

Filming examinations

On occasion, for quality assurance purposes, we may film examinations. If this occurs, you will be informed before the examination, along with the reasons for the filming.

Medals and bars

The Examinations Board, after due consideration, has agreed that medals and bars cannot be awarded or purchased for examinations taken prior to their introduction.



FEATURES

Understanding the examination criteria

The following is an edited transcript of the presentation given by Paula Hunt, Chair of the Panel of Examiners, at the Grades 4 & 5 Launch at the Mermaid Theatre, London, on 3 January 2014.

At the Grades 1-3 launch, the examination criteria for technique were covered. As a reminder, these are the criteria - with the delightful acronym of 'CCCLSD':

Correct posture and weight placement
Co-ordination
Control
Line
Space
Dynamics (movement)

These criteria are used in every RAD examination from Primary in Dance to the Solo Seal Award. For every component mark (eg. 'Technique 1'), Examiners award an overall mark that includes an assessment of all these criteria points.

The example below gives an idea of this marking process. You can see that **posture, weight placement, control** (which includes turnout), **co-ordination** and **line** are on a consistent mark of 6 (= 'fairly good'). Let's assume on this occasion that this candidate does not have natural facility and will struggle to improve the mark from an average of 6. However, the teacher and student have put some effort into lifting the average for the last two criteria points bringing **space** and **dynamics** to 8 (= 'very good'), resulting in an overall mark of 7 (= 'good'). This example clearly shows how helpful it is to develop the student's understanding of all the criteria assessed.

CRITERIA	INDIVIDUAL CRITERIA MARKS	OVERALL MARK
POSTURE	6	7
WEIGHT PLACEMENT	6	
COORDINATION	6	
CONTROL	6	
LINE	6	
SPACE	8	
DYNAMICS (MOVEMENT)	8	

At all syllabus courses teachers are encouraged to develop all vocabulary steps with repetitive development exercises. This process is covered in more depth at Syllabus Strategies courses (for more information see: www.rad.org.uk/study/cpd).

[At this point in the presentation students demonstrated a selection of development exercises to underpin the basic technique of the vocabulary step pas de chat.]

Of equal importance to the technical criteria are of course the music and performance criteria. To assist my recall and hopefully yours - more acronyms!

The individual criteria within performance give us a brilliant acronym: EPIC - a word commonly used by young people of today: its new slang meaning is 'amazingly awesome'!

Expression
Projection
Interpretation
Communication

Once again, Examiners consider all four criteria points when assessing performance. To touch briefly on each of these criteria:

You might think **expression** would be the easiest criteria point to fulfil, but we all know it's much more difficult in reality. While many candidates do well in this area, there are still a number that do not have a good understanding of how to achieve on this criteria point.

continued overleaf

With my teacher hat on I wonder whether sometimes it might be better to approach this from as many different angles as possible. The most commonly used one is 'smile!' Examiners hear 'smile!' before the students come in to the examination and 'did you smile?' when they go out! If I said I never say 'smile' when I am teaching it would not be true, and usually about a week before the exams I do get a little desperate and sneak in the odd 'smile'.

Generally though, I try to avoid asking students to smile as I think it works better if expression can be achieved from the inside out. More emphasis on the eyes and the candidate's focus should ultimately encourage a more natural expression. Students should also understand that when they are waiting their turn to dance or for the Examiner to make some notes, they are not on the stage, they are waiting in the wings.

Having said all that about smiling, I do know the effort and confidence building you sometimes have to put in, to achieve even a glimmer of any sort of smile. I am sure you all discuss the audience with your students, reminding them that while the Examiner is part of the audience, he or she is sitting in the cheapest seat very close to the stage. The students should be performing to an audience who paid for the most expensive seats beyond the Examiner! Many Examiners use acronyms to quickly record the assessment of **projection** and **communication**: they may write down NA, SA, MA or LA – easily worked out as 'no audience', 'small audience', 'medium audience' or 'large audience'. Communication is about connecting with the audience, projecting is sharing appropriate feelings with the audience, and **interpretation** is about the colour of the performance, the artistry and individuality. The students' performance today showed some excellent communication and projection; I hope those at the back felt touched by the connection made.

The acronym for music is not quite as memorable but still projects positive thoughts. Timing is not included in this acronym for obvious reasons, as TRAPD is not as positive as RAPD!

The following criteria are all under the heading of 'response to the music':

Rhythm
Atmosphere
Phrasing
Dynamics

Timing is 'RAD timing' as in the *Set Exercises and Dances* book. Many students do very well with timing; it is the lack of **responsiveness to the music** which Examiners feel often affects the marks for music.

For example, a candidate could be in time with the music for as much as 90 per cent of the examination, giving them a mark of 9 (= 'excellent') for timing, but if the response to the music is much lower, say around 4 (= 'adequate') or 5 (= 'fair'), this will reduce the overall mark to 6 or 7.



Today we are looking at just two of the criteria of the RAPD acronym – **phrasing** and **dynamics**. Phrasing is the punctuation, the moments where suspension and breathing give the dance meaning and depth.

[At this point in the presentation two students danced Female Dance B from the new Grade 4.]

I have been discussing possible punctuation marks for this dance with the students and we have not always totally agreed - but that is what makes it so exciting, as we do not always have to agree! The introduction is the title of the story, so there should be a large breath/growing moment at the end of the title before the story begins...

D17: Dance B female (from Grade 4 Set Exercises and Dances book)

Suggestion of punctuation to help candidates understand the phrasing and dynamics

	Step forward with right leg to dégagé derrière en fondu				
	Step back to retiré turning to right to face 6				
II	Pas de bourrée dessous facing 1 finishing stepping forward facing 5	II			
	Posé en avant with left leg and close parallel 1st en demi-pointes	?			
	Step to left to dégagé in 2nd en fondu				
	Repeat to other side				
II	Pas de bourrée dessous facing 1 finishing stepping forward facing 6	II			
	Posé en avant with right leg and close parallel 1st en demi-pointes	?			
					
	Running waltz step en avant commencing right leg travelling toward 6				
	Posé en avant with left leg and close parallel 1st en demi-pointes	!			
		?			
	Repeat last counts 1-2& to other side				
	Step forward with right leg en fondu left leg skimming rond de jambe à terre en dedans turning to right to face 7				
	Step forward				
	Step forward with right leg and temps levé in parallel retiré	!			
	2 steps forward into parallel pas de chat turning to right to face 5 finishing right leg parallel retiré	!			
	Step back and run backward finishing near corner 7				•