



ROYAL
BALLET
SCHOOL

SETTING THE STANDARD

REPORTING, ASSESSMENT & AUDITION (ARTISTIC) POLICY

October 2024

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INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines the School's approach to the assessment of student artistic progress, and the reporting of that artistic progress, to parents and students.

The key underlying principles are openness, equity and timeliness. The process is intended to avoid the delayed communication of any significant issues so that parent meetings and reports do not contain unwelcome surprises. Parents (and indeed students) should feel able, at any time, to contact the relevant ballet teacher about any concerns affecting progress. Likewise, staff will speak with a student and contact parents, if necessary, when they do not feel it is appropriate to delay a discussion until the next formal meeting or report.

It is the intention of The Royal Ballet School to assess progress based on set criteria, (outlined later in this policy document), and with due regard to performance in the studio as well as in formal artistic assessments.

It is, at all times, the aim of the School to use reporting and assessment as a means to guide students and parents in making the correct choices in terms of ongoing artistic training. Artistically there will always be an element of professional judgment involved in this process, but parents and students should be reassured that it is our goal to enable every student to continue with us, if it is right for that young person to do so.

It is important to separate the artistic assessment process from the audition process for the entry points of the Royal Ballet School training programme. The assessment process assesses students against the required standard for their current year group. The audition process considers not only a student's current technical ability but also their capacity to undergo the next stage of the training programme with the subsequent increases in standard, content, and intensity.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The assessment of a student's artistic progress is ongoing. It takes place in the studio on a daily and weekly basis. This is known as formative assessment and is about the continuous process of a teacher providing feedback to a student on what is going well and what requires further work. At certain points in the School year this formative assessment is underpinned by a summative assessment, or what might be called a 'test' or 'exam' in academic parlance or a 'quantifiable' record of the standard of a student's work at that point in time, perhaps in the form of a written report.

The annual summative artistic Assessment for students at The Royal Ballet School takes place, depending on year group, in either the Spring or Summer Term (as outlined in the tables on pages 7 & 8).

The School's System of Training sets out the requirements of the artistic programme for each year group. As with an academic subject the demands will be greater as a student moves up the School.

These assessments are not part of the audition process for the Vocational and Pre-Professional Programmes

The annual artistic assessment is based on the criteria listed below which are measured to the standard of The Royal Ballet School. It is important to note that the standards at The Royal Ballet School far exceed national dance standards for children of the same age.

ARTISTIC ASSESSMENT

In Years 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 students are assessed in their work in classical ballet. As they move to Upper School the assessment expands to include their work in Variations, Pas de Deux and Contemporary dance.

In Classical Ballet the assessment uses the following categories:

- Technical and Physical Application, and Coordination
- Artistry, and Musicality
- Effort (only marked by the year group teacher)
- Professional Behaviour (only marked by the year group teacher)

In Pas de Deux and Contemporary dance, the assessment uses the same categories.

Within each of these categories there are specific criteria (listed below) against which the student is assessed. The average mark in each category is the weighted average of the individual marks. The final mark corresponds to a grade descriptor (see p5).

The criteria under each category used for artistic assessment are:

1. Technical and Physical Application:

- a. Correct posture and placement
- b. Appropriate strength, and use of muscles
- c. Quality of classical ballet aesthetic lines produced
- d. Flexibility
- e. Use of hip rotation (turn-out)
- f. Jump technique
- g. Coordination
- h. Foot work

2. Artistry and Musicality

- a. Stage presence, presentation, and projection
- b. Interpretation
- c. Flow of movement
- d. Musical interpretation
- e. Use of dynamics and a clear understanding of phrasing

These criteria are applicable to Classical Ballet and with slight adaptations to Contemporary.

However, Pas de Deux work, and the interaction with a partner, introduces an additional and unique set of criteria against which students are also assessed.

The list below highlights these criteria:

Technical and Physical Application and Coordination

- Correct posture and alignment in relation to partner
- Correct centring and balance with partner
- Correct use of grips
- Lifting technique (Men only)
- Spatial awareness of and with partner

Artistry, Musicality and Dynamics

- Communication and rapport with partner

These criteria will be graded by each member of the Assessment Panel and by the relevant teacher against the standards set by The Royal Ballet School. The marks will be combined using the weightings outlined in the table below. In the early years of training the mark is weighted in favour of the teacher's assessment. They are aware of the quality of a students' work on an ongoing basis and so can mitigate the effect of performance nerves or other factors negatively affecting the assessment class itself. As the years progress, greater emphasis will be placed on the assessment class itself as the ability to meet expectations in performance conditions is very much part of a dancer's skill set.

Year Group	Teacher's Mark	Combined Panel Mark
7	60%	40%
8, 9 & 10	40%	60%
12 (1st)	20%	80%
13 (2nd)	0%	100%
14 (Pre-Professional)	0%	100%

The following additional criteria are part of the assessment but marked solely by the teacher:

1. Effort
 - a. Self-discipline and drive
 - b. Ability to focus and appropriate attention span
 - c. Appropriate energy
 - d. Appropriate application of technical and artistic information and feedback
 - e. Retention of technical and artistic information
2. Professional Behaviour
 - a. Ability to effectively work with others
 - b. Ability to maintain respect for the working environment (studio/theatre)
 - c. Punctuality
 - d. Being prepared for lessons and rehearsals
 - e. Appropriate personal presentation

All teachers' assessments are moderated throughout the year by the Artistic Director, in combination with the Head of Artistic Programmes, the Artistic Managers and other experienced external teachers who observe the work.

If a child is ill or injured at the time of the assessment and unable to complete any, or only part of the class, alternative arrangements will be made for the assessment to be completed at another time. There may be some circumstances in which this would not be the case, such as a student no longer wishing to continue their artistic training, a very long-term injury that will fundamentally affect a student's artistic progress, the risk of assessment affecting recovery from injury and so on. In exceptional circumstances, therefore, we will base our feedback on what we already know relative to an individual's circumstances.

The criteria above are considered when offering feedback on their ongoing training. Classical ballet is a demanding and disciplined career and success requires not only technical and artistic accomplishment but also dedication, motivation, and resilience.

The assessment process also includes regular Tutorials for the student and teacher to ensure that your child(ren) understands what areas are going well and what areas require improvement. These tutorials as well as the regular and annual artistic assessment process will all take account of the other factors listed above, such as injury, illness, recent growth etc.

Grade Descriptors

In 2019 the reporting and assessment process, including the grading system, was reviewed through consultation with staff and students. To ensure clarity in the feedback provided to students we have moved to a more factual model of assessment. We believe that this will identify more accurately what and how much needs improvement and allow for praise and encouragement where appropriate and deserved. The objective will be to give our students a fuller picture of their strengths and the areas for development at regular intervals. The total number of grade descriptors have been reduced to four, and are text based rather than numbers.

Each of the criteria is measured against the following Grade Descriptors:

Grade Descriptor
Exceeding required standards
Meeting required standards
Improvement needed to meet required standards
Significant improvement needed to meet required standards

Annual Assessment

Students who are accepted into full-time training are considered to have potential for training at the highest level in classical ballet. The purpose of grade descriptors is to offer essential, constructive feedback. It is also important to note that they are not used to ascertain whether the student will ultimately become a professional classical dancer or not.

The descriptors do not affirm whether a student is passing or failing, alternatively they offer constructive feedback on their current standard aligned to The Royal Ballet School's standards, including achievements and areas that need improvement.

Improvement needed to meet the required standards indicates that a student should be able to meet the required standard with further training.

Significant improvement to meet the required standards indicates that the gap between current performance/ability and the required Royal Ballet School standard is significant and may either need significant focus and improvement or put into question the student's suitability for this course.

It must be noted that every student is an individual, with their own set of circumstances. Receiving feedback in a report is not a decision about their future at the School but instead indicates current standard, strengths, achievements, challenges and targets.

Therefore, the grade descriptors, *Improvement Needed* and *Significant Improvement Needed* are an indication of areas that a student needs to address, and to what extent, and do not necessarily predict a final decision on suitability for the School. Any decision regarding suitability for a student's continued training at the School, or concerns with their progress, will be clearly communicated at parents' evenings.

Through Years 8 & 9 we will hold personalised conversations with families if concerns arise about a student's progress as they develop through this challenging stage of training. Our aim is to collaborate with you and your child to create improvement plans and provide additional support where necessary.

To ensure clarity, we will follow a three-step process if concerns persist:

1. We will contact you to discuss the issue and develop a plan.
2. We will follow up to review progress.
3. We will inform you by the Spring half-term if sufficient progress has been made and we feel confident the Royal Ballet School is the right place for the student to continue their training

If a student's progress does not fully align with the expectations, we will work closely with you to support a smooth and thoughtful transition to a more suitable training provider or school. Our commitment is to ensure this process is handled with care, providing guidance and encouragement to both students and parents every step of the way. This would be a last resort and only if we felt it was in the student's best interests.

Ballet Reports

At times outlined in the tables below students will receive ballet reports for their classical work. Students at Upper School will also receive Pas de Deux, Character, and Contemporary reports. For Classical and Pas de Deux, teachers will feedback against the detailed criteria outlined above under the same grade descriptors.

For each category there will be space for the teacher to make appropriate comments against categories and/or criteria. However, if a student is meeting the required standards and is making sufficient progress, a comment may not be necessary or noted. At the end of the report, there will be a space for the artistic manager to identify key action points personalised to each student and specifically focussed on helping them to improve.

It is the intention that any language used should be clear and concise. Concerns around progression will be shared in the Artistic Manager's comments but these need to be sensitive to the need for the student to remain motivated, (the exception here is Year 7 due to the levelling up process that occurs in the year group as the students settle into training at the School).

A Healthcare section will be contained in all ballet reports.

The table below outlines the cycle of assessment for each year group.

Year Group	October	December	January	February/March	April	May
7	Tutorial - before 1/2 term Goal setting	Ballet Report followed by parent meeting and report feedback	Tutorial – start of Spring term. Goal setting	Ballet Report Optional tutorial after ½ term–one-to-one	Tutorial - start of Summer term Goal setting	Assessment & assessment result letter Optional Tutorial – after ½ term Assessment de-brief
8	Tutorial - before 1/2 term Goal setting	Ballet Report followed by parent meeting and report feedback	Tutorial – start of Spring term. Goal setting	Ballet Report Optional tutorial after ½ term–one-to-one	Tutorial - start of Summer term Goal setting	Assessment & assessment result letter Optional Tutorial – after ½ term Assessment de-brief
9	Tutorial - before 1/2 term Goal setting	Ballet Report followed by parent meeting and report feedback	Tutorial – start of Spring term. Goal setting	Ballet Report Optional tutorial after ½ term–one-to-one	Tutorial – start of Summer term Goal setting	Assessment & assessment result letter Optional Tutorial – after ½ term Assessment de-brief
10	Tutorial - before 1/2 term Goal setting	Ballet Report followed by parent meeting and report feedback	Tutorial – start of Spring term. Goal setting	Ballet Report Optional tutorial after ½ term–one-to-one	Tutorial - start of Summer term Goal setting	Assessment & assessment result letter Optional Tutorial – after ½ term Assessment de-brief
11	Tutorial - before 1/2 term Goal setting	Ballet Report followed by parent meeting and report feedback	Tutorial – start of Spring term. Goal setting	Upper School Audition & Result letter Optional tutorial after ½ term–one-to-one	Tutorial - start of Summer term Goal setting	Optional Tutorial – after ½ term Artistic report

Year Group	October	December	January	February/March	April	May
1st	Tutorial - before 1/2 term Goal setting	Ballet Report followed by parent meeting and report feedback	Tutorial – one-to-one at start of Spring term.	Tutorial - before 1/2 term Goal setting	March: Assessment & assessment result letter April: Tutorial - start of Summer term Goal setting	Ballet Report Optional tutorial after ½ term– one-to-one
2nd	Tutorial - before 1/2 term Goal setting	Ballet Report followed by parent meeting and report feedback	Tutorial – chat at start of Spring term.	Tutorial - before 1/2 term Goal setting	February: Ballet class Assessment & assessment result letter & letter regarding offer of training for the 3 rd March: Pas de deux, Variations and contemporary assessment April: Tutorial - start of Summer term Goal setting	Ballet Report Year Optional tutorial after ½ term – one-to-one
3rd	Tutorial - before 1/2 term Goal setting	Ballet Report	Tutorial – chat at start of Spring term.	Parent Meeting (Optional) Tutorial - after 1/2 term Goal setting	March: Assessment & assessment result letter April: Tutorial - start of Summer term Goal setting	Ballet Report & Diploma decision Optional tutorial after ½ term– one-to-one

THE AUDITION PROCESS

As mentioned above, the School's audition process is independent of its annual assessment process. Students in Year 11 are invited to apply to audition to gain entry to the next stage of the School's training programme. While the assessment process looks at a student's current standard the audition process assesses whether a student will be able to meet the increased physical and technical requirements of the next stage of training.

It should be noted that not progressing at one entry point of the programme does not preclude a student re-auditioning for a later entry point to the programme.

The School's desire is that all students remain with us for the full duration of the training programme but in some cases, and for many different reasons, that is not possible. The School's decisions are made in what it believes are the best interest of the student.

Audition Panels

Decisions on whether a student is offered further training at the School are made in consultation with the artistic, healthcare, pastoral and academic teams.

The artistic audition panel is chaired by the Artistic Director and is made up of members with extensive artistic experience who understand the demands, (technical, physical and psychological), of continuing training at the School and ultimately a career in classical ballet. The panel will contain a mix of School artistic staff, (although not the student's current teacher(s) or current Artistic Programme Manager) and invited external members. The make-up of the panel will be communicated to parents/guardians ahead of the auditions.

The Panel will apply a consistent set of procedures when assessing the potential for a student to cope with the next programme of training. They will each arrive at an overall judgment which will be a simple 'Yes' or 'No'. There will always be an 'odd' number of members on the panel.

This judgment will then be discussed in detail with student's current teacher and members of the School's healthcare, pastoral and academic teams, and a decision on the offer of future training will be made after input from all stakeholders. The Artistic Director's role is to facilitate the discussion and in the event of a lack of consensus provide the casting vote. The Artistic Director is not at liberty to move a 'Yes' from the auditions panel to a 'No' after further discussion. However, they may move a 'No' to a 'Yes'.

A record of the panels vote will be kept in school, YES/NO, together with reasons, and any Artistic Director intervention.

THE ROYAL BALLET SCHOOL DIPLOMA AND CERTIFICATE

Admission to the Pre-Professional year at Upper School is by invitation only. At the end of this programme the award of the Diploma or Certificate to graduating students will be based on the following criteria:

- a. Assessment results
- b. Professional Application
- c. Professional Behaviour
- d. Artistic and academic effort
- e. Upholding the School's values

A Diploma Committee, which would typically consist of the following and/or their nominated deputies: The Artistic Director, the Academic & Pastoral Principal and other senior artistic and academic staff and teachers will assess each student against the above criteria and either award The Royal Ballet School Diploma or The Royal Ballet School Certificate. Students will be advised of the decision during the second half of the summer term.

The Diploma will be awarded to those students who attain the highest standards of artistic attainment and meet the School's expectations in the other criteria. The Certificate will be awarded to those students who attain a satisfactory standard of artistic attainment and meet the School's expectations in the other criteria. Where expectations in criteria b) to e) are not met, this will be considered when deciding on the final award.

In exceptional circumstances it may not be possible to award either a Diploma or Certificate to a student who has not been able to fully complete the course. In this case a Record of Attendance may be awarded.

ARTISTIC TERMINOLOGY

Students are assessed in the following sections of the ballet lesson/assessment:

Barre Work

Barre work prepares a student for all that comes in the centre. Repetition of the same exercises and movement allows students to gain strength and to focus on body alignment, turn-out, flexibility, head positioning and balance. Students should develop a clear understanding of vocabulary and how it is executed, posture, alignment, port de bras, extensions, stability and balance.

Centre Work

In the Centre, a student should be able to transfer the vocabulary and skills learnt at the barre in dance combinations/exercises of ever-increasing complexity as the years progress.

Allegro

Allegro is the term we use to describe the technique of jumping. The use of coordination, strong footwork and dynamics are essential, alongside a natural ability to jump (ballon).

Pointe Work

For the female ballet dancer, pointe work is the defining element of classical and contemporary ballet choreography. The learning of this technique can only start after a child has acquired the necessary strength in her feet and awareness of core stability.

All of the above areas of the lesson are assessed in the following categories:

Technical and Physical Application and Coordination

Classical ballet requires a high level of technical application in order to meet the requirements of the dance profession. In each area of the lesson students should demonstrate the achievement of vocabulary, correct posture and alignment, correct weight placement/balance, transfer of weight, and use of turn-out relevant to the level of training undertaken. Classical ballet also demands of the professional dancer a high level of physicality. In each area of the lesson students should demonstrate physical strength, stamina, appropriate use of muscles, appropriate physical intensity, and spatial awareness. Coordination includes the effective and integrated use of the body, and the flow of movement.

Artistry

As a profession, classical ballet is an expressive artistic pursuit. For the student the development of technique should always be matched by the development of individual artistic interpretation and dynamics. Artistry includes appropriate interpretation and style, conveyance of character to an audience, presentation, projection, and stage presence.

Musicality and Dynamics

The awareness of music and rhythm is intrinsic to dance. Combined with dynamic variety and nuance it provides colour to ballet technique. Musicality includes phrasing, musical interpretation, and synchronicity with the accompanist. Dynamics includes its appropriate use, and a clear understanding of phrasing.

Aesthetics Currently Observed for Classical Ballet

“Aesthetics Currently Observed for Classical Ballet” is the way in which a student currently uses their physical ability and attributes to produce the necessary aesthetic lines and technique of classical ballet to the standard required for The Royal Ballet School.

In addition, the ballet teacher assesses the following:

Effort

The discipline and demands of classical ballet training require consistent physical and mental effort in order to achieve the required standard. Effort includes self-motivation, self-discipline and drive, the ability to focus and appropriate attention span, and appropriate energy.

Professional Application

In order to apply themselves effectively to their training students should demonstrate the ability to apply and retain technical and artistic information and corrections, and a willingness to learn.

Professional Behaviour

Throughout their training students should demonstrate behaviour that is appropriate to the profession of classical ballet. The attributes of professional behaviour include the ability to work effectively with others, process feedback in a constructive manner, maintain respectful working relationships with the teacher, pianist and peers, and maintain respect for the working environment (studio/theatre). Also taken into consideration is punctuality, being prepared for lessons and rehearsals, and attendance.

GLOSSARY

These descriptions are illustrative and not exhaustive.

<i>Alignment:</i>	Relates to the arrangement of the limbs in space relative to the body.
<i>Ballon:</i>	A jump demonstrating ease and lightness with a swift rebound from the floor.
<i>Coordination:</i>	The ability to use different parts of the body together smoothly and efficiently in order to effectively execute classical ballet technique.
<i>Dynamics:</i>	The appropriate degree of energy or force used to execute a movement.
<i>Extensions:</i>	Height, stretch and length of leg and foot, achieved through a combination of flexibility and strength.
<i>Musicality:</i>	Musical interpretation through the matching of movement and form to the rhythm, melody and mood of the music being played.
<i>Physical Aesthetics:</i>	Possessing the physical aesthetic appropriate to classical ballet.
<i>Port de bras:</i>	Movement and shape of the arms, in and through the distinct classical positions, involving the use of the eyes, head and upper body.
<i>Turn-out:</i>	Leg rotation in the hip socket and its enhancement through training, to be continually sustained through movement.
<i>Posture:</i>	The appropriate visual stacking of the skeletal system and maintaining correct core control when the body is static and also moving through space.
<i>Presentation:</i>	The student's ability to engage an audience through their dancing.
<i>Vocabulary:</i>	Understanding and application of the classical ballet steps required at that particular level of training.
<i>Weight placement:</i>	The correct distribution of weight between the three points of the foot (1 st and 5 th metatarsal and front of heel) to facilitate correct posture and ease of movement.