



Imperial Society of  
Teachers of Dancing

# Performance Awards for Theatre Faculties Specification

For exams from  
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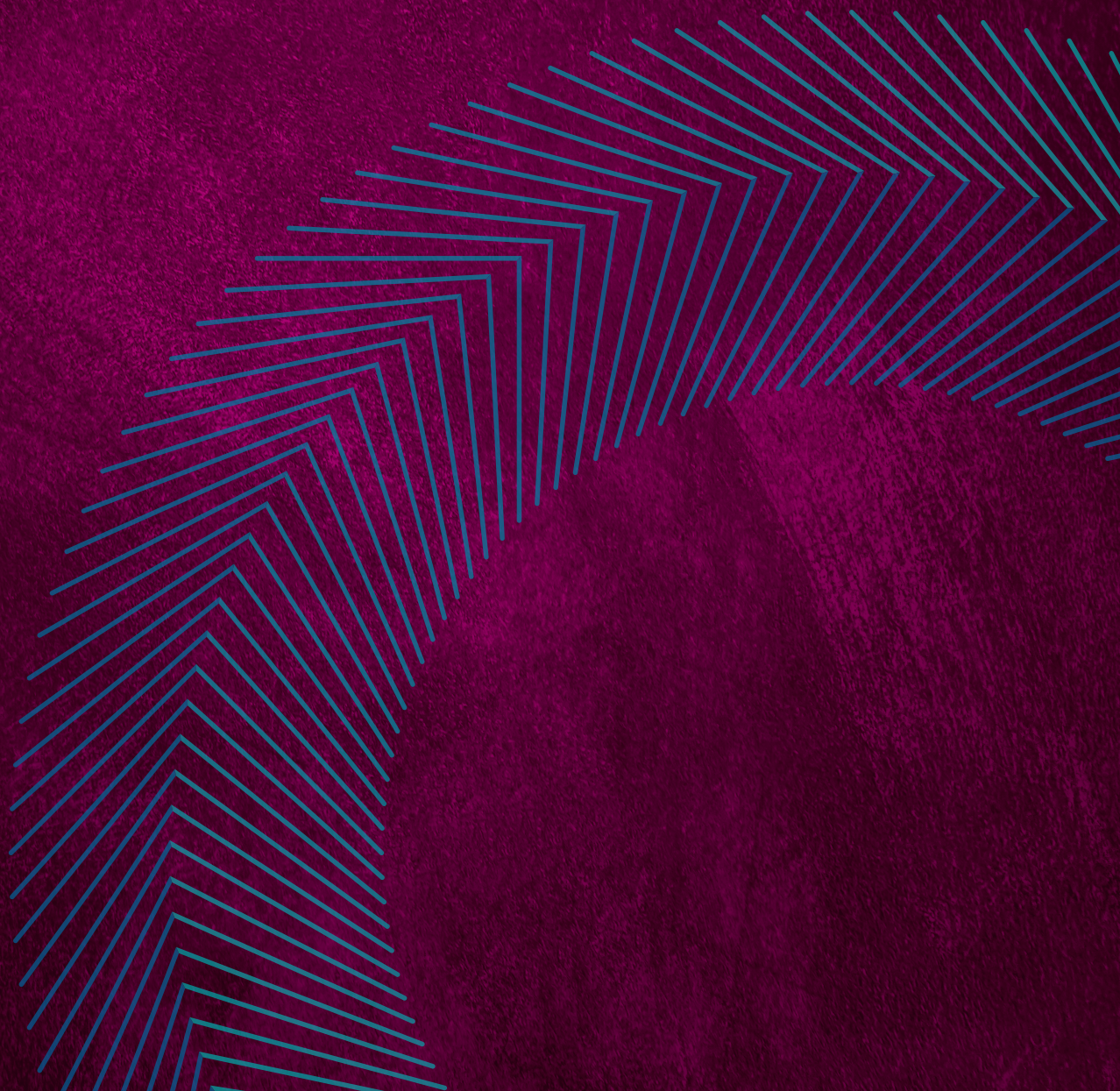


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# Performance Awards for Theatre Faculties Specification





# 1 About the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD)

The ISTD exists to inspire, teach and support dancers and dance teachers around the world, making teaching and learning dance accessible to all.

Our membership is recognised as the mark of quality dance training globally. We support teachers to develop their careers and business through progressive training, performance qualifications and events. Together we aim to build a diverse and sustainable dance profession by championing inclusion and increasing access to dance teaching.

Since 1904, we have provided quality dance training across a diverse range of genres – enabling our members to inspire their students with a passion for dance. Our dance syllabi are carefully structured to support both children and adults in developing and progressing their technical dance skills.

Our clearly defined structure allows learning to take place in the context of safe dance practice and is designed to cater equally for those who wish to progress to make dance their profession. We offer a range of teacher training routes and pathways to develop careers into teacher training and examining. The Society is a registered educational charity (250397), regulated examinations board and membership association. Find out more [www.istd.org](http://www.istd.org)

## 2 Qualification purpose

Performance Awards are inclusive, flexible examinations designed to support every dance learner in developing their performance skills. Offered across **six progressive stages**, they encourage dancers to grow in confidence and artistry, with each level building on the last to refine expressive and interpretive abilities.

These awards are open to **all dance genres and styles**, allowing teachers and students to explore beyond traditional ISTD syllabi. Candidates are assessed **solely on performance quality** – not technique or choreography – making them ideal for celebrating individuality and creativity in dance.

Teachers can enter students for multiple Performance Awards within the same exam session, tailoring the experience to suit personal learning journeys. Performance Awards also offer a valuable opportunity to introduce **new styles and genres** into the studio, helping to broaden students' exposure and deepen their engagement with dance.

### Aims

Performance Awards aim to support artistic development, using dance performance as a way of exploring creativity and individuality, and as a means by which to develop confidence in performing dance.

### Objectives

- Develop a range of performance skills
- Promote self-confidence
- Encourage creative use of movement
- Develop a sense of performance and artistry
- Retain and recall dance movement
- Develop awareness of the use of space
- Encourage awareness of audience
- Gain a sense of self-expression

## 2 Transferable skills

- Application of knowledge
- Commitment
- Concentration
- Confidence
- 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

## 3 Performance Awards exams structure

There is no set syllabus content for Performance Awards. Teachers and/or students create choreographed dances that are performed for an ISTD examiner.

Performance Awards are offered at six levels which are referred to as Stages. The expectation at each stage is outlined in the Levels of Response section (pages 9–12).

(Please note that Performance Awards Stages are not in any way related to Key Stages used within the education system in England and Wales.)

## 4 Dance genres and styles

Performance Awards can be undertaken in any dance genre or style that is preferred. These styles are not limited to genres offered by the ISTD and can be drawn from any dance tradition. They can also be combinations of styles or fusions of styles and there are no restrictions on the style being performed.

The choreography is not assessed but basic guidelines for the level of choreography expected for each Stage are given in the Levels of Response section (pages 9–12).

Teachers submitting candidates for Performance Awards do not need to be specialists in the genre that they create choreographic work in and in this way Performance Awards can be an opportunity for teachers and students to explore different dance styles and their own creativity.

## 5 Examination requirements

When booking Performance Awards on Quest the allocated timetable slot will be 10 minutes for solos, duets and trios and 15 minutes for groups. This is to ensure there is enough time for one practice run through in the space before the final examination performance. Once the final performance has ended the candidate/s and teacher should leave the room so the Examiner can complete the assessment. This practice run is purely for the benefit of the candidates and can be done to music or unaccompanied (teacher's choice). The examiner will be present, but the examiners will not mark any criteria during the practice run.

All solo candidates must have their own time slot allocated on the examinations timetable and must take the exam individually.

Performance Awards are offered at six stages, and in four categories. Each category has a specified length of performance and a specific number of candidates who can be entered for each exam.

### Dance durations

Category	Numbers of candidates	Stage	Length of dance performed
Solo	1	1–3	1 min–2 mins 30 seconds
Duet	2	1–3	1 min 30 seconds–3 mins
Trio	3	1–3	1 min 30 seconds–3 mins
Group	4–30	1–3	2–5 mins
Solo	1	4–6	1 min 30 seconds–2 mins 30 seconds
Duet	2	4–6	1 min 30 seconds–3 mins
Trio	3	4–6	1 min 30 seconds–3 mins
Group	4–30	4–6	2–5 mins

Timings for dance length are taken from the first note of the musical accompaniment or from when the dancer/s starts moving (whichever is first).

### Language

All examinations and assessments are conducted in English.

### Clothing and costuming

Candidates for Performance Awards can wear any dancewear, dance clothing or costumes that the teachers feel is appropriate for the dance and style that is being performed. All clothing worn must allow safe practice to be observed and should be appropriate for the age of the candidates.

Costumes are optional and are not assessed or considered when marking the award. Props can be used but must adhere to safe dance practice guidelines.

### Numbers for identification

Numbers should be worn by candidates entered for duets and trios for ease of identification. The numbers should be secured on the front of the dancewear of each candidate. Numbers are not required for solos or group entries.



# Studio layout for the examination

Teachers should select the most suitable studio layout for the examination, to allow candidates to demonstrate fully.

Teachers should ensure mirrors are covered or made opaque for all live or recorded Performance Awards. This ensures that the candidates are not focusing on the mirror during their performance as this can affect their concentration, eyeline, focus and projection.

For in-person examinations, examiners require a table and a comfortable chair. Teachers need to provide a bell that can be used to indicate when the Examiner is ready for candidates to enter the studio.

## Entry conditions

Entries must be submitted by a teacher who holds a Full Theatre Teaching membership with the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

## Minimum age

The minimum age for Performance Awards examinations is five years old and there are no upper age limits. The recommended minimum age is as of the examination date, but a grace period of 60 days from the examination date is permitted. If candidates are younger than this, please contact the Examinations Department.

## Prior learning

There are no prior qualifications that are required for entry for a Performance Award.

## Exam entries

**For Solo entry:** Candidates can enter for a maximum of 4 Solos at the same Stage, in different dance styles, in any one examination session (please see the Section 7 for Quest codes). For example, a candidate may enter a Stage 1 Solo in Modern, as well as Stage 1 Solo in Tap, National and Ballet in the same examination session. Solos also can be entered at multiple levels in one examination session up to a maximum of 4 per Stage. For example, a candidate may enter for a Stage 2 Solo in Modern, a Stage 2 Solo in Ballet, a Stage 3 Solo in Tap and a Stage 4 Solo in Bollywood, in the same examination session.

**For Duet entry:** Each candidate can enter for a maximum of 2 Duets at the same Stage, in different dance styles, in any one examination session. Candidates can enter for duets in other Stages, up to a maximum of 2 per Stage. For example, a candidate can enter for a Stage 2 Duet in Ballet and a Stage 1 Duet in National and a Stage 3 Duet in Modern and a Stage 3 Duet in Contemporary in the same examination session.

**For Trio entry:** Each candidate can enter for a maximum of 2 Trios at the same Stage, in different dance styles, in one examination session. Candidates can enter for trios in other Stages up to a maximum of 2 per Stage (as per duets).

**For Group entry:** Each candidate can enter for a maximum of 4 Group dances at the same Stage, in different dance styles, in one examination session. Candidates can enter for Group dances in other Stages up to a maximum of 4 per Stage.

Entries can be made using the same choreography in any examination session. So, a group dance can use the same choreography at the same Stage, providing all of the dancers are different between the two groups.

Please note that candidates cannot enter for multiple entries at the same Stage if using the same dance style. So, if a candidate has two Stage 2 Ballet solos they would like to do, they will need to choose which one to perform for their Performance Awards. This is to ensure accurate certification.

Please also note that teachers will be asked to select the style/genre that best describes the dance being performed when booking exams in Quest and the style will appear on the candidate's report sheet. Certificates do not state the dance style entered. If a candidate is entered for multiple Performance Award exams within the same timetable, teachers need to ensure they are timetabling these appropriately by ensuring the candidate has sufficient rest between their exams.

## Maximum numbers

A maximum of 30 candidates will be assessed at any one time for group entries.

## 6 Examination methods

### In person, recorded and remote (live streamed)\* examinations

Whilst these can be full days of Performance Awards examinations, it is expected that Performance Awards will usually be mixed in with any other graded/class/awards exams that are being entered in an exam day.

Teachers may choose where they add Performance Awards examinations onto their timetables and compile the timetable accordingly.

\*Please note that for UK examinations, remote (live streamed) exams are only allowed within a session containing other remote (live streamed) exams.

### Remote recorded examinations

Performance Awards can be entered in the same way as all remote recorded exams. As the content is not set, there are no exam scripts to be followed. They can be filmed in a dance studio, performance venue or can be site specific.

If the Performance Award exam is within an examination day with graded/vocational examinations, the same studio venue must be used for the whole day as specified on Quest. Please apply for a separate remote session if using a performance venue. (A performance venue is only applicable for the whole timetable. Examiners cannot move venues during the day and for recorded remote exams teachers need to film an entire day at one venue).

Teachers need to record the practice run through and then go straight into the final performance as one recording. It is expected that candidates will take a short break to rest in between the practice run and the final performance and teachers should ensure that the camera records continuously for the duration of the exam.

Teachers will receive detailed guidance on filming an examination day from the examination departments.

Please ensure that:

- all dancers must be visible all the time, unless they are offstage
- all performances should be recorded using a stationary camera, positioned to capture the entire performance area. If the camera is placed at a distance, operators may zoom in for a clearer view of all dancers. However, for duets, trios, or group dances, please ensure that all dancers remain visible and avoid focusing exclusively on any single performer. If all dancers are not always visible the candidates cannot be fully assessed and teachers will need to refilm before assessment can take place
- lighting levels must be sufficient to ensure full visibility for the examiner. This is particularly relevant if an exam is filmed in a performance venue where lighting levels are often lower for live performance
- teachers do not need to be visible on the recorded footage

# 7 Entering for Performance Awards examinations

The teacher should enter for Performance Awards through Quest, in the usual way. The following codes should be used:

## Performance Award Stage 1

- PA 1 S1 Stage 1 - Solo - Dance 1
- PA 1 S2 Stage 1 - Solo - Dance 2
- PA 1 S3 Stage 1 - Solo - Dance 3
- PA 1 S4 Stage 1 - Solo - Dance 4
- PA 1 D1 Stage 1 - Duet - Dance 1
- PA 1 D2 Stage 1 - Duet - Dance 2
- PA 1 T1 Stage 1 - Trio - Dance 1
- PA 1 T2 Stage 1 - Trio - Dance 2
- PA 1 G1 Stage 1 - Group - Dance 1
- PA 1 G2 Stage 1 - Group - Dance 2
- PA 1 G3 Stage 1 - Group - Dance 3
- PA 1 G4 Stage 1 - Group - Dance 4

## Performance Award Stage 2

- PA 2 S1 Stage 2 - Solo - Dance 1
- PA 2 S2 Stage 2 - Solo - Dance 2
- PA 2 S3 Stage 2 - Solo - Dance 3
- PA 2 S4 Stage 2 - Solo - Dance 4
- PA 2 D1 Stage 2 - Duet - Dance 1
- PA 2 D2 Stage 2 - Duet - Dance 2
- PA 2 T1 Stage 2 - Trio - Dance 1
- PA 2 T2 Stage 2 - Trio - Dance 2
- PA 2 G1 Stage 2 - Group - Dance 1
- PA 2 G2 Stage 2 - Group - Dance 2
- PA 2 G3 Stage 2 - Group - Dance 3
- PA 2 G4 Stage 2 - Group - Dance 4

## Performance Award Stage 3

- PA 3 S1 Stage 3 - Solo - Dance 1
- PA 3 S2 Stage 3 - Solo - Dance 2
- PA 3 S3 Stage 3 - Solo - Dance 3
- PA 3 S4 Stage 3 - Solo - Dance 4
- PA 3 D1 Stage 3 - Duet - Dance 1
- PA 3 D2 Stage 3 - Duet - Dance 2
- PA 3 T1 Stage 3 - Trio - Dance 1
- PA 3 T2 Stage 3 - Trio - Dance 2
- PA 3 G1 Stage 3 - Group - Dance 1
- PA 3 G2 Stage 3 - Group - Dance 2
- PA 3 G3 Stage 3 - Group - Dance 3
- PA 3 G4 Stage 3 - Group - Dance 4

## Performance Award Stage 4

- PA 4 S1 Stage 4 - Solo - Dance 1
- PA 4 S2 Stage 4 - Solo - Dance 2
- PA 4 S3 Stage 4 - Solo - Dance 3
- PA 4 S4 Stage 4 - Solo - Dance 4
- PA 4 D1 Stage 4 - Duet - Dance 1
- PA 4 D2 Stage 4 - Duet - Dance 2
- PA 4 T1 Stage 4 - Trio - Dance 1
- PA 4 T2 Stage 4 - Trio - Dance 2
- PA 4 G1 Stage 4 - Group - Dance 1
- PA 4 G2 Stage 4 - Group - Dance 2
- PA 4 G3 Stage 4 - Group - Dance 3
- PA 4 G4 Stage 4 - Group - Dance 4

## Performance Award Stage 5

- PA 5 S1 Stage 5 - Solo - Dance 1
- PA 5 S2 Stage 5 - Solo - Dance 2
- PA 5 S3 Stage 5 - Solo - Dance 3
- PA 5 S4 Stage 5 - Solo - Dance 4
- PA 5 D1 Stage 5 - Duet - Dance 1
- PA 5 D2 Stage 5 - Duet - Dance 2
- PA 5 T1 Stage 5 - Trio - Dance 1
- PA 5 T2 Stage 5 - Trio - Dance 2
- PA 5 G1 Stage 5 - Group - Dance 1
- PA 5 G2 Stage 5 - Group - Dance 2
- PA 5 G3 Stage 5 - Group - Dance 3
- PA 5 G4 Stage 5 - Group - Dance 4

## Performance Award Stage 6

- PA 6 S1 Stage 6 - Solo - Dance 1
- PA 6 S2 Stage 6 - Solo - Dance 2
- PA 6 S3 Stage 6 - Solo - Dance 3
- PA 6 S4 Stage 6 - Solo - Dance 4
- PA 6 D1 Stage 6 - Duet - Dance 1
- PA 6 D2 Stage 6 - Duet - Dance 2
- PA 6 T1 Stage 6 - Trio - Dance 1
- PA 6 T2 Stage 6 - Trio - Dance 2
- PA 6 G1 Stage 6 - Group - Dance 1
- PA 6 G2 Stage 6 - Group - Dance 2
- PA 6 G3 Stage 6 - Group - Dance 3
- PA 6 G4 Stage 6 - Group - Dance 4



When booking exams in Quest, teachers are required to select a dance style that best describes the dance being performed. Styles are presented as a drop-down box with the following options:

Ballet	Hip Hop	Street
Fusion	Natural Movement	Commercial
Musical Theatre	Classical Greek	Lyrical
Bharatanatyam	Jazz	Tap
Global/International	Other	Folk
National Dance	Contemporary	Modern Theatre
Bollywood	Kathak	

## Role of the teacher

Teachers are allowed to be in the studio during the performance if they wish. This is optional and the teacher's presence in the studio will usually depend on the individual needs of the dancer/s performing.

If the teacher does choose to be in the studio during the examination, they are only able to observe and should not demonstrate any element of the choreography element of the choreography during the examined performance. Teachers may give non-verbal cues during the practice run, if required. If a demonstrator is needed for a group, a request can be submitted as an Application for Reasonable Adjustment, (see pages 22–23), and this will be considered in relation to the needs of the candidate/s on a case-by-case basis.

## Musical accompaniment

A sound system capable of playing CDs/Bluetooth or other digital audio equipment at a volume suitable for the venue should be provided.

Music system operators should be seated at a discreet distance from the Examiner. Teachers can choose to operate the music system themselves if they wish, as a separate music operator is not a compulsory requirement for Performance Awards exams.

## 8 Levels of response and choreographic guidelines

Please note that the guidelines for choreography below are purely for reference purposes and to ensure that candidates can meet the criteria for each stage. Choreography is unrestricted, providing it always supports safe dance practice.

Whilst originality and creativity are encouraged, teachers have the flexibility to enter candidates with dances that draw on syllabus-based material, if they wish. For example, a dance could be created by combining some of the Modern amalgamation work or one of the dances from the syllabus could be performed, if the teacher feels this will support a candidate's learning and development.

The stages are designed to be progressive. Stages 1–3 focus on building confidence when performing and on developing audience awareness and engagement. Stages 4–6 builds on these skills by supporting the development of individuality and artistry.

### Stage 1

Stage 1 is an introductory level, and Stage 1 students are likely to be experiencing performing for the first time.

### Level descriptor

Candidates will show that they can **participate** with **commitment**.

### Aims and objectives

- To enable students to have an initial experience of performing.
- To introduce students to performing dance as a discrete set of skills.
- To promote self-confidence in performing dance.
- The retention and replication of basic movement material.

### Choreographic guidelines

Consisting of straightforward and well-defined actions that are fundamental to the style being performed (group cohesion). All movements should be Stage appropriate and ensure that safe dance practice is observed.

### Characteristics/benchmarks

Stage 1 candidates will show that they can:

- perform a choreographed dance in its entirety
- commit fully to a dance performance
- respond to musical accompaniment
- replicate simple dance movements within a performance context

## Stage 2

Stage 2 is an opportunity for students to develop their performance skills, and Stage 2 students are likely to have had some limited experience of performing dance, prior to entering the exam.

### Level descriptor

Candidates will show they can participate with **fundamental performance skills**.

### Aims and objectives

- To enable students to develop their basic performance skills.
- To use their natural capabilities within a dance performance.
- To develop confidence in dance performance.
- To demonstrate awareness of the general emotion or style of dance material.

### Choreographic guidelines

Consisting of simple movement material that enables students to develop their own natural physical and performance abilities (group cohesion). All movements should be Stage appropriate and ensure that safe dance practice is observed.

### Characteristics/benchmarks

Stage 2 candidates will show that they can:

- perform a choreographed dance in its entirety
- begin to show emerging awareness of an audience
- show a basic awareness of the general emotion and/or style of the dance
- engage effectively with the movement material
- respond to the style and rhythm of musical accompaniment



## Stage 3

Stage 3 is for students to start to consolidate their performing skills and Stage 3 students are likely to have had some general experience of performing dance.

### Level descriptor

Candidates will show they can participate with **consolidated awareness of performance**.

### Aims and objectives

- To enable students to consolidate fundamental performance skills.
- To explore how to communicate with an audience and interpret dance movement material.
- To develop an awareness of audience and an emerging sense of performance.
- To perform dance choreography with interpretive skills and confidence.

### Choreographic guidelines

Choreography should require students to show some interpretative skills and will be well-developed in relation to how students use the space (group cohesion). All movements should be Stage appropriate and ensure that safe dance practice is observed.

### Characteristics/benchmarks

Stage 3 candidates will show that they can:

- perform a choreographed dance in its entirety
- use dance performance as a means to communicate with an audience
- engage with movement material using consolidated performance skills
- begin to demonstrate emerging emotional expression
- respond to musical accompaniment with fundamental awareness of rhythm and timing

## Stage 4

Stage 4 is for students who are ready to explore increasing complexity in relation to movement patterns and musical rhythms. Stage 4 students are likely to have consolidated their basic performing skills and are ready to be challenged with more complex concepts showing a range of simple movement dynamics.

### Level descriptor

Candidates will show that they can participate with **sound performance skills**.

### Aims and objectives

- To allow students to develop a sense of individuality within performance.
- To challenge students to perform dance choreography with some individual artistic awareness.
- To develop and explore an emerging sense of dynamic awareness.

### Choreographic guidelines

Choreography should include movements that support the emergence of dynamic awareness and that provide students with an opportunity to explore individuality within their performance (group cohesion). Individuality refers to the student's personal response to the choreography and does not require all students to have solo dance material. All movements should be Stage appropriate and ensure that safe dance practice is observed.

### Characteristics/benchmarks

Stage 4 candidates will show that they can:

- perform a choreographed dance in its entirety, maintaining connection with the audience throughout
- perform dance material with simple dynamic variation
- engage with movement material showing sound performance skills
- embody the musical texture and rhythm of the dance
- use both personal and common space effectively
- perform a choreographed dance with confidence

# Stage 5

Stage 5 is for students who are beginning to approach dance performance with a sense of artistry, and it is likely that students will have already participated in a number of performance experiences.

## Level descriptor

Candidates will show that they can participate with **established performance skills**.

## Aims and objectives

- To enable students to perform movement material that encourages a sense of artistry.
- To provide an opportunity for students to perform dance choreography with a sense of artistry and dynamic variation.
- Develop and explore a range of more complex performance skills.

## Choreographic guidelines

Choreography at this level needs to be sufficiently challenging to enable students to show an artistic response, in relation to musicality and a broad range of movement dynamics (group cohesion). All movements should be Stage appropriate and ensure that safe dance practice is observed.

## Characteristics/benchmarks

Stage 5 candidates will show that they can:

- perform a choreographed dance in its entirety, maintaining connection with the audience throughout and using developing narrative skills
- use a complex range of performance skills in relation to focus, expressions, use of space and spatial awareness
- engage with movement material showing an established range of performance skills
- perform dance with dynamic variation and emerging individual artistic awareness and expression
- respond confidently to a dance performance showing developing self-assurance and an emerging ability to command the performance space



## Stage 6

Stage 6 is for students who can perform choreography with a degree of complexity and a high level of detail and as such, students are likely to have had significant performance experience within controlled performance environments.

### Level descriptor

Candidates will show that they can participate with **considerable performance skills**.

### Aims and objectives

- To enable students to perform dance choreography with a sense of self-expression and individuality.
- To challenge students to perform dance material with attention to detail and an emerging sense of self-expression.
- To enable students to develop and explore a broad range of performance skills.

### Choreographic guidelines

Choreography at this level needs to ensure that students can show their individual artistry and should provide a level of challenge that enables them to demonstrate a detailed and sophisticated performance (group cohesion). All movements should be Stage appropriate and ensure that safe dance practice is observed.

### Characteristics/benchmarks

Stage 6 candidates will show that they can:

- perform a choreographed dance in its entirety, communicating with an audience and maintaining attention to artistic detail throughout
- use a complex range of performance skills in relation to dynamic variation, focus, artistry, use of space and spatial awareness
- engage with movement material showing a considerable range of performance skills
- perform with a refined ability to embody musical texture and individual artistry
- hold the attention of the audience and move with confidence and courage

### Guidance for Duet, Trio, and Group choreography

In order to meet the requirements in the group mark schemes, dances need to include some opportunities for interaction between dancers. These can be simple interactions, in terms of using floor patterns and space (there does not have to be direct links between dancers) but there needs to be a clear differentiation between solo material which is danced by multiple dancers and a group dance. Solo dance material that is performed with no interaction between dancers should be entered as a solo dance.

## Quick reference: summary information

Stage	Level descriptor	Characteristics/benchmarks
Stage 1	Participate with commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform a choreographed dance in its entirety.</li> <li>Commit fully to a dance performance.</li> <li>Respond to musical accompaniment.</li> <li>Replicate simple dance movements within a performance context.</li> </ul>
Stage 2	Participate with fundamental performance skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform a choreographed dance in its entirety.</li> <li>Begin to show emerging awareness of an audience.</li> <li>Show a basic awareness of the general emotion/style of the dance.</li> <li>Engage effectively with the movement material.</li> <li>Respond to the style and rhythm of musical accompaniment.</li> </ul>
Stage 3	Participate with consolidated awareness of performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform a choreographed dance in its entirety.</li> <li>Use dance performance as a means to communicate with an audience.</li> <li>Engage with movement material using consolidated performance skills.</li> <li>Begin to demonstrate emerging emotional expression.</li> <li>Respond to musical accompaniment with fundamental awareness of rhythm and timing.</li> </ul>
Stage 4	Participate with sound performance skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform a choreographed dance in its entirety, maintaining connection with the audience throughout.</li> <li>Perform dance material with simple dynamic variation.</li> <li>Engage with movement material showing sound performance skills.</li> <li>Embody the musical texture and rhythm of the dance.</li> <li>Use both personal and common space effectively.</li> <li>Perform a choreographed dance with confidence.</li> </ul>
Stage 5	Participate with established performance skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform a choreographed dance in its entirety, maintaining connection with the audience throughout and using developing narrative skills.</li> <li>Use a complex range of performance skills in relation to focus, expressions, use of space and spatial awareness.</li> <li>Engage with movement material showing an established range of performance skills.</li> <li>Perform dance with dynamic variation and emerging individual artistic awareness and expression.</li> <li>Respond confidently to a dance performance showing developing self-assurance and an emerging ability to command the space.</li> </ul>
Stage 6	Participate with considerable performance skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform a choreographed dance in its entirety, communicating with an audience and maintaining attention to artistic detail throughout.</li> <li>Use a complex range of performance skills in relation to dynamic variation, focus, artistry, use of space and spatial awareness.</li> <li>Engage with movement material showing a considerable range of performance skills.</li> <li>Perform with a refined ability to embody musical texture and individual artistry.</li> <li>Hold the attention of the audience and move with confidence and courage.</li> </ul>

## Summary of choreographic guidelines

Stage	Characteristics/benchmarks
Stage 1	Consisting of straightforward and well-defined actions that are fundamental to the genre being performed.
Stage 2	Consisting of simple movement material that enables students to develop their own natural physical and performance abilities.
Stage 3	Choreography should require students to show some interpretative skills and will be well-developed in relation to how students use the space.
Stage 4	Choreography should include movements that support the emergence of dynamic awareness and that provide students with an opportunity to explore individuality within their performance. Individuality refers to the student's personal response to the choreography and does not require all students to have solo dance material.
Stage 5	Choreography at this level needs to be sufficiently challenging to enable students to show an artistic response, in relation to musicality and a broad range of movement dynamics.
Stage 6	Choreography at this level needs to ensure that students can show their individual artistry and should provide a level of challenge that enables them to demonstrate a detailed and sophisticated performance.

## 9 Solo mark schemes

### Stage 1–3 Solos

Performance Skills										
Criteria	Projection and connection with audience	Sustaining energy throughout	Engagement with dance material	Spatial awareness	Timing	Sensitivity to music	Memory and recall	Commitment	Confidence	Impact
Indicative content	Demonstrate progressive awareness of the audience for the duration of the dance, through the use of eyeline and focus	Maintain consistent energy during the full dance	Demonstrate an awareness of dance movement material and immersion into movement content and style	Demonstrate an awareness of the performing space within the given choreography	Perform to time with the music/ accompaniment and respond to the rhythms of the dance	Responds to the musical style and atmosphere/ emotion of the dance	Replicate the dance for the full duration	Demonstrate the dance with engagement and effort	Demonstrate the dance with self-assurance and determination	Shows the ability to create an impact as an individual dancer



## Stage 4–6 Solos

Performance Skills										
Criteria	Projection and connection with audience	Sustaining energy throughout	Engagement with dance material	Spatial awareness and use of space	Musical interpretation and timing	Individual artistic response	Memory and recall	Commitment	Dynamic awareness and dynamic variation	Impact and confidence
<b>Indicative content</b>	Maintain a sustained awareness of the audience with use of eyeline, focus and sense of performance that is appropriate to the given choreography	Maintain consistent energy that is appropriate for the given choreography during the full dance	Demonstrate the ability to fully immerse themselves in the movement and to progressively explore nuances within the movement content	Demonstrate a full understanding of the performance space, both personal and common space, within the given choreography	Demonstrate the progressive ability to embody the musical texture and rhythm of the dance	Demonstrate an understanding of individual expression and artistry	Replicate the dance, in detail, for the full duration of the dance	Demonstrate the dance with increasing engagement, effort, self-assurance, and determination	Demonstrate a clear understanding of appropriate movement dynamics and dynamic variation	Demonstrate the ability to create an impact as an individual dancer and to command the performance space

# 10 Group mark schemes

## Stage 1–3 Groups

Performance Skills										
Criteria	Projection and connection with audience	Sustaining energy throughout	Engagement with dance material	Spatial awareness	Timing	Sensitivity to music	Group cohesion and interaction	Commitment	Confidence	Group Impact
Indicative content	Group maintains a sustained awareness of the audience with use of eyeline, focus and sense of performance, that is appropriate to the choreography throughout the dance	Maintain consistent group energy appropriate to the given choreography, during the full dance	Group demonstrates an awareness of the specific dance movement vocabulary (material) and immersion into the movement content	Demonstrate an understanding of group spatial awareness in the performance space, through the given group choreography	Perform to time as a group with the music/ accompaniment	Group responds to the musical style and atmosphere/ emotion of the dance	Create/develop relationships between dancers that demonstrate sensitivity and unity in the given choreography; Positive group participation, showing overall group harmony	Group demonstrates the dance with engagement and energy	Group demonstrates the dance with self-assurance and determination	The ability to create an impact as a group and to show an emerging ability to command the performance

## Stage 4–6 Groups

Performance Skills										
Criteria	Projection and connection with audience	Sustaining energy throughout	Engagement with dance material	Spatial awareness and use of space	Musical interpretation and timing	Artistic response	Group cohesion and interaction	Commitment and confidence	Dynamic awareness and dynamic variation	Group impact
<b>Indicative content</b>	Group maintains a sustained awareness of the audience with use of eyeline, focus and sense of performance that is appropriate to the choreography throughout the dance	Maintain consistent group energy that is appropriate for the choreography, during the full dance	Group demonstrate a full understanding of the specific dance movement material and full immersion into the movement content	Demonstrate a full understanding of group spatial awareness in the performance space within the given choreography, including personal and common space	Perform to time as a group and interpret the musical/accompaniment's variances, textures, and nuances	Demonstrate an understanding of individual expression and artistry within the group setting	Create/develop relationships between dancers that demonstrate sensitivity and unity in the given choreography.  Positive group participation, showing overall group harmony	Group demonstrate the dance with engagement, energy, self-assurance, and determination	Group demonstrates an understanding of movement dynamics and variations within the given choreographic intention and style	The ability to create a memorable impact as a group, and to command the performance space

# 11 Method of assessment

Performance Awards 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 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

## Determining a mark

Performance Awards are marked using criteria relating to performance skills. Dance technique and choreography are not assessed.

Candidates are assessed against 10 criteria, as outlined in the mark schemes. These criteria are either met or not met at the level of the stage specified, in relation to the level descriptor.

Candidates must demonstrate at least 40% of the criteria (4 out of 10 criteria) to pass the examination overall.

# 12 Classification of results

Students receive a grade attainment outcome of Pass, Merit or Distinction with accompanying examiner comments.

Result	Number of criteria passed (out of 10)
PASS	4–5
MERIT	6– 7
DISTINCTION	8–10

Candidates who demonstrate all 10 criteria will have their achievement recognised on the exam report sheet.

## Reward and recognition

Upon successful completion of Performance Awards all candidates will receive an individual certificate and an individual badge. This applies to all candidates entering for solo, duets, trios, and groups.

## Examiner report comments

Exam report sheets will show which criteria were met during the exam and will include a comment from the Examiner.

Candidates who have entered for solos, duets and trios will receive individual exam report sheets. Candidates for group entries will receive group feedback but all candidates will receive a copy of the exam report sheet and examiner's comment.

# 13 Examinations and quality assurance

## Exam 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/](http://www.istd.org/documents/rules-and-standing-orders/)

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

### UK Examinations

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

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

### International Examinations

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

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

## Policies and quality assurance

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

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

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

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

## Reasonable adjustments

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. The teacher acting on behalf of a candidate can request the Society to make reasonable adjustments to the assessment processes and examination requirements, to make the assessment more accessible and alleviate a barrier to allow the candidate to show what they know and can do.

To request reasonable adjustments, the teacher making the application on behalf of the candidate should send their completed application form and supporting documents to [ara@istd.org](mailto:ara@istd.org) a minimum of 28 days before the date of the exam. Further guidance for reasonable adjustments can be found in the ISTD Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustment Policy which is available on: [www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance](http://www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance)

Reasonable adjustments that may be considered for Performance Awards include:

- the use of a demonstrator for candidates who may not be able to perform a dance independently
- more time to practice in the examination room, prior to performing the dance

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 cannot be requested for Performance Awards examinations due to the nature of the marking criteria. If a candidate is affected by temporary adverse circumstances beyond their control just before the examination, the teacher should immediately contact the ISTD Examination Team to be advised of their options. If the absence occurs at a weekend, please contact the relevant Examinations Team on the next working day during the office hours.

## Enquiries and appeals about results

The Society endorses the principle of the right to enquire about a result where it does not meet reasonable expectations and to appeal against the outcome of that enquiry.

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](http://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, exam regulations and all other ISTD policies about the delivery of our exams. 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](http://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 exam results for any errors before issuing the awarded results and certificates direct to the primary organiser, unless requested otherwise. Exam session results and exam report sheets can be accessed online on the ISTD exam management portal, usually within 21 days of the date of the exam.

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 learners' examination report sheets, containing the overall result and examiner feedback. Where full marks have been awarded, this will be indicated in the candidate's exam report sheet. Successful candidates will also be issued with a qualification certificate displaying the qualification title, and Stage that they have been examined in, date of award and the overall result achieved.

This section focuses on the administrative requirements for delivering the examinations and related quality assurance processes. [www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance](http://www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance)

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