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## Equality and Diversity Policy (originated July 2016) General

VMA DANCE is committed to promoting an environment where all individuals are encouraged to achieve their full potential and develop their skills, encouraging its teachers to maintain an open approach towards the different talents and abilities offered by all their students.

It undertakes to comply with the requirements of equalities legislation in force at the time and to ensure that it has systems in place to ensure that it does not discriminate against any member, employee or candidate either directly or indirectly.

Direct discrimination occurs where the reason for a person being treated less favourably than another is one of the following, which are known as protected characteristics:

- • Age
- • Disability
- • Being pregnant or having a child
- • Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- • Religion, belief or lack of religion or belief
- • Being married or in a civil partnership
- • Gender
- • Sexual orientation
- • Being or becoming a transsexual person

It therefore requires of all VMA DANCE's teaching staff, that they do not discriminate in any of these respects, as additionally noted in the ISTD Code of Professional Standards and Practice. Teachers must adhere to current legislation, including the Equality Act 2010.

In order for the VMA DANCE to prove itself as unprejudiced, students' personal details are requested upon registration with VMA DANCE. We hope this does not offend, but need to ask these questions in order to prove that we operate equal opportunities throughout the organisation. Please note VMA DANCE will observe the guidelines of the Data Protection Act. Personal information will be held on file only as necessary for the operation of our business and will not be disclosed to any party outside of VMA DANCE without the consent of the person involved.

### ISTD Qualifications

There are two circumstances of which teachers must be aware:

- Minimum age limits apply for entry to some examinations and qualifications. This is either to protect the health and safety of the candidate where physical development may be insufficient to meet the demands of certain syllabi; or where they are responsible for children in class.

- Certain sections of some performance examinations are designed particularly for either male or female dancers. This reflects the realities and requirements of the dance profession and should in no way be construed as sex discrimination. Candidates, including transgender candidates, may enter for their preferred syllabus according to the gender with which they choose to identify in relation to dance.

The ISTD qualifications are developed to be open to all, and achievement is measured against assessment criteria according to their ability. As part of its process of new unit and qualification development, the ISTD undertakes to consult with its members to ensure there are no barriers in the design and equal assessment of qualifications particularly in regard to:

- those with disabilities (those who are disabled)
- those who may be of any specific ethnic group
- transgender students, or either gender

It will ensure that the syllabi and assessments proposed do not disadvantage such candidates, or give those with disabilities an advantage over non-disabled candidates, whilst maintaining the competence standard for the level of the examinations.

In the Equality Act of 2010, a person is “disabled” if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect that is on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

The ISTD reminds its teaching members that it should not treat disabled students less or more favourably than non-disabled students simply because of their disability. The overriding approach taken by teachers is that so far as possible all students should be afforded the same treatment, and that where they have a disabled student, adjustments should be made to their normal teaching conditions as far as reasonable.

The ISTD monitors its entries and examination results by gender, age and ethnicity in order to ensure as far as possible that there are no barriers, and that results are awarded consistently. Candidates’ ethnicity is not indicated to examiners for performance examinations, but age is, as it is relevant to the particular entry of groups on an examination timetable. All written examinations are anonymous to the markers.

It may be the case that the individual would endanger his/her personal safety or that of the other students in the class so should be prevented from undertaking that activity on health and safety grounds. If teachers have any concerns on the ability and safety of a student the ISTD advises that they should undertake a risk assessment and must seek the appropriate medical and legal advice, and discuss with the parent/guardian before reaching a final decision.

## Policy and procedures for disabled candidates

The ISTD recognises that there are some candidates who have coped with the demands of the course, and can demonstrate their ability in the dance technique and performance skills being assessed, but for whom the normal examination arrangements may provide difficulties that could be removed without affecting the validity of the examination. In this case the teacher can apply for a variation in the examination conditions, as suitable for the candidate. This may include candidates with physical limitations in certain parts of the

examination only, who must demonstrate to the best of their physical capability, and who can additionally discuss what they are trying to achieve.

The ISTD will only refuse entry to a particular candidate because of a reasonable belief that undertaking the examination will create a risk to their health or safety. Any pregnant candidate who wishes to take a practical examination must use the reasonable adjustments process before being entered, so that the risk can be assessed by the ISTD. The examiner also has the right to stop an examination if s/he considers that there is a risk to the health or safety of the candidate if they continue.

Pregnant candidates may enter for written examinations.

### Candidates with requiring reasonable adjustments to assessment conditions

Assessment conditions may be varied, for example, in the following ways, on an individual candidate basis, by means of advance permission from the ISTD only:

Extra time may be granted in performance examinations for recovery between dance exercises, or for repetition of instructions by the examiner. The time granted will depend on the length of the particular examination and number in the group in which the candidate may dance.

Candidates in groups in examinations may be rotated so that the particular candidate may not be required to lead the group.

Additional equipment may be used within the examination, such as special microphones and hearing equipment for deaf candidates.

Candidates taking written examinations may be allowed extra time, a scribe, word processing equipment, coloured examination papers, translators etc. Specific adjustments of this nature relate to the level of disability, particularly in relation to dyslexia, and must be discussed with the Customer Services and Quality Assurance Department.

If the examination is being taken in any other country than England and Wales, and the candidate does not speak English, permission must be sought in advance for the use of a translator. All examinations taken within England must be in English, and in Wales, in English or Welsh.

This list

Assurance Department regarding the appropriateness of assessment conditions and the permission process.

is not exhaustive and advice should be sought from the Customer Services and Quality

As stated in Ofqual guidelines, it is important both to disabled learners and to public confidence that the qualifications achieved are seen to be of the same value for all candidates, and provide a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of the candidate. Therefore, what the candidate is being assessed on must be the same for all, and marking against those criteria may not be adjusted because of any disability.

The ISTD will seek as much information as possible from the teacher and professionals as appropriate in relation to a particular candidate's disability and severity, and encourages teachers to discuss the application in detail if they are unusual or complex, so that advice can be given. The ISTD reserves the right to grant an adjustment according to its standard types of adjustments in relation to all similarly disabled candidates, rather than exactly as the teacher has requested. This is to ensure parity of adjustments as far as possible.

If a disabled candidate is to be submitted for examination, the teacher must complete an "Application for Reasonable Adjustments" form and return it direct to Customer Services and Quality Assurance Department, a minimum of three weeks prior to the official examination timetable submission, together with a doctor's letter and other supporting evidence as relevant.

Many disabled candidates have a physical or mental impairment which do not need any changes to the examination assessment itself, but it is helpful for the examiner to be aware. This is good practice so that the examiner can ensure that the candidate has the best possible examination experience. The Application for Reasonable Adjustments form has a separate section for such candidates, which must be completed under the same process as above.

Pregnant candidates are required to complete the form, including a doctor's letter, so that the ISTD can consider medical evidence as necessary and the examiner can be made aware of their condition, regardless of any adjustment being requested, as the examiner needs to be informed. Additional time for breaks may also be applied for. The ISTD reserves the right to refuse entry to pregnant candidates for health and safety reasons.

The ISTD will consider the request for a particular adjustment and may discuss this further with the teacher, and with the Faculty. The teacher and examiner will be informed of the adjustment granted, with full details of the candidate's disability supplied to the examiner, as soon as possible, but at least one week prior to the examination.

Teachers must submit an Application for Reasonable Adjustments form each time the candidate enters for an examination. This is because the degree of disability may have changed, or the demands of the examination may be different, so the adjustments may vary. It also enables the ISTD to inform the examiner of the current details.

The Customer Services and Quality Assurance Department will agree the adjustment in writing and in some cases may require verification from the teacher/other staff that it was carried out in accordance with its decision. Neither the teacher nor the examiner may alter this at the point of examination, and if the ISTD has not been notified of a request prior to the examination date, the examiner will not be able to make any adjustment at the point of examination.

#### Appeal against a decision on reasonable adjustments

The teacher has the right to appeal against an adjustment decision, and in such a case, should write to the Quality Assurance Manager in the Customer Services and Quality Assurance Department as soon as possible and no later than 7 days prior to the examination, giving:

- Candidates full name
- Pin number
- Examination session reference and date, and examiner if known.
- Type of disability and any further evidence

The Quality Assurance Manager will review the evidence and confirm a final decision no later than 4 days prior to the examination.

If the teacher is not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, they may write to the Chief Executive Officer, no later than 2 days prior to the examination. He will review the evidence and processes to ensure that they have been carried out fairly and equitably. His decision is final, and the teacher and examiner will be informed immediately.

## Candidates requiring special consideration

Special consideration applies where candidates may have a temporary illness or an adverse effect that could affect their performance. It is not normally appropriate therefore for candidates to apply for this in the case of a disability or learning difficulty which are known to be permanent and covered by reasonable adjustments.

All cases would be considered on an individual basis.

If a candidate is unable to take any examination due to illness, either by withdrawing beforehand, or on the day, the ISTD will refund 50% of the examination fee on receipt of a medical certificate. A refund will not be given once a candidate had commenced an examination. If a candidate has a minor injury prior to the examination, the candidate may withdraw with a refund made as above, or the examination may only be taken on production of a medical certificate which should preferably be submitted in advance to the Customer Services and Quality Assurance department. The ISTD may grant an adjustment to the assessment conditions if requested, similar in nature to those granted for reasonable adjustments, but only if agreed by the Customer Service and Quality Assurance Department in advance. The examiner cannot make any changes on the day.

If the injury is too close to the examination date to send in a medical certificate, it may be presented to the examiner on the day. However, the ISTD reserves the right to refuse entry to the candidate if the examiner judges that the injury is such that it would be damaging to the health and safety of the candidate. It should be noted that there is no liability on the part of the ISTD or the examiner if an injury occurs during any ISTD examination.

## Practical Dance performance examinations

ISTD dance examinations below professional level are single assessed performances at one moment in time. It is therefore important that the examination is fully completed, as there is no previous assessment or coursework evidence which can be considered as further evidence for any adjustment of marks.

During the course of an examination, if a candidate suffers an injury or becomes unwell, the examiner will stop the examination and determine the severity of the problem. The candidate will be given the opportunity of a short break before recommencing if they so wish. If the candidate cannot complete the examination, the examiner will confirm the details in writing to the Customer Services and Quality Assurance Department, and include the candidate's result sheet.

In regulated examinations, candidates must reach the required percentage of the marks attainable in every section (and component in Vocational Graded examinations) to pass the examination overall. If a candidate is unable to complete any component of the examination for any reason, marks cannot be adjusted to compensate, but if the section has been completed to an extent such that the minimum pass mark is achieved for the section, then the result can stand and the qualification be awarded. The result in such cases therefore will depend on the point at which the candidate ceases the examination. All marks awarded will be recorded, but if the marks do not reach the minimum percentage pass in all sections, the candidate will be unsuccessful. In all cases the report sheet will be sent to the teacher for the candidate in the normal way.

In all such circumstances, the candidate may retake the examination as soon as they are able.

Any circumstances which arise during the course of the examination will be considered by the examiner, with a report being made immediately to the Customer Services and Quality Assurance department. These may include for example, illness of the candidate or teacher, failure of music

systems or serious disturbance such as power failure. Marks will not be adjusted, but the circumstances will help determine the appropriate action which may include delaying, postponing or re-taking the examination

#### Written examinations

For those units of the ISTD professional examinations which are written and where the candidate has completed coursework which may be used as evidence, candidates will be eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course, but performance in the examination is affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control. These include:

- • temporary illness or accident/injury before or at the time of the assessment;
- • recent bereavement or diagnosis of terminal illness of a member of the candidate's family;
- • serious disturbance during an examination, particularly where recorded material is being used;
- • other accidental events at the time of the assessment such as being given the wrong examination paper, being given a defective examination paper or tape, failure of practical equipment, failure of materials to arrive on time;

Any adjustment to the examination marks will be based on all the written coursework and formative assessments for the unit, with an opinion of the anticipated mark from the tutor. Adjustments will be made to a maximum of 10% of the examination marks.

Requests for special consideration must be received by the Customer Services and Quality Assurance Department within a maximum of 7 days post examination on an Application for Special Consideration form, available on the ISTD website. Because special consideration is given for a circumstance at the time of the assessment, this will not apply for portfolio or journal submissions, which are created by accumulation of work over a long period of time.

#### Appeal against a decision on special consideration

The teacher has the right to appeal against an adjustment decision, and in such a case, should write to the Quality Assurance Manager in the Customer Services and Quality Assurance Department as

soon as possible and no later than 14 days after the decision is received, giving:

Candidates full name

Pin number

Examination session reference and date, and examiner if known Any further evidence to the original request information.

The Quality Assurance Manager will review the evidence and confirm a final decision, within a further 14 days. If the teacher is not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, they may write to the Chief Executive Officer, within a further 14 days. He will review the evidence and processes to ensure that they have been carried out fairly and equitably. His decision is final.

There are no fees for Applications for Reasonable Adjustments, Special Consideration, or for appeals against decisions.