



UK Secretary of State supports exams in creative subjects

Focus on class awards





Exam results – do's and don'ts

Focus on Exams Issue 2 2018

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Welcome to *Focus on Exams*, the RAD publication dedicated to all things exams-related!

In this issue of *Focus on Exams*:

- our usual news and reminders
- support from the UK Secretary of State for Education for examinations in creative subjects
- focus on class awards

If you have any questions about anything in this issue of *Focus on Exams*, or any other feedback or queries for the Examinations department, contact us at exams@rad.org.uk

Let us know about your exams experience via our online survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/examsfeedback

Thank you for your continued support for RAD exams.

Dr Andrew McBirnie
Director of Examinations



Valete

Due to health reasons arising from an injury sustained just weeks in to her new role, Paula Hunt took the difficult decision to step down as the RAD's Artistic Director in May.

Paula's involvement with the RAD as student, teacher, tutor and examiner has spanned a lifetime, but it is in particular her inspiring and dedicated work in senior leadership roles with the Examinations and Artistic departments in recent years that has gained her the love and respect of the entire RAD family all over the world. The Examinations Board is particularly grateful for her vision and guidance in leading the Panel of Examiners, always with a unique blend of incisiveness, clarity, and humour, as well as her key role in creating the RAD's current suite of examination syllabi, while Chair of the Panel of Examiners and, latterly, Head of Syllabus Development from 2005 to 2017.

Whilst saddened by her decision to step down, the exams department, along with the entire Academy, would like to extend their best wishes to Paula for continued improvement from her injury. With the wealth of knowledge and experience Paula has, as well as the invaluable contribution she has made, we look forward to Paula's continued contribution to the Academy's work in the future.



Photo: James Gilbert T/A Photospace

Music in vocational graded exams

A reminder that all vocational graded examinations must have live piano accompaniment, with the variations performed to the orchestral tracks on the CD. The pianist must operate the playback equipment – it is not permissible for any other individual to enter the exam room to undertake this role.

If, on the day of an exam, an accompanist is unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances, your local office should be informed as soon as possible. Where, exceptionally, it is then agreed that the exams may go ahead, applicants will be required to send information about the situation to their local office, and this information will be logged.

Underwear in exams

Whilst our uniform specifications do suggest that underwear should not be visible, they do not state that it should not be worn.

The RAD places the safeguarding of children and young people at the heart of its policy making. It's very important that candidates (and their parents) feel comfortable, and should not be made uneasy with any of the uniform requests made by teachers.

It is important to note that candidates are not assessed based on the uniform worn.

Syllabus and music amendments

A reminder that any syllabus and sheet music publication amendments are summarised at www.rad.org.uk/syllabus-updates

Exam fees

The RAD publishes an international fees table covering all countries in which it operates worldwide. Exam fees apply in the country in which the examination is taking place, and must be paid in the currency of that country, regardless of the country of residence of either teacher or candidate.

The process may be different for the following countries, who should consult Joanna Pigeon (International Examinations Officer) for information: Bermuda, Ghana, Jordan, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, and Serbia.

Reasonable adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is a **request for specific arrangements or aids to be put in place** to enable a candidate to enter for and complete an exam, despite the presence of a barrier such as a disability or a pre-existing condition. It can also be used to **inform the examiner** about a condition (e.g. use of an inhaler, arm or leg cast), or to give guidance on how to adapt to or relate to a candidate with specific communication needs. A reasonable adjustment will not affect the candidate's marks or what is expected of them in the exam.

Application for a reasonable adjustment (by submission of a reasonable adjustment form together with any supporting medical evidence) must be made **before the closing date** for examination entry and should be sent to the exams department at RAD headquarters. We will try to accommodate applications made later than this, but cannot guarantee to put adjustments in place if there is insufficient time to do so. Applications will not normally be accepted if received by the exams department within two working days of the examination.

Forms or notification of an adjustment request should never be given directly to the examiner.

Minimum age reminder

Candidates must have reached the stated minimum age by a specified date before each exam session. The actual dates are determined on a country-by-country basis; contact your local office for further details.

RAD exams are designed for candidates of certain ages: syllabus content has been carefully created to accommodate the progressive cognitive maturity required to study the concepts, movements and skills introduced. Before the recent changes to the minimum age policy were introduced, there were increasing indications that the ages at which candidates were being entered for exams were precluding against the outcomes of achievement and success that we would all like to see.

The RAD supports standards of safe dance practice. The minimum ages required for exam entry impact on the associated preparatory training which candidates undergo with their teachers, which can typically take a year or more to complete. If younger students participate in programmes of study whose content is not suitable for their developmental stage – particularly in terms of motor development – there is a risk of adversely affecting their future progression as dancers.

A progressive structure helps learners to achieve enjoyment and fulfilment throughout the learning process. The minimum age policy promotes the proper exploration and consolidation of work by students at the appropriate developmental stage, and hence guards against poor performance in examinations.

Exam / level	Minimum age
Pre-Primary in Dance	5
Primary in Dance	6
Grades 1–5	7
Grades 6–8 and Intermediate Foundation	11
Discovering Repertoire Levels 2, 3 and 4	12
Intermediate	12
Advanced Foundation	13
Advanced 1	14
Advanced 2	15
Solo Seal	15

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

In common with all organisations which operate within the European Union, the Academy is subject to new data protection laws known as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which came into effect in May 2018.

These regulations require us to implement new procedures and safeguards surrounding the handling of examination data, particularly in respect of teachers (and others) providing us with candidate data (names, dates of birth, gender, ethnicity, disability information, etc.) including the collection of this data beforehand from candidates and their parents. This is because under the terms of the GDPR, everyone has a right to know how and for what purpose their personal data is used by any organisation, and the RAD as 'data controller' has an obligation to ensure this awareness.

We will be providing more information about these requirements shortly, so watch out for further details.

Support from the UK Secretary of State for Education for examinations in creative subjects

The RAD has been successful in gaining support from the UK Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, for students taking dance, music and drama exams during school time. We hope that this support will provide guidance for head teachers, clearer information for parents, and support and encouragement for students wishing to take external exams in creative subjects.



Photo: Elliott Franks

In 2013 the Department for Education issued new guidance for schools in England outlining stronger repercussions for unauthorised absences, and stating that head teachers should only authorise absence in 'exceptional circumstances'. The RAD has found that this new guidance has often made it difficult for head teachers to authorise absences for external exams as there is currently no clear definition of what constitutes such circumstances. This point has been raised in parliamentary debate, most notably in June 2016. The transcript of the debate can be found here: <https://goo.gl/vMfjPg>

Due to the substantial numbers of exam entries – approximately 60,000 in the UK each year, and nearly a quarter of a million worldwide – it is not always possible for the RAD to organise exams out of school hours. Seeing an increasing number of declined requests for authorised absences for exam candidates by schools in England, the Director of Examinations, Andrew McBirnie, decided to raise the issue with his local MP, Ed Vaizey, a former culture minister. Mr Vaizey took the issue up with the Department for Education and the resulting support from the Secretary of State represents vital and welcome encouragement for young people who are at increasing risk of being denied the opportunity to perform for an examiner and gain a qualification they have worked hard to achieve.

The issue was reported prominently in the UK national media in the week before Easter, particularly by the BBC and the *Daily Telegraph*: <https://goo.gl/yH4ndz>
<https://goo.gl/Q8SorC>



2017-0057596POSoS

Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State

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Rt Hon Ed Vaizey MP
By email: ed.vaizey.mp@parliament.uk

16 January 2018

D. H.

Thank you for your email of 4 December, addressed to the Minister of State for School Standards and enclosing correspondence from your constituent Mr Andrew McBirnie, Director of Examinations at the Royal Academy of Dance, about school absence. I am responding as the Secretary of State for Education and I am sorry for the delay in replying.

Whilst my department wishes to reduce school absence, we recognise that parents may wish for their child to undertake external examinations. We support pupils taking dance, music and drama examinations, which can lead to recognised qualifications and provide personal development opportunities. It is, however, for headteachers to decide whether they allow pupils to attend such examinations if they take place during term time.

We recommend that parents either apply for a leave of absence or ask the school to consider approving such examinations as an educational activity. Our guidance clearly sets out that pupils must only have an authorised leave of absence from school in exceptional circumstances. My department does not explicitly state what constitutes an exceptional circumstance. These decisions are best made by headteachers, who will know their pupils' individual circumstances best. We do expect schools to be sympathetic to such requests, as long as they are satisfied that time away from school will not have a negative effect on a child's education.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Tours
Damian

Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State for Education

Focus on class awards

Class awards were first added to the RAD's portfolio of assessments with the introduction of the Pre-Primary in Dance and Primary in Dance syllabi in 2009. Since then more levels have been introduced, alongside the continued development of new syllabi. Class awards are currently available from Pre-Primary in Dance to Grade 5, as well as for all levels and units of the RAD's latest offering, Discovering Repertoire.

Whilst the teacher leads the class award, an examiner is present to assess the candidates. Students perform the syllabus, although only one dance is required and there is a choice between some exercises – details can be found in the Specifications. The assessment is a broad indication of standard and achievement rather than a specified level of attainment comprising a detailed breakdown using specific marking criteria, as is the case for exams and solo performance awards.

Teachers should arrange candidates in groupings that are appropriate for the studio space and allow the examiner to see all the candidates clearly.



Photo: Elliott Franks

RAD examiner **Olivia Burvenich** provides a personal insight into the benefits of entering students for class awards, both as a teacher and an examiner:

In my opinion, class awards should be looked at as just another format or type of examination offered by the RAD. An achievement, whether passing an exam, class award or other assessment, is still an achievement.

As a teacher I have found that, most of the time, students just want to belong. They want to feel included and they love to be rewarded – don't we all!? Class awards are living proof of the ideology that everyone with a love of ballet and dance should be able to get involved in the flexible assessment system the RAD has developed.

It is essential that teachers explain to parents the RAD's philosophy – examinations and assessments are there to encourage and reward candidates of all abilities, and a positive experience on the day is one of the most important factors.

Whether a student is entered for a class award or an exam, they wear the same uniform, they wear the same numbers, and they each get a certificate and a medal when they pass. The format of the assessments might be a little different, but at the end of the day teachers will see smiling faces from all of their candidates because no-one has been told 'no, you can't take part'.

As a teacher, I love the fact that class awards can be used as a stepping stone (between grades, or as an introduction to the exam system for students who have not previously studied RAD syllabi), or stand perfectly by themselves in their own right. For some candidates, it might be the only realistic possibility to get involved with ballet assessments and be rewarded.

I have also found that it is very interesting to see how every individual candidate handles the exam situation. It's quite amazing to see how students can be completely different on the day of the exam and in the exam room itself, compared to in class. Some get so nervous they can hardly remember anything, and then a small reminder from their teacher can be helpful. A class award can help to reduce the pressure placed on students.

As an examiner it's heart-breaking to see children struggle during an examination because they aren't ready or are overly nervous and therefore the whole point of taking the exam is lost. Part of the point of an exam is to enjoy the experience and come out of the exam room more confident!

I certainly don't think any less of class award candidates. I just love to see well prepared, happy dancers that are dancing to the best of their ability whatever type of assessment they are participating in.

NB – the current Specifications include incorrect groupings of candidates for class awards in Section 2: Content and markschemes. An errata document has been published on the Specifications page of the website, and this will be corrected in future releases of the Specifications.



Photo: Elliott Franks

Barbara Peters – oldest UK exam candidate

Former RAD examiner Barbara Peters has, at the age of 80, been awarded a merit at grade 7. Barbara entered for her exam in Winter 2017, 70 years after she took her first RAD exam aged 9.

The news of Barbara being the oldest candidate in the UK to take and pass an RAD grade 7 exam spread through media channels in the UK, with Barbara appearing on various news programmes, in newspapers and on social media.

Barbara became an RAD examiner in 1963 and retired from the panel in 2004. She still teaches, and, alongside the Panel of Examiners Manager, organises the former examiners' reunion which takes place at RAD headquarters in London each year.

In conversations with members of the exams department, Barbara mentioned that when she was studying Grades 6 to 8 didn't exist – they were only introduced to the RAD's portfolio of syllabi in the 1990s. After she retired, Barbara started attending classes again 'for a bit of fun', and taking the exam was a natural progression. She plans to enter for her grade 8 exam later this year.

Exam results: do's and don'ts for teachers (and a few for the RAD!)

With use of social media becoming ever more ubiquitous, it's natural that successful exam candidates will want to shout about their achievements online to their friends and family. But teachers need to be mindful that the exam result belongs to the candidate, not to them! So specific information about results and grades needs to be passed on confidentially to candidates first, and it's up to them whether and how they want to disseminate the information. It should never be passed on to anyone else, and certainly never in a public or online forum, without their permission.

In the same way, it's never justified for teachers to hold on to information about exam results. These should always be passed on to the candidate (or their parents) in a timely manner, regardless of any other considerations – including in the unfortunate circumstance that a dispute arises between the teacher and the parents. Once the entry has been received and accepted by the RAD, we have an obligation to deliver the exam to the candidate, and once they've taken it and passed, they have a right to be awarded their qualification – without exception.

Of course, we realise that sometimes students leave a school and families move away without leaving a forwarding address, so there may be occasions when despite the best of intentions, it's simply not possible to pass the results on. In these circumstances, so long as every reasonable effort is made to do so, we can't ask for anything more. And of course, we know that many schools retain results to give them out at award ceremonies, which is fine, so long as not too much time elapses between the result being received and the ceremony taking place.

A few more things to bear in mind, taken from our rules and regulations and malpractice policy:

- don't give false or misleading information about exam results to candidates

- don't give out documents which might be taken to be a genuine RAD award, but aren't
- don't amend, add to, or falsify any exam documentation issued by the RAD (eg. by adding stickers or other 'personal touches')
- don't hold 'mock' or practice exams in your school, and give students or parents the impression that they are genuine RAD exams

We know that teachers and candidates value the speedy dispatch of exam results. We work extremely hard to turn results around as quickly as possible, but sometimes, particularly at busy periods, it's simply not possible to get everything sent out as quickly as we would like. Processes mean we need to wait until a complete 'tour' (typically 4 weeks of exams) is finished and all results sent in by the examiner before we can award and issue results. Candidates whose exams were on day 1 of the tour will need to wait a lot longer than those on day 28.

This year we're rolling out our new IT system across the world, which eventually will mean that all teachers will be able to enter candidates and receive results online. While we get used to the system internally at first, there will be some slight delays to the processing of results, so we ask for your patience and understanding during this period.

Finally, teachers and candidates in some countries will know that we've had serious problems with some of our delivery companies over the past year. We are well aware of these, and can assure you that we're working hard with our central distributor to resolve them and find alternative solutions. Please accept our sincere apologies for any results which have taken longer to arrive than they should have done.

In memorium

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of UK examiner Heulwen (Holly) Price.

Holly became an RAD examiner in 1981 and joined the staff at RAD Headquarters in 1989, following a successful career teaching and performing. Over the years she had many roles: tutor, lecturer, examiner, mentor and she was of course a respected colleague and much loved friend. She was made a Fellow of the RAD in 2016, in recognition of her enormous contribution to the Academy, to RAD Registered Teachers, examiners and students around the world. She will be greatly missed.

In consultation with her family, the RAD is setting up a bursary fund in her memory. The money raised will be used to support the things that Holly was so passionate about: encouraging new and trainee dance teachers, and mentoring talented young dancers.

Welcome

We are delighted to welcome twelve new examiners who successfully completed their training and joined the panel at the end of last year:

Theresa Brown (Greece)
 Margaret Bull (UK)
 Timothy Clarke (UK)
 Lorna Cook (UK)
 Dana Fry Blanco (Canada)
 Charlotte Gillespie (UK)
 Yvonne Henshaw (Italy)
 Anabel Ho (Canada)
 Elena Koukoli (Greece)
 Roberta McClelland (UK)
 Rivkah Nathan (Israel)
 Beverley Spencer (UK)

Examiner training programmes

We recently held two new examiner training programmes in Sydney, Australia and Johannesburg, South Africa.

Eighteen trainee examiners from 11 countries were led by Artistic Director Paula Hunt and Chief Examiner Jennifer Hale. During their 3–4 weeks at the Sydney and Johannesburg offices, the trainees were taken through a practical revision of the RAD syllabi and an in depth study of the assessment criteria and examination procedure.

These trainee examiners are now on tour, each shadowing a current examiner, and after completion of the shadowing and a probationary period, they will join our worldwide panel as front-line representatives of the RAD.

A further training programme is planned for October/November 2018 at RAD Headquarters in London where eleven new examiners will be trained.

Future recruitment

There are no current plans to recruit for further examiners following these training programmes.

Any future recruitment campaigns, including details of the RAD examiner role and the application process, will be advertised on the 'Work for us' page on the RAD website, via members' publications and on the RAD's social media sites.

Successful Solo Seal candidates

The Solo Seal is the highest level of examination offered by the RAD. Candidates perform three solo variations and a virtuoso finale (choreographed by the candidate and/or their teacher), requiring a high degree of technical and expressive artistry, in front of an audience. They must achieve a minimum of 8 marks (out of 10) in every examination component in order to pass. In a typical year, no more than 20-30 candidates around the world achieve this prestigious award.

Congratulations to the following:

Australia

Lucy Angel (October 2017)
 Janae Kerr (August 2017)
 My Le (August 2017)
 Rose Maloney (August 2017)
 Abby Morgan (August 2017)
 Sara Ouwendyk (August 2017)
 Laura Reuther (October 2017)
 Ada Saysanne (October 2017)
 Tyler Steinbach (August 2017)
 Elizabeth Wenta (August 2017)
 Benjamin Wilson (October 2017)

Brazil

Anne Jullieth dos Santos Pinheiro (December 2017)

Hong Kong

Chung Man In Natalie (December 2017)
 Lam Hoi Yee (December 2017)

South Africa

Caitlin Tanner (August 2017)
 Alexandra Van Veijeren (August 2017)



Photo: Winkipop Media

Examinations department at RAD HQ

In February, we welcomed back **Katharine Christopher** (Examinations Business and Customer Services Administrator) from maternity leave, and said a fond farewell and many thanks to **Harriet Main** and wish her all the best for the future.

This month we welcome back **Harriet Grant** (Examinations Operations and Communications Manager) and **Cecilia Matteucci** (Examinations Officer – UK RAV exams) from maternity leave. We say a heartfelt goodbye to **Kirsty Yeung** and **Carys Barbour** who so ably filled Harriet and Cecilia's shoes (respectively) while they were away.

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