music should be suggested.

PART TWO Explanation of Dances and Teaching Technique

- 1 Be prepared to call in full or call briefly with hints, any of the listed dances as requested by the Examiner
- 2 Teaching Techniques
 - a) Explain methods of teaching dances or Figures featured in the routines
 - b) Show understanding and teaching of poise, posture and balance
- 3 Method of approach to conduct and instruct a class, including suitability of dances for different levels, age groups and types of classes, knowledge of floorcraft and Dance Floor Etiquette

- 4 Knowledge of Basic Anatomy and understanding of Body Adaptations occurring as a result of movement and exercise, particularly in relation to dancers of very different ages
Awareness of dangers: Knowledge of injury prevention and safety precautions in relation to dance training and also in relation to clothing, footwear etc

PART THREE Understanding of Line and Country Western Dance Terminology

Candidates to explain, using own words, and demonstrate, with music if necessary, any of the following terms as requested by the Examiner:

A Musical Knowledge

ACCENT	PHRASE/PHRASING	SLOW, QUICK, AND
BAR – MUSICAL	RHYTHM	SYNCOPIATION
COUNT	RHYTHM BREAK	TEMPO
		TIME SIGNATURE

B Dance Terminology

ACCENT	CBMP	HOLD
ALIGNMENT	CENTRE	HOME/IN PLACE
AMALGAMATIONS	CHOREOGRAPHY	LOD and AGAINST LOD
BALANCE	DIAGONAL	1,2, and 4 WALL DANCES
BODY MOVEMENT	FOLLOW THROUGH	SPOTTING
CBM	FOOT POSITIONS	VARIATIONS

C Basic Steps and Actions

APPLEJACK	HITCH	SHUFFLE
BALL CHANGE	HITCH TURN	SLIDE
BRUSH	HOOK	SPIN
CAMEL WALK	HOP	STEP
CHARLESTON	JAZZ BOX/ SQUARE	STOMP
CHASSÉ	JAZZ JUMP	STROLL
CHUG	JUMP	STRUT (Heel or Toe)
CLOSE	JUMPING JACK	SUGAR FOOT
COASTER STEP	KICK	SWING
CROSS	KNEE DIP	SWITCH
CROSSOVER ROCKS	KNEE POPS	SWIVEL (Heel or Toe)
DIG	LEAP	SWIVET
DRAW/DRAW	LOCK	TOGETHER/CLOSE
EXTENDED VINE/WEAVE	MONTEREY TURN	TOUCH/TAP
EXTEND/EXTENSION	PADDLE/PEG LEG TURN	TRAVELLING PIVOT
FAN (Heel or Toe)	PIVOT/MILITARY TURN	TURN/ROTATE
FLEX	POINT	TWINKLE
FLICK	ROCK STEP/ROCKING CHAIR	TWIST or
FLICK/KICK BALL CHANGE	SAILOR STEP	CROSS/UNWIND TURN
HEEL SPLIT (Pigeon)	SCISSORS	VINE/WEAVE
HEEL STOMP	SCOOT	WEIGHT CHANGE
	SCUFF	ZIG-ZAG

D Hand / Arm and Body Movements

CLAP	RIPPLE	THRUST
FINGER SNAP/CLICK	SHIMMY	TORQUE
HIP BUMPS/ROLLS/GRINDS	SLAP	
ISOLATION	SWAY	

PART FOUR Knowledge of the Dance Industry

Candidates will be expected to be aware of the responsibilities of a dance teacher concerning the following point: -

- 1 Safety of staff and pupils.
- 2 Legal Requirements
 - a) Adequate insurance for Public Liability in relation to pupils and staff.
 - b) Knowledge of the relevant licences required for the performance of music.
 - c) Awareness of local council authorities regulations with regard to Music/Dancing Licence, Environmental Health, Fire Prevention standards etc.
 - d) Professional approach to booking arrangements
 - e) Professional conduct with regard to other teachers or professional organisations

PART FIVE Partner and Mixer Dances and Western Freestyle Couples

- 1 Knowledge of the following Basic Dance Positions:

CLOSED WESTERN	SIDE BY SIDE
INDIAN	SKATERS
OPEN	SWEETHEART (aka SIDE BY SIDE)
PROMENADE (aka SWING POSITION)	VW
REVERSE INDIAN	WRAP
REVERSE WRAP	
- 2 Understand the following Terms:

ARCH	FRAME
CHASE	PREP
CUP AND PIN	RESISTANCE
- 3 Knowledge of Foot Positions in relation to Room Alignment
- 4 Demonstration
 - A Partner and Mixer Dance

Demonstrate with a partner and describe:

 - a) - One Partner Dance of candidate's choice
 - b) - One Party or Mixer Dance of candidate's choice.

B Western Freestyle Couples

Demonstrate with a partner Basic Steps of one of the following dances (candidate's choice):

CHA CHA CHA

TWO STEP

EAST COAST SWING

WALTZ

POLKA

PART SIX Interpretation of Dance Script and Class Teaching

- A Interpret a 16 beat dance script supplied by the Examiner, containing Figures and Steps listed in '*Terminology*' section earlier in this Syllabus Outline
- B Introduce a small class, set the dance floor and count in a dance, which has been previously taught to the group. Call hints or counts as appropriate.
- C Teach Amalgamations (Script Interpretation as in A) to class.
- D Teach class a basic Partner Dance sequence, i.e. 8 Steps plus 4 Shuffles, with careful explanation of Holds.

Licentiate Syllabus Content

Duration of examination is 90 minutes

Candidates must be 21 years of age or over and have occupied a responsible position as a teacher of dancing for at least two years. Candidates must hold the ISTD Associate in Line and Country Western Dance.

PART ONE Line Dancing

- A The candidate will be required to prepare three dances of own choice, one of each of the levels shown. Candidates will be asked to perform and call two of these dances as selected by the Examiner.
 - a) Beginner (Social Dance / Pre-Bronze Tests)
 - b) Improver (Bronze / Silver Medal Test)
 - c) Intermediate / Advanced (Gold / Gold Star and Above Tests)

In the Intermediate / Advanced routine, after performing the dance as written for two repeats, candidates may, if they wish, freestyle according to normal rules, adding styling, embellishments or alternative footwork providing the basic pattern and rhythm remain unaltered.

Note: Each dance selected should represent a different dance Style / Movement as described in 'Dance Styles And Movements' listed at end of this Syllabus Outline.

- B Dance a Line Dance that can be adapted to a Partners Line Dance, show this with a partner.
- C Choreograph and perform a 32 beat Improver Line Dance using Syllabus Figures, any music chosen by the candidate may be used.

The Examiner will require a typewritten copy of the Dance Sheet for this routine, which must be written in the generally accepted manner for writing Line Dance scripts using ISTD Associate Syllabus terminology.

PART TWO Partner Dancing

- A Demonstrate with a partner and explain an Intermediate Partner Dance. Explain Holds and teaching methods. 9
- B From a Partner Dance Script provided by the Examiner read the script and teach dance to a partner. The dance will consist of approximately 8 Steps and 4 Shuffles and will be choreographed to 4/4 music.

PART THREE Couples / Freestyle Dancing

- A Demonstrate with a partner to music, as Leader or Follower, four of the following dances as selected by the Examiner using amalgamations of the Basic Figures listed. Other Figures may be included in the demonstration to music, but are not a requirement of this examination.
- B Demonstrate solo to music Syllabus Figures as requested by the Examiner, who may ask for demonstrations to be performed both as Leader or Follower.

WALTZ	Basic, Forward and Back Underarm Turn R (Outside Turn) Underarm Turn L (Inside Turn) Walkaround Right Wrap
TWO STEP	Basic Step Pattern Basic Progressing Forward and Back Underarm Turn R (Outside Turn) Underarm Turn L (Inside Turn) Walkaround Right Wrap
POLKA	Basic, Forward and Back Underarm Turn R (Outside Turn) Underarm Turn L (Inside Turn) Walkaround Polka Turn
EAST COAST SWING	Basic in Place and Turning Underarm Turn R (Outside Turn) Underarm Turn L (Inside Turn) Underarm Pass Side Pass (Various Holds) Sugar Push Tuck Turn

WEST COAST SWING Starter Step

Throw Out
Underarm Turn L (Aka R Side Pass)
L Side Pass
Sugar Push
Tuck Turn
Locked Whip/Basket Whip

CHA CHA CHA

Basic and Open Basic
Back Break
Underarm Turn R and L
Walkaround (Spot Turn)
Right and Left Side Crossovers (New York)
Right and Left Parallel Breaks (Shoulder to Shoulder)
5th Position Breaks (Hand to Hand)

PART FOUR Theory

- A Candidates must have an in depth knowledge of all of the Associate and Licentiate Line and Country Western Dance syllabi. Work may be included from the Associate Examination syllabus at the discretion of the Examiner.
- B Show an understanding of the style and technique of the listed Couples/Freestyle Dances including entries and exits to and from the Specified Figures, also time signatures and recommended speeds.
- C Teaching questions will be of a standard appropriate to a teacher with two years experience teaching Line and Country Western Dance. Candidates should have an understanding of the current trends in Line and Country Western Dance and music.

Professional Dancing Diplomas

Candidates should show a high standard of dance technique, artistic ability and rhythmic expression, working to a higher level for each diploma.

All examinations and tests, which include Partner/Couples work, candidates must provide their own partners who may be amateur or professional.

These Diplomas are awarded for proficiency in dancing. The candidate must hold a professional qualification of the Society in Line and Country Western Dance.

CLASS III Associates must commence at this grade. Optional for Licentiates and Fellows

CLASS II For all professional levels.

CLASS I For Licentiates and Fellows who have attained Class II.

The requirements are as follows:-

CLASS III

One Beginner / Improver routine to medium tempo music.
Three dances of differing rhythms, of own choice, selected from the list of 'Dance Styles and Movements' as shown at end of this Syllabus Outlines. One dance may be of Advanced level.

CLASS II

- ☐ Warm Up (Limbering Routine)
- ☐ Dance Routine (Up to Fellowship Figures)

CLASS I

- ☐ Warm Up (Limbering Routine)
- ☐ Dance Routine (No restriction)
- ☐ Cool Down Routine

NOTE: In all Professional Diplomas, after performing dances as written for two repeats, candidates may freestyle according to normal rules, adding styling, embellishments or alternative footwork, providing the basic pattern and rhythm remain unaltered.

Method of Assessment for Professional levels - Associate, Licentiate, Diplomas

Method of Assessment

The examination is divided into sections, and each section must be passed at 65% to pass the examination overall. The marks are added and the overall result is awarded as follows:

Highly Commended	85-100
Commended	75-84
Pass	65-74

Candidates are unsuccessful if they do not achieve the minimum mark in any one section.

Line and Country Western Dance Styles and Movements

Line and Country Western Dances are performed in many styles. It is necessary to show the appropriate interpretation of the rhythm and also the characteristic footwork, leg and body Actions generally associated with each particular style. For clarification and as a guide for examination purposes, dance styles are briefly defined as follows:-

- 1 **LILT** – A dance containing patterns using a ‘lilt’ movement, such as the Actions used in Polka rhythm i.e. danced to the count of, ‘a1&2 a3&4’, stepping down on the beat of the music, rising on the ‘off beat’ to create the Lilt Action. For reference, other dance styles having a similar rhythmic feeling and action are the East Coast Swing, Jive and Hip-Hop. Any dances using music with this type of rhythmical feeling would be danced with a ‘LILT’ Style. 12
- 2 **SMOOTH** – Dances which use a basic ‘smooth’ movement without use of Rise and Fall, Lilt or any Latin Movements. Foot patterns are danced with smooth passing steps with patterns usually changing with the phrase of the music. For reference, dances based on the following would use ‘SMOOTH’ Style: Two Step, West Coast Swing, Tango and Hustle.
- 3 **LATIN** – Dances with patterns using mostly ‘Latin’ Action. On counts 1 and 5, ‘Pauses/Holds’ occur and Break Steps are on count 2 and 6. ‘Latin’ dances feature a rotary and horizontal hip action with the upper body rib cage moving in opposition across the body’s centre. For reference, dances using a ‘Latin’ Action include the Rumba, Cha Cha Cha, Mambo, Samba etc.
- 4 **RISE AND FALL** – Dances which use a basic ‘Rise and Fall’ Action. Dependent on the time signature of the music, the dancer lowers on the accented beat by lowering through the knees, ankles and feet, gradually rising through feet, legs and body on the following steps to reach the climax of the rise. The foot patterns and Rise and Fall Movement re-commence with the following Figure, each group of steps danced with the phrase of the music. Rise and Fall dances also use ‘Swing and Sway’ Movement. The movements complement and aid each other to produce controlled turns and flowing movements. For reference, dances choreographed in Waltz, Bolero, Foxtrot and Quickstep rhythms use ‘Rise and Fall Action’.
- 5 **NON- SPECIFIED** – Any dance, which is visually and musically acceptable, but not applying to the criteria in Styles 1 – 4 as listed. For example, Funky / Disco, Irish or other dances with a National flavour.

Further information and guidance on basic systems and figures is given in the ‘Line and Country Western Study Notes’ and Country Western Associate Set Line Dances’ available from the ISTD Shop, but the ISTD would like to make it clear that it is not compulsory to purchase these books in order to successfully pass any ISTD Line and Country Western examination.

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. link

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 candidates' result. These appeals may relate to an unexpected examination result, assessment decisions being incorrect, or assessment not being conducted fairly. We ensure that enquiries are dealt with swiftly and fairly within the specified timescales.

Through the ISTD Enquiry and Appeal about a Result Policy, it is ensured that enquiries about results are processed correctly, fairly and in a timely manner. A copy of the Enquiry and Appeal About a Result Policy can be downloaded from:

<https://www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance/policies-and-related-documents>

Malpractice

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

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

Registered members and candidates must follow the requirements set out in this specification, examination regulations and all other ISTD policies about the delivery of our examinations.

In cases where registered members or candidates have committed malpractice, a sanction or penalty may be given. For further information, please refer to the ISTD Malpractice Policy on:

<https://www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance/policies-and-related-documents>

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