



## Code of Practice

### Assessment of Students' Work within Taught Programmes



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## Glossary

Academic judgement	A judgement that is made about a matter where only the opinion of an academic expert will suffice, for example, a judgement about assessment, a degree classification, research methodology or programme content or outcomes.
Agreement of mark(s)	Agreement of mark(s) is applied when two or more academics responsible for marking an assessment initially disagree, but then reach agreement on the mark/grade they jointly award.
Assessment	The evaluation of student performance and attainment.
Assessment framework	The design of the overall combination of assessment methods and of formative and summative assessment tasks that is recorded in the Programme Specification and presented for validation.
Cohort	A group of individual students, or teams of students working together, who submit work for assessment under the same title; for example, work submitted to an examination question.
Compensation	Compensation is a procedure through which strong performance by a student in the greater part of the current level or stage of their programme entitles them to compensation for limited failures following reassessment in specified circumstances.
Correction of marks	Any mark can be corrected where there has been a demonstrable failure in administrative procedures, for example incorrect addition of various component marks.
Element of assessment	A discrete assessment task linked to one or more of the intended learning outcomes within a 'unit of assessment'.
First Marker	An academic responsible for the initial marking of assessed work.
Formative assessment	A formative assessment contributes to the learning process by the return of a commentary, often in the form of verbal feedback, to students on the strengths and weaknesses of their work, but the outcomes do not contribute to any (aggregate) mark used for progression or award purposes.
Reasonable Adjustments	A statement in a standard form prepared by the Faculty of Education's Student Support and Welfare Officer outlining

	<p>the adjustments for physical or other impairments assessed as reasonable for a named student. Adjustments are designed to provide a student with an equal opportunity to participate in all educational activities: they are not intended to provide an unfair advantage.</p>
Learning Outcomes	<p>Subject knowledge and understanding and cognitive, practical and key/transferable skills which are gained upon successful completion of a module/programme of study.</p>
Internal Moderation (of marks)	<p>Review of a sample of the First Marker's marks and rationale for agreement or adjustment of marks awarded.</p>
Second Marking	<p>Review of all of the First Marker's marks and rationale for agreement or adjustment of marks awarded.</p>
External Examination (of assessment and marking process)	<p>The purpose of the external examiner system is to ensure that the academic standards of the Faculty of Education's awards are consistent with those in comparable Higher Education providers. Each academic year, the External Examiner for the programme of study will view the assessment and marking process for a number of modules.</p>
Modification (of mark)	<p>Adjustment to a mark for a single piece of assessed work but not within a cohort.</p>
Scaling (of cohorts of marks)	<p>Scaling of marks (the raising or lowering of a cohort's marks) may be considered where analysis of the marks awarded to a cohort of students shows that, whilst the overall profile is typical for that cohort, there is an unexpected <u>and significant</u> variation in the range of marks within the profile.</p>
Teaching period	<p>A timetabled period of defined duration in which learning and teaching normally takes place. Quality control of assessments undertaken during teaching periods is a Faculty responsibility, subject to quality assurance by Registry.</p>
Summative assessment	<p>A summative assessment provides a mark or grade that is recorded and will contribute to the requirements for progression and in specified cases will contribute to the student's award.</p>

## The Faculty of Education's Code of Practice on the Assessment of Students' Work

1. Viewed holistically, assessment includes evaluation and appraisal, making judgements, identifying strengths and weaknesses in order that a mark may be awarded. Ideally, assessment is an objective act, but can also include subjective aspects, for which a rationale and explanation must be available. As part of this holistic view, the Faculty of Education also regards assessment as an essential means of providing informative feedback to students on their progress and how this guidance can feed forward into improved performance. Both formative and summative assessments are expected to support student learning, the effectiveness of which is monitored through Annual Programme Reviews and tutor/student feedback to ensure continued improvement.
2. While acknowledging the many functions of assessment, and a continuity of process, the Code of Practice on the Assessment of Students' Work (Assessment Code) is structured under the following broad headings:

**Section A:** The purposes and background to the Code of Practice, including:

- 2.1 The purposes of this Code
- 2.2 The general principles for assessment
- 2.3 The quality control and quality assurance of assessment

**Section B:** The purposes, practices and outcomes of Assessment including

- 2.4 Marking
- 2.5 The quality control and quality assurance of marking
- 2.6 The recording and return of provisional and release of confirmed marks
- 2.7 The classification and grading of awards

### **SECTION A: The Purposes and Background to this Code of Practice**

3. This Code of Practice on the Assessment of Students' Work (Assessment Code) is primarily intended to assist academic staff within the Faculty of Education, its External Examiners, and those of its administrators who are concerned with student assessment and its outcomes to ensure that:
  - 3.1 There is demonstrable integrity, fairness and rigour in the application of academic judgement to the assessment of students' work;
  - 3.2 The associated administrative processes are undertaken with demonstrable integrity, fairness and rigour.
4. The Assessment Code should also assist students in understanding how assessment processes and procedures operate and how they can best use the various forms of assessment to support their learning and achievement.

5. The Faculty of Education expects its academics to exercise academic judgement rigorously and competently within the framework of this Code. Marks or grades resulting from processes which are underpinned by academic judgement should be consistent and demonstrable, and be aligned to the principles outlined in this Code.
6. The requirements set out in the Assessment Code will be reviewed annually.
7. Where the requirements of the Assessment Code differ from those of an external accrediting body, the requirements of the external accrediting body may take precedence with formal written approval by the Director of Education of the Faculty of Education and Registrar (or equivalent) of the external accrediting body.

### **Assessment: the general principles**

8. The following principles apply to the assessment of students' work on university-validated programmes of study.
  - 8.1 All programmes include an assessment strategy that sets out the extent and balance between the different methods of assessment used, whether formative or summative, are expected to contribute to and validate student learning. This information is outlined in Programme Specifications and Module Outlines.
  - 8.2 All summative assessment is subject to proportionate internal quality assurance and external examining.
  - 8.3 Each individual unit of assessment is dealt with, in the first instance, independently (marked out of 100%) whether or not the outcomes of units of assessment are subsequently weighted.
  - 8.4 All summative assessments are based on and aligned with the Faculty of Education's Grade Descriptors (see: Annex 1) and related to the Learning Outcomes set out in Programme Specifications and Module Outlines.
  - 8.5 Programmes that lead to university-validated awards and credit are taught and assessed in English and are aligned to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).
  - 8.6 The form(s) and extent of each unit of assessment are expected to be relevant and proportionate to the Learning Outcomes being evaluated and the contribution to the award that the unit makes.
  - 8.7 The allocation of all marks is always supported by explanatory comments provided by the First Marker and Internal Moderator whether for the benefit of students, where assessed work is returned to them, and/or to provide evidence for any subsequent calibration, moderation or quality assurance by colleagues internally and External Examiners.

## The quality control and quality assurance of assessment

9. The Faculty of Education defines **quality control** in the context of the assessment of student work as:
    - 9.1 The processes followed by the Faculty of Education's academic and administrative staff to ensure that assessments are appropriate to and valid for the Learning Outcomes of the relevant module/programme to be met; that assessments are conducted and marked as the Faculty of Education requires; and that results and feedback are accurately recorded, processed, presented and returned to students in a timely manner.
  10. The Faculty of Education defines **quality assurance** in the context of the assessment of students' work as:
    - 10.1 The processes undertaken by its academic and administrative staff, and its External Examiners, to enable the Faculty of Education to be confident of adherence to quality control processes and that these processes are fit for purpose; that the outcomes of student assessment provides a reliable guide to achievement; that the Faculty of Education's assessment arrangements meet UK expectations and requirements; and that the Faculty of Education identifies and actions opportunities for the enhancement of its assessment arrangements.
  11. The Faculty of Education is committed to meeting the expectations of assessment as set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education which states that:
    - 11.1 The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks;
    - 11.2 The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers;
    - 11.3 Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where and how courses are delivered or who delivers them;
    - 11.4 The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.
  12. As a principle, all work by students that is assessed and that makes a summative contribution to the students' progression and/or awards will be subject to quality control and quality assurance. The Faculty of Education achieves this through:
    - 12.1 Its 'internal' quality assurance procedures, which are applied to the academic and administrative aspects involved in assessment;
    - 12.2 Its external examining system, which provides independent 'external' confirmation that the assessment procedures that have been applied are fair and that the outcomes are sound.
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13. Procedural requirements apply to the:
  - 13.1 Marking of units of assessment and the recording of assessment outcomes;
  - 13.2 Correction of marks which is applied to any mark when there has been a demonstrable failure in the administration of marks, for example the incorrect addition of components leading to a total;
  - 13.3 Agreement of assessment outcomes, which is applied where the First Marker and Internal Moderator initially disagree with a mark;
  - 13.4 Scaling of cohorts of marks;
  - 13.5 Compensation applied to assessment outcomes of an individual's unit of assessment;
  - 13.6 Reasonable adjustments to assessments.

### **Reasonable Adjustments**

14. The Faculty of Education's Student Support and Welfare Officer (SSWO) is responsible for co-ordinating additional learning needs of students, which are detailed in Study Support Plans. Students who have a disability can apply for reasonable adjustments to summative assessments, as detailed in the *Policy and Guidance for Reasonable Adjustments to Learning, Teaching and Assessment for Students with Disabilities*.

### **Study Skill Support**

15. The Faculty of Education's Study Skills Coordinator (SSC) provides group and one-to-one support for students requiring additional support in academic skills pertaining to written assessments and examinations. The Study Skills section of the Faculty of Education's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) contains support material for all students wishing to improve their study and academic skills.

## **SECTION B: The Purposes, Practices and Outcomes of Assessment**

### **The purposes of assessment**

16. Assessment is not solely concerned with the marking or grading of a student's work; it is also an integral support to the learning process, by providing:
  - 16.1 Feedback to students and staff on the achievement of students;
  - 16.2 Information on how successfully the assessment has measured/judged student achievement;
  - 16.3 Constructive commentaries to help students enhance their work.
17. The design and preparation of all Faculty of Education programmes of study and modules provide:



- 17.1 A rationale for the aims, form(s) and relevance of the assessment task;
- 17.2 The Learning Outcomes, including any 'weighting' between elements where appropriate;
- 17.3 How the units of assessment, and elements within assessments, are integrated within and between modules within a programme of study.

These details are required for module/programme validation.

- 18. Students are able to access the overall assessment strategy for a programme of study and details of the assessment requirements for each module through the relevant Programme Handbook.

### **Forms of assessment**

- 19. Assessments are categorised as either:
  - 19.1 Formative – which contribute to the learning process by the return to students of their submitted work with a commentary on its strengths and areas for improvement;
  - 19.2 Summative – which provide a mark that is recorded and will contribute to the requirements for progression and in specified cases will contribute to the award.
- 20. Formative assessment is built into programmes of study as an integral and supportive part of the planned learning process. Students are expected to submit all formative assessments identified in Module Outlines.
- 21. Students and tutors may agree on further formative assessments as part of the learning process over and above that included within Module Outlines.
- 22. All modules should include at least one opportunity to provide students with evaluative feedback on their work from which they can judge how they have performed and how they can improve. Where a module is assessed exclusively by examination(s), there is a requirement for formative assessment prior to the examination(s).

### **The validity of assessment methods**

- 23. The Faculty of Education is committed to ensuring that the assessment modes and methods are appropriate, transparent and relevant to the assessment of Learning Outcomes. It does this through:
  - 23.1 Continuing professional development and standardisation of assessment processes and procedures as part of INSET and Peer Review;
  - 23.2 Attention paid to assessment frameworks during programme and module design;
  - 23.3 Internal quality assurance arrangements involved in programme validation and re-validation arrangements;

- 23.4 Monitoring arrangements, including the evaluation and response to feedback from students, Internal Moderators, External Examiners and other relevant stakeholders.
24. Academic tutors are required to identify both generic and specific Learning Outcomes when designing programmes of study and modules. The analysis of how Learning Outcomes can most effectively and efficiently be assessed is integral to the design of the overall assessment framework for the programmes of study. In addition, academic tutors are required to be conversant with the relevance and validity of assessment modes, and the rationale of each assessment task.
25. For each module, the Learning Outcomes determine the overall assessment task and assessment criteria. Assessment tasks and criteria should account for specific (module related) and generic (level of study and programme of study) Learning Outcomes. Assessment of modules normally focuses on the demonstration of specific Learning Outcomes whilst contributing to wider generic Learning Outcomes. It is important that the purposes and requirements of the various units of assessment within a module are correlated, to ensure that the intended Learning Outcomes of the module are all evaluated, and that there is no unnecessary duplication within and between modules.
26. The design of assessment tasks should be clearly aligned with the Faculty of Education's Grade Descriptors (see Annex 1), and should provide students with opportunities to demonstrate not only their abilities to meet expectations at threshold level but also, progressively, to the highest levels of ability that would give access marks at the top of the mark range.
27. Some overlap or even duplication in the assessment of particularly important Learning Outcome(s) may be advantageous in contributing to the learning process.

### **The extent (or amount) of assessment**

28. The amount of assessment within a module, as well as in a programme of study overall, should be proportionate to the contribution each module makes to determining the award. All Faculty of Education programmes of study are based on 10 or 15-credit modules, with multiples thereof. The extent of assessment and the mode of assessment should be determined primarily by academic judgement of the requirements to assess the Learning Outcomes. The following should be considered when designing the strategy and extent of summative assessment:
- 28.1 The overall assessment strategy of the programme of study;
- 28.2 The assessment strategy for each module which is determined by specific Learning Outcomes and the contribution the module makes to the overall programme of study;
- 28.3 Where there are multiple units of assessment within a module, the extent of each unit of assessment should reflect the proportion of module Learning Outcomes it is assessing.

29. Where work is submitted for assessment in an integrated series, the timing of submission by and return to the students should be sequenced to allow students to benefit from feedback on earlier submission(s). This process is sometimes referred to as 'feed-forward'.
30. The use of formative assessment will vary between levels of study but in general it should not exceed the extent of summative assessment.

### **Penalties for Late Submission of work for assessment**

31. The Faculty of Education has clear requirements for the timely submission of work for assessment. Any summative assessment not received by the date and time given in the Assessment and Examinations Booklet will be given a mark of zero (0).

### **Illegible submissions**

32. It is a student's responsibility to present work for assessment that is legible. Occasionally, however, an assessor may be presented with work that is illegible. In such instances the following guidance should be used:
  - 32.1 The responsibility for determining whether submitted work is illegible resides with the Board of Examiners or through consultation with the Chair of the Board, never with an individual assessor;
  - 32.2 At its discretion, the Board of Examiners may require the candidate, at their own expense, to reproduce the answer in legible form and within a new timescale specified by the Board;
  - 32.3 The original submission should be retained by the Registrar for the purposes of comparison.
33. Notwithstanding the terms of paragraph 32, the Board of Examiners is authorised to take into consideration the particular circumstances of students who are known to have a Learning Support Agreement and may, in cases of doubt, advise a student whose submission is deemed illegible to seek guidance from the SSWO.

### **Marking**

34. The following terms apply within this Code of Practice:
  - 34.1 First Marking which is normally undertaken by the academic(s) involved in teaching the topic being assessed;
  - 34.2 First markers undertake first marking. First Markers are required to provide a clear basis for the allocation of the mark(s) to be awarded against Learning Outcomes and Grade Descriptors. First Markers should also provide written feedback where assessed work is returned to students;

- 34.3 Internal Moderation which involves the work of a second academic (the Internal Moderator), who focuses on the marking of work that has been submitted for assessment alongside comments and reports written by the First Marker. Internal Moderation may involve all or a sample of work within a cohort depending on the size of cohort. Where a sample of student work is selected for Internal Moderation, this should be the same sample that is provided for scrutiny by the External Examiner, i.e. *at least 10% of the total or 20 pieces of work whichever is the lesser across the range of marks*. Internal Moderators are required to submit a written report on the internal moderation process.
- 34.4 Blind marking of dissertations which involves the work of a second academic who has not been involved in the supervision of the student's work, and does not have the comments or marks of the First Marker. In blind marking, the second academic will award a mark in reference to Learning Outcomes and Grade Descriptors and complete an Internal Moderation report. The second academic will meet with each of the First Markers (who are normally dissertation supervisors) to compare and agree final marks. Any discussions between the First Marker and second academic at this stage of the process will be recorded on the Internal Moderation report.

### **Anonymous marking**

35. The Faculty of Education operates a policy of **anonymous marking** for all written assessments.

### **Awarding marks**

36. Marks are awarded following the generic framework provided by the Faculty of Education's Undergraduate and Postgraduate Grade Descriptors, the assessment criteria, and the extent to which a student has achieved the specified Learning Outcomes set out in the Programme Specification and Module Outlines.
37. Assessment criteria for each assessment are stated clearly in the Assessment and Examinations Booklets.
38. A 10% leeway above or below the stated word count is operated. Where work exceeds this leeway (i.e. more than 10% above the stated word count), the assessor will strike through the over-write and not consider such work in awarding a mark. For work significantly below the stated word count, it is likely that the Learning Outcomes and assessment criteria of the assessment are not met fully, and that this would be reflected in the mark awarded.
39. Marks are awarded on a percentage scale. For undergraduate programmes of study the pass mark is 40% and for taught postgraduate programmes of study the pass mark is 50%. The Faculty of Education is committed to the use of the full range of the marking scale, and advises its staff and External Examiners accordingly.

40. The principles embedded within the Grade Descriptors should be reflected in assessment tasks and assessment criteria.
41. Through the tutorial system, Level Coordinators and/or Programme Managers ensure students are aware of Grade Descriptors and assessment criteria and how these relate to the assessment of work.

### **Marking and its quality control and assurance**

42. All work that contributes to a Faculty of Education programme of study leading to university-validated and RAD Awards is quality controlled/assured. Quality control is applied to administrative processes such as ensuring that marks have been totalled correctly, whilst quality assurance is applied to the awarding of marks or grades through the exercise of academic judgement (Paragraphs 9-10 refer).
43. The extent of quality control/assurance should be proportionate to the type of assessment and the contribution it makes to an award. Typically:
  - 43.1 Where a unit of assessment contributes to a 10/15 or 30-credit module a sample of assessed work should be internally moderated with the sample being that submitted for external examining;
  - 43.2 Where a unit of assessment contributes to more than 30 credits, typically dissertations and research reports, all work submitted for assessment should be marked by at least two academics (blind marked).
44. For examination answers in the form of multiple choice, or short notes on a number of separate topics, it is sufficient for a second academic to check that all parts have been marked and that the marks have been totalled correctly.
45. Where feasible, all pages of assessed work that contribute to a student's summative assessment in the penultimate year and final year of programmes should include an indication that the page has been scrutinised as part of the assessment process.

### **Correction of marks**

46. Correction of marks applies when there has been a demonstrable failure in the administration of marking, for example the incorrect addition of components leading to a total. Correction may be applied to an individual mark within a cohort so long as the sample used for quality control purposes includes no further errors. Where additional errors are found within the sample then all of the units within that cohort must be checked for administrative accuracy. The correction of marks is actioned by the Registrar, who will report to the Board of Examiners.

### **Agreement and moderation of marks**

47. The adjustment/alteration of the initial mark(s) assigned to work submitted for assessment can only be undertaken through procedures that are applied

- consistently within the Faculty of Education. Where the quality assurance procedures indicate a difference in mark between the First Marker and Internal Moderator/second academic, those assessing the submitted work should document how an agreed mark was arrived at, or provide justification for a scaling exercise to be undertaken.
48. Except for correction of marks by the Registrar (Paragraph 46), marks awarded cannot be changed by anyone acting alone.
49. To ensure that any and all adjustments or alterations take place in a manner that is equitable to all students, a common and shared use of terminology and set of procedures are essential. The following apply within the Faculty of Education:
- 49.1 **Agreement of mark/s** When the First Marker and Internal Moderator agree on mark/s awarded.
- 49.2 **Disagreement of mark/s** When the First Marker and Internal Moderator initially disagree on a mark awarded, the following process will be applied:
- 49.2.1 Negotiation of an agreed mark followed by a written commentary on the premise of the agreement or;
- 49.2.2 Seeking the advice of an independent, academic arbitrator from the Faculty of Education senior management (normally the Head of Learning and Teaching), who will reconcile the difference in light of the objective evidence available. On rare occasions, the advice of the External Examiner may be sought. In such cases the External Examiner's decision will be final.
- 49.3 **Moderation of marks through scaling** When there are anomalies in the consistency of marks within a cohort, a scaling exercise may take place. All documentation related to the scaling exercise will be attached to mark sheets and the Internal Moderator's report, and submitted to the External Examiner as appropriate.
50. Reassessment assignments are internally moderated in cases where the First Marker awards a fail, or a pass that is within five percentage points of the relevant pass mark. For instance, undergraduate work that achieves a reassessment mark between 40% and 45% on first marking is to be internally moderated. Once the marking and moderating process has been completed, marks for reassessed units of assessment are capped at the pass mark.

## Compensation

51. Programme Regulations identify the circumstances under which Compensation may be considered by a Board of Examiners.

### **The return of assessed work to students**

52. Assessed work which has been summatively assessed will normally be returned to students within four teaching weeks following the submission deadline. Where there is a very large cohort of students, and/or the volume of work to be assessed is such that the four-week deadline is impractical, the Director of Education may authorise an extension to a total maximum of five teaching weeks, so long as this is reported to the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee.
53. Assessed work which has been formatively assessed should not normally be returned later than five working days before the submission deadline. This is to ensure that students have sufficient time to respond to feedback ahead of the assessment deadline. For undergraduate dissertations, no feedback will be given ten working days before submission deadlines and for postgraduate dissertations, 20 working days before submission deadlines.

### **Feedback and feed-forward to students on assessed work**

54. Assessment of all summative assignments requires a commentary explaining the basis of any mark or grade. The nature and extent of feedback will be determined, in part, by the assessment criteria and Learning Outcomes of a module. Feedback should be sufficient to explain strengths and weaknesses in the performance(s) and explain and justify the mark(s) awarded.
55. Feedback (verbal and/or written) on student work submitted for formative assessment should be directed to supporting the learning process. Formative feedback should also provide an indication on how a student's performance could be improved.
56. Feedback should aim to focus a student's attention in ways that are intended to support the learning process and provide a basis for future improved performance. It is in this sense that the term 'feed-forward' is used. Feedback/feed-forward should include comments on what a student has done well and what is incorrect and/or inadequately presented. It should be regarded as essential to provide advice on how the work could have been improved.

### **The recording and return to students of provisional marks**

57. Marks for summative assessment remain provisional until ratified by the Board of Examiners, and students must be made aware of this to avoid any potential confusion.
58. Summative assessments that contribute to awards can be returned to students with the provisional mark once that mark has been subject to appropriate quality checks.
59. Once marks have been forwarded to the Registrar, and such marks entered in the system, marks cannot be altered unless there has been an administrative

error. All internal moderation or scaling must be completed before marks are presented to the Registrar.


### The release of ratified marks

60. The Registrar will inform students of recommendations made by the appropriate Board of Examiners. No member of the Board of Examiners or Faculty of Education should divulge provisional pass lists or degree classifications until official notification to students has been made.
61. The procedure for classification of Bachelor's and Master's degrees is set out in the Programme Regulations.

### Annex 1: Grade Descriptors

The Grade Descriptors indicate the criteria that should be applied when allocating marks for undergraduate and postgraduate assignments.

The Grade Descriptors align the best practice identified by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) as set out in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and Subject Benchmark Statements. The descriptors will be updated from time to time to conform to the advice of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and amendments made to Subject Benchmark Statements. The Grade Descriptors are published on the password-protected Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to enable the Faculty of Education to ensure clarity and consistency of approach across programmes of study. Students and staff can access the Undergraduate Grade Descriptors and the Postgraduate Grade Descriptors on this page of the VLE: <http://moodle.rad.org.uk/course/view.php?id=26>.

Created	11 April 2014
Reviewed by the Policy and Strategy Committee	18 May 2021
Ratified by the Education Sub-committee of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Academy of Dance	7 June 2021
Signed on behalf of the Education Sub-committee of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Academy of Dance by the Chair	
Review Date	May 2022