

**The examiner's  
marking app**

The role of the pianist/  
music operator

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delivering street  
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## Focus on Exams Issue 2 2019

Examinations Department  
36 Battersea Square  
London SW11 3RA  
United Kingdom

tel: +44 (0)20 7326 8073  
[exams@rad.org.uk](mailto:exams@rad.org.uk)

[www.royalacademyofdance.org/examinations](http://www.royalacademyofdance.org/examinations)  
[www.royalacademyofdance.org](http://www.royalacademyofdance.org)  
[www.radenterprises.co.uk](http://www.radenterprises.co.uk)  
[www.stepintodance.org](http://www.stepintodance.org)

  /RoyalAcademyofDance  
 /RADheadquarters  
 Royal Academy of Dance

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## Welcome

...to the summer edition of *Focus on Exams*!

In this issue:

- *The examiner's marking app* by Wendy Holt, RAD examiner
- *The role of the pianist/music operator* by Jennifer Hale, Chief Examiner
- *My first exam in a decade* by Nyisha Bill-Eteson
- *Urban Strides* – delivering and regulating street dance examinations

Questions, feedback or queries? Contact us at [exams@rad.org.uk](mailto:exams@rad.org.uk)

Let us know about your exams experience via our online survey at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/examsfeedback](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/examsfeedback)

Visit [www.royalacademyofdance.org/exams-news](http://www.royalacademyofdance.org/exams-news) to find out more.

**Dr Andrew McBirnie**  
Director of Examinations





Daphne, Sophie, Zara and Alexis, Primary in Dance candidates, Palais Dance Studio, Singapore  
Photo: Ching Ching Teo

### Your news and feedback

We appreciate it when teachers and students take the time to tell us what we are doing right, and wrong. Even if it may seem like we don't respond or fix the problem right away, we do read and analyse all feedback, and this is taken into account in our operational and strategic planning.

### Would your exam candidates like to feature in *Focus on Exams*?

We would love to share stories of exam success, perhaps against the odds or in unusual circumstances – or photos of students, maybe getting ready to enter the exam studio or proudly displaying their certificates and medals – so that we can celebrate the different places round the world where exams take place.

We would also like to hear stories of families who dance – have you and a parent taken RAD exams? What has changed? Visit [www.royalacademyofdance.org/exams-news](http://www.royalacademyofdance.org/exams-news) to find out more and send in your images, stories and news.



Ovwiyaah and Charlize,  
Grade 6 candidates, Palais  
Dance Studio, Singapore  
Photo: Ching Ching Teo

### Online exam entries

We are continuing to implement our new online exam entry portal around the world. This is now available to teachers in England, Wales and Scotland, and we are in the process of rolling it out in Brazil, Canada, Scandinavia and Spain.

We are delighted that teacher feedback has been very positive. The more teachers use the online portal, the more we will reduce the delays in processing results and certificates which were experienced in 2018.

### Street dance exams

Royal Academy of Dance and **Urban Strides**, a specialist street dance organisation, have entered into an exciting new partnership to deliver street dance exams.

In our capacity as an awarding organisation, the RAD will quality assure, deliver and assess these new street dance qualifications which have been produced and developed by Urban Strides. We are now recruiting for freelance Urban Strides examiners.

These new exams will be delivered to Urban Strides teachers and their students. If RAD members and Registered Teachers are interested in finding out how they could get involved in the future, they can register their interest – [urbanstrides@rad.org.uk](mailto:urbanstrides@rad.org.uk)

## Reasonable adjustments and special considerations

Please note the following guidelines regarding the process for reasonable adjustments and special considerations:

Teachers should supply applications for reasonable adjustments or special considerations, and any supporting medical evidence, as **separate documents**. This is because, in accordance with best practice for data management, any medical evidence will be deleted as soon as a decision on the adjustment or consideration has been reached.

The reasonable adjustment form itself will be sent to the examiner, but any separate medical evidence will not be sent, so please **clearly state on the form the nature of the condition and the adjustment required** rather than referring to the supplementary documentation.

We are not always able to interpret medical documents and decide what adjustment might be suitable without supporting information and we rely on advice provided by the teacher in order to avoid possible misunderstandings or errors.

Please provide applications in English (with help from the relevant national office, if needed).

Reasonable adjustments are intended to address **conditions known about at the time of entry**. For issues which arise shortly before or at the time of the exam, it may not be possible or practical to put an adjustment in place, and a special consideration application (for a post-exam adjustment to the mark) might be more appropriate.



Photo: Elliott Franks

Alternatively, the candidate can withdraw and the teacher can apply for a partial refund or (where available) carryover of the fee. **We do our best to process requests for reasonable adjustments which are submitted very late, but this may not always be possible**, and particularly not if the application is made less than two working days before the date of the exam. If the issue is simply one of examiner awareness, it might be easier to ask your local office to explain this to the examiner.

For more information, please consult the Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy, available on the exams pages of the RAD website. It is important that teachers understand the difference between the two, the purposes for which they are intended, and the different circumstances in which they might apply.

## Syllabus and music amendments

A reminder that any syllabus and sheet music publication amendments are summarised at [www.royalacademyofdance.org/syllabus-updates](http://www.royalacademyofdance.org/syllabus-updates)

## Revised specifications

The version of the Specifications currently on RAD websites is dated July 2018. Things never stand still and a number of points have changed even within the last year (e.g. the free enchaînement linking steps below). We are working on a revised version of the Specifications which we hope to make available in July 2019.

## Intermediate Foundation and Intermediate: new free enchaînement linking steps – reminder

From January 2019, please note that the linking steps at both Intermediate Foundation and Intermediate level have been revised.

All free enchaînements will contain the following:

- at least **two** variations of **one** focal step.
- a selection of linking steps from the list provided.

| Free enchaînement vocabulary |   |  |
|------------------------------|---|--|
|                              | Intermediate Foundation   | Intermediate   |
| <b>Focal steps</b>           | <p>Jetés ordinaires devant and derrière</p> <p>Assemblés devant, derrière, dessus and dessous</p> <p>Sissonnes fermées de côté, devant, derrière, dessus and dessous</p>  | <p>Pas de basque sauté en avant and en arrière</p> <p>Assemblés</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assemblé battu dessus</li> <li>• Assemblés devant, derrière, dessus and dessous</li> <li>• Assemblé porté de côté dessus</li> </ul> <p>Sissonnes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sissonnes fermées de côté devant, derrière, dessus and dessous</li> <li>• Sissonnes fermées and ouvertes en avant and en arrière</li> </ul> |
| <b>Linking steps</b>         | <p>Pas de bourrées devant, derrière, dessus and dessous</p> <p>Changement, changement battu, relevé in 5th position</p> <p>Glissades devant, derrière, dessus and dessous</p> <p>Temps levé (not in a series)</p> <p>Petit jetés devant and derrière</p> <p>Petits assemblés devant and derrière</p> <p>Coupé dessous</p> <p>Chassé en avant pas de bourrée dessous</p> | <p>Pas de bourrées devant, derrière, dessus and dessous</p> <p>Changement, changement battu, entrechat quatre and relevé in 5th position</p> <p>Glissades devant, derrière, dessus and dessous</p> <p>Petit jetés devant and derrière</p> <p>Petits assemblés devant and derrière</p> <p>Coupé dessous</p> <p>Chassé en avant pas de bourrée dessous</p>   |

## The role of the pianist/music operator

Chief Examiner, **Jennifer Hale**, offers advice for pianists and music operators to enable candidates to perform at their best on exam day

There are many variables that can contribute to a candidate's performance on an examination day: the months of careful preparation, a timely arrival to the venue, and a composed and focused atmosphere before the examination. We train examiners to provide a professional, calm and encouraging environment to help candidates perform at their best. However, pianists and music operators also have a key role to play. The pianist should of course play accurately as well as being attentive, supportive and reliable to all candidates. The music operator must ensure that music is delivered in such a way that it supports the candidate's performance.

Unfortunately, examiners have reported instances where the provision of recorded music in AECs has been less than ideal. This includes occasions where the music operator has become over-involved in the examination, or where disinterested and unfocused behaviour resulted in delayed or over-anticipated responses by candidates or the wrong track being played. Another example is using the old Grade 6–8 CDs where the titles are announced, taking up unnecessary time: the new CDs have no announcements. (The old CD recordings can be used, if preferred, so long as the announced titles are not included.)

Playing the music before candidates are ready can have a negative impact on their timing and focus. Starting the music too late can mean that they lose the opportunity to show musical anticipation, and if this occurs excessively it can affect the running time of the examination day.

The quality of playback equipment is also extremely important. Does it distort the sound? Are the all-important musical introductions cut off? Sound distortion can be caused by quality of speakers, and the volume and tone (the position of the equaliser controlling the bass and treble) controls. If the music is distorted (too loud, heavy bass, crackling speakers etc.) then candidates have less opportunity to show an awareness of dynamics, atmosphere, phrasing and rhythm when responding to the various nuances of the music. If the beginning of the musical introductions are not audible, this can affect a candidate's ability to anticipate and correctly time the exercise.

Has the music operator rehearsed with the candidates sufficiently beforehand and are they familiar with the playback equipment? Does the music operator know which tracks to use and in what order? This is especially important when there are choices in the tracks that can be used (PPiD–G5). If the wrong track is played, this can impact negatively on a candidate's concentration. If this constantly occurs throughout an examination, it can affect the professional, calm atmosphere, and prolong the timing.

Are music operators aware how the examiner will cue them to play the music? Where an exercise starts on count '1', as soon as the music starts, this is usually indicated by 'ready... AND' after announcing the title of the exercise. (One example, of many throughout all the levels, is the port de bras of the introduction to the Pliés exercise in Grade 2.) If candidates know to move when they hear the 'AND' and the music operator knows to press 'play' immediately, then this should co-ordinate well and students can be rewarded for showing musical anticipation. This does not work effectively, however, if the playback equipment has a prolonged delay when 'play' is pressed or if it cuts off a portion of the introduction.

However, for other examples where the exercise does not start on count '1', as well as when there is a musical introduction with a preceding upbeat, this command is not required. An example of an introduction with a 1 count, upbeat is the grands battements and grands battements en cloche exercise in Grade 7.

In an ideal scenario, the music operator is organised, alert and unobtrusive during the examination. At the start of the day, they should double check the volume of the playback equipment and what music tracks and CDs/playlists are required. A schedule for the examination day is also very helpful so they are aware of the timings of sets, including breaks and lunch.

The music operator should not communicate directly with the candidates during an examination and they should not assist with props. However, there may be times when the examiner asks the music operator if any assistance is required.

It is very difficult to sit still for an entire day (or indeed multiple days) but it is also distracting for the candidates and examiner if the music operator is moving excessively throughout an examination. Therefore, we suggest that a screen is used to enable them to sit naturally without distracting the candidates. The music operator does not have to face the examiner directly or face the wall but should be able to view the examiner, when required. The music operator should not bring a mobile phone into the examination room and they must not film or record any portion of the examination.

There will always be situations where unpredictable incidents occur. This is, of course, normal in the running of any examination day. However, if all the elements surrounding the playback equipment and music operator are appropriately prepared and well executed, then this will undoubtedly assist the candidates in performing their best work.



Photo: Elliott Franks

## Examiner marking app

RAD examiner **Wendy Holt** reports on a technological step forward for exam assessment

There has recently been an exciting development in the way that most Canadian and US examiners are marking examinations. As of November 2018, we have moved from pen and paper marking to using a specially designed iPad app.

There are many reasons for this change: speed and reliability of post, environmental concerns, weight of paperwork, cost and processing times, to name just a few.

The marking app is the initiative of Clarke MacIntosh, RAD Canada's National Director. Clarke approached app developer Matt Johnson and myself in June 2014 to help design a user-friendly interface that could be used during exams.

Many versions later, after lots of trialling and feedback from examiners, we have an app that is intuitive and straightforward to use, and which gives us the potential to provide more timely and meaningful feedback to teachers and candidates.

| PB/CP/Pirs  | 1           | 2           | 3           | Summary         | Comments |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|----------|
| Exercise    | Candidate 1 | Candidate 2 | Candidate 3 | Candidate 4 (M) |          |
| Tq ?            |          |
| Music       | ? T R ?     | ? T R ?     | ? T R ?     | ? T R ?         |          |
| Performance | ? E C ?     | ? E C ?     | ? E C ?     | ? E C ?         |          |
| P           | -           | +           | -           | +               |          |
| WP          | -           | +           | -           | +               |          |
| Co          | -           | +           | -           | +               |          |
| Ct          | -           | +           | -           | +               |          |
| L           | -           | +           | -           | +               |          |
| Spp         | -           | +           | -           | +               |          |
| SPp         | -           | +           | -           | +               |          |
| D           | -           | +           | -           | +               |          |

The app was first introduced to the worldwide panel of examiners at the Examiners' Seminar in London in January 2017. There was at first, some nervous anticipation, but by the end of the day, many of the panel were asking how soon they could use the app in exams.

The Canadian examiners had their final training sessions during August and October 2018 and used the app in the following November/December tours.

The app has the same marking system as the paper mark sheets. The examiner uses a combination of numerical marks and criteria comments to assess the candidates. We hope, in time, that teachers will be able to receive more information about their candidate's exam performance than the 10 numerical marks in the current examination report. This will potentially allow the teacher to see where the examiner has identified strengths and weaknesses in relation to the exam criteria.

The app is used offline in the examination room and it notifies the examiner when every section has been fully completed. Once online, at the tap of a button, the days' results are locked, submitted and, moments later, received by the RAD. Results from the recent November/December tours were available to Canadian teachers well before advertised target dates, a huge step forward for efficiency and towards a more meaningful and effective learning benefit from our assessment services.

The rollout of the marking app continued with the US panel of examiners in early 2019 and will progress to expand globally hand in hand with the RAD online exam entry portal.

## My first exam in a decade

**Nyisha Bill-Eteson** discovers a new perspective on ballet exams

My mother always likes to remind me how at the age of 15 I refused to take another ballet exam. I don't know what it was that terrified me so much, but I used to have nightmares about the examiner asking to see an exercise I'd never heard of. I continued to dance until I was 18 but I never took another exam until the summer of last year.

When I took up ballet at the RAD for the first time in 5 years, taking an exam didn't even occur to me – it was just a fun form of exercise. I started in a non-syllabus class to build my confidence and after a year my friend took up Intermediate Foundation and encouraged me to join. I loved it. Learning structured exercises that I could improve on each week was really satisfying and I was confident standing in the front row in class – but something was missing.

Every class felt like a rehearsal for a performance that would never happen. I could tell that I was improving, found my teacher inspiring, and enjoyed every class – but what was it all for? That's when I decided I wanted to take my exam. I needed something to work towards and a sense of accomplishment.

Once I'd spoken to my teacher and he'd said I would probably be ready to take an exam in the summer, I started working much harder. I was focusing on the details: performance, eye line and foot articulation. I came to class with a real sense of purpose and started booking private lessons at the weekend to make sure I was up to scratch.

That summer I took my first ballet exam in a decade and it was completely different from any exam I'd done before. I remembered exams as dreaded, nerve-wracking experiences where I lost sleep the night before and trembled outside the studio waiting for the sound of the bell.



Sarah Louise, Nyisha Bill-Eteson, Emily Dawkins  
Photo: courtesy of Nyisha Bill-Eteson

For the first time I was excited about an exam, for the opportunity to perform everything I had been working so hard on. Perhaps it was more significant, being an adult and making the decision to use my time and money to attend classes. Or maybe it was just that my perspective had changed: exams were no longer a scary test but an exciting chance to show off my dedication.

I loved every second of that exam and beamed the whole way through, feeling exhilarated for the rest of the day. I was thrilled to receive a distinction too – it felt like a real achievement. I'm now working towards my Intermediate which is a lot more challenging, but I'm looking forward to taking another exam when I'm ready.

## In memoriam

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of examiners Yui Kan Cheung (Hong Kong) and Joyce Myroff (South Africa) in 2018, and former examiner Prue Bowen earlier this year.

## Fond farewell

At the end of 2018, Australian based examiner Marie Walton Mahon resigned from the panel. We thank Marie for her contribution over the past 14 years.

## Welcome

We are delighted to welcome the following new examiners who successfully completed their training in London in Winter 2018:

Ana Emilia Cardenas Iturriria (Mexico)  
Christos Chandroulidis (UK)  
Fabia Vasconcellos (UK)  
Lauren Matthews (UK)  
Michelle Harrison (UK)  
Michelle Styler (UK)  
Nicola Orchard (UK)  
Nicole Hadrawa Sedlak (Germany)  
Serena Su (China)

## Future recruitment and training

There are no current plans to recruit for further RAD examiners. However, any future recruitment campaigns, including details of the role of RAD examiner 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. For general queries about examiner recruitment, please contact [exams@rad.org.uk](mailto:exams@rad.org.uk)

## 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 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

Kayla Van Den Bogert (August 2018)  
Lucia Catanzariti (October 2018)  
Makeely Foster (August 2018)  
Joshua Green (August 2018)  
Nicola Jones (July 2018)  
Matthew Maxwell (July 2018)  
Tina Pyrcz (October 2018)  
Portia Secker (October 2018)

### Hong Kong

Canaan Wung Hay (December 2018)  
Jordan Yeuk Hay (December 2018)

### New Zealand

Jemima Scott (September 2018)  
Alice Shirreffs (September 2018)

### South Africa

Chanté Daniels (September 2018)

## Examinations department at RAD HQ

**Sania Akram**, who has worked for the RAD for the last few years as Facilities Officer, has taken over the role of Examinations Officer (RAV UK), while **Cecilia Matteucci** is on maternity leave. **Suzanne Partridge** has taken on the new role of Examinations Qualifications and Partnerships Officer and **Peter Wright** has joined the Examinations department as Examinations Business and Customer Service Administrator. **Andrew Milton** has accepted the role of Examinations Registration, Results and Certification Manager, **Lucia Silva** is now our Examinations Data Processing Supervisory Officer and **Meliita Niklus** is our new Examinations Results Administrator.

### UK Headquarters

Royal Academy of Dance  
Examinations Department  
36 Battersea Square  
London SW11 3RA  
[exams@rad.org.uk](mailto:exams@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8073  
[www.royalacademyofdance.org](http://www.royalacademyofdance.org)

**Urban Strides examinations**  
[urbanstrides@rad.org.uk](mailto:urbanstrides@rad.org.uk)

### Director of Examinations

**Andrew McBirnie**  
[amcbirnie@rad.org.uk](mailto:amcbirnie@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8088

### Chief Examiner

**Jennifer Hale**  
[jhale@rad.org.uk](mailto:jhale@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8969

### Examinations Business Compliance Manager

**Mark Rogers**  
[mrogers@rad.org.uk](mailto:mrogers@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8057

### Examinations Customer Service Manager

**Antonella Di Franco**  
[adifranco@rad.org.uk](mailto:adifranco@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8037

### Examinations Operations and Communications Manager

**Harriet Grant**  
[hgrant@rad.org.uk](mailto:hgrant@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8009

### Examinations Registration, Results and Certification Manager

**Andrew Milton**  
[amilton@rad.org.uk](mailto:amilton@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8055

### Examinations Results Quality Assurance Manager

**Lynne Bradley**  
[lbradley@rad.org.uk](mailto:lbradley@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)1608 676109

### Panel of Examiners Consultant

**Paula Hunt**  
[phunt@rad.org.uk](mailto:phunt@rad.org.uk)

### Panel of Examiners Manager

**Sara-Jane Mulryan**  
[sjmulryan@rad.org.uk](mailto:sjmulryan@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8006

Examinations Business and Customer Service Administrator  
Personal Assistant to the Director of Examinations

**Peter Wright**  
[pwright@rad.org.uk](mailto:pwright@rad.org.uk) / +44 (0)20 7326 8906

### Examinations Certification Officer

**Monica Camara**  
[mcamara@rad.org.uk](mailto:mcamara@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8050

### Examinations Data Processing Supervisory Officer

**Lucia Silva**  
[lsilva@rad.org.uk](mailto:lsilva@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8960

### Examinations Officer (International)

**Joanna Pigeon**  
[jpigeon@rad.org.uk](mailto:jpigeon@rad.org.uk) / +44 (0)20 7326 8930

### Examinations Officer (London, Middlesex and UK Specials)

**Carys Barbour**  
[cbarbour@rad.org.uk](mailto:cbarbour@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8056

### Examinations Officer (UK RAD Approved Venues)

**Sania Akram**  
[sakram@rad.org.uk](mailto:sakram@rad.org.uk) / +44 (0)20 7326 8909

### Examinations Operations Administrator

**Brenda Strong**  
[bstrong@rad.org.uk](mailto:bstrong@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8008

### Examinations Results Administrator

**Meliita Niklus**  
[mniklus@rad.org.uk](mailto:mniklus@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8966

### Examinations Qualifications and Partnerships Officer

**Suzanne Partridge**  
[spartridge@rad.org.uk](mailto:spartridge@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8936

### Panel of Examiners Officer

Personal Assistant to the Artistic Director and Chief Examiner

**Lillian Doleman**  
[ldoleman@rad.org.uk](mailto:ldoleman@rad.org.uk) / +44 (0)20 7326 8058

### User Systems Support Specialist

**Claire Marks**  
[cmarks@rad.org.uk](mailto:cmarks@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)1984 667533 / m: +44 (0)7554 457258

## UK regional offices

### Midlands and East of England

Regional Manager: **Louisa Coleby**  
[lcobleby@rad.org.uk](mailto:lcobleby@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)1386 40935

### Northern England

Regional Manager: **Debbie White**  
[dwhite@rad.org.uk](mailto:dwhite@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)1325 717 888

### Northern Ireland

Examinations Area Organiser: **Millicent Brown**  
[mbrown@rad.org.uk](mailto:mbrown@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)289 042 5187

### Scotland

Regional Manager: **Jennifer MacFarlane**  
[jmacfarlane@rad.org.uk](mailto:jmacfarlane@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)1314 455 455

### South East England

Regional Manager: **Sue Morice-Jones**  
[smorice-jones@rad.org.uk](mailto:smorice-jones@rad.org.uk) / t: +44 (0)1634 305 573

### South West England, Wales & Channel Islands

Regional Manager: **Amy Griffiths**  
[agriffiths@rad.org.uk](mailto:agriffiths@rad.org.uk) / m: +44 (0)7554 457 259

**International offices**

**Bermuda, Ghana, Jordan, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Serbia**  
(and all other countries not listed below)  
Examinations Officer (International): **Joanna Pigeon**  
jpigeon@rad.org.uk / +44 (0)20 7326 8930

**Australia & Papua New Guinea**

Examinations & Training Manager: **Kathryn Hughes**  
khughes@rad.org.au / t: +61 2 9380 1908 / f: +61 2 9360 6677  
www.rad.org.au

**Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and France**

Royal Academy of Dance Asbl  
National Director: **Neeltje Holland Van Laarhoven**  
nholland@rad.org.uk / t: +31 6 20748924  
www.rad.lu

**Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela**

Royal Academy of Dance Brasil Ltda  
National Director: **Maria do Carmo de Kenny**  
mckenny@royalacademyofdance.com.br / t: +55 11 3826 2498  
www.royalacademyofdance.com.br

**Canada**

Examinations Manager: **Carolyn Jones**  
cjones@radcanada.org / t: +1 416 489 2813 ext. 221  
info@radcanada.org / t: +1 416 489 2813 / f: +1 416 489 3222  
www.radcanada.org

**Caribbean (Jamaica, Guadeloupe, Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St Lucia, Antigua and Aruba)**

National Manager: **Diane Bernard**  
dianebernard@rad.org.jm / t/f: +1 876 755 0612

**China**

Chief Representative RAD China: Professor **Ting Tina Chen**  
radchina@hotmail.com / t: 86 21 63463675 / f: 86 21 6513 7188  
leeandtna@hotmail.com / t: 86 21 6346 3675  
Chief Officer (RAD China): **Miss Judy Gu**  
radchina@hotmail.com / t: 86 21 63463675 / f: 86 21 6513 7188  
RAD Shanghai (Exams)  
Shanghai & Eastern China: **Miss Ying Wang**  
w\_y\_1957@hotmail.com / t: 86 21 62483326  
Beijing & North East China: **Miss Lu Sha (Rose) Xu**  
609869679@qq.com / t: 86 138 1071 7071  
www.rad.cn.com

**Cyprus**

National Manager: **George Shantos**  
info@rad.com.cy / t: +357 99 477 887 / f: +357 24 818 351  
www.rad.com.cy

**Germany, Austria and Switzerland**

Royal Academy of Dance GmbH  
National Director: **Horst Vollmer**  
Examinations officer: **Markus Thié**  
pruefung@royalacademyofdance.de / t: +49 (0)30 39 40 466 60 /  
f: +49 (0)30 39 40 466 69  
www.royalacademyofdance.de

**Greece**

The British Council  
RAD Representative: **Veta Anastasopoulou**  
rad@britishcouncil.gr / t: +30 2103 6923 73 / f: +30 210 363 0332

**Hong Kong and Macau**

Hong Kong Examinations & Assessment Authority  
International and Professional Examinations Division  
RAD Representative: **George Pang**  
ie7@hkeaa.edu.hk / t: +852 3628-8787/3628-8750 (Direct) /  
f: +852 3628 8790

**Indonesia**

Yayasan Royal Academy of Dance Indonesia  
National Director: **Lala Salendu**  
radindonesia@cbn.net.id / t: +62 21 75 90 93 63 / f: +62 21 75 90 93 70

**Israel**

National Manager: **Gali Zamir**  
gali@rad.org.il / t: +972 52 3343838

**Italy**

Royal Academy of Dance Srl  
National Director: **Manuela De Luca**  
info@raditaly.it / t: +39 0461 985 055 / f: +39 0461 985 054  
www.raditaly.it

**Japan**

National Director: **Noriko Kobayashi**  
radjapan@nifty.com / t: +81 3 3987 3750 / f: +81 3 3987 3649

**Malaysia and Brunei**

RAD Dancing (Malaysia) SdnBhd  
National Director: **Selvee Murugiah**  
radmalaysia33@gmail.com / t / f: +6 03 2276 0052

**Malta**

National Manager: **Sandra Mifsud**  
smifsud@rad.org.uk / t: (356) 7993 8584  
www.rad.org.mt

**Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Panama**

Royal Academy of Dance de Mexico AC  
National Director: **Julieta Navarro**  
radmexju@prodigy.net.mx / t: +55 5360 2700 / f: +52 55 5373 4069

**New Zealand**

National Director: **Bronwyn Williams**  
info@rad.org.nz / t: +64 4 382 8924  
www.rad.org.nz

**Norway, Sweden and Denmark**

National Manager: **Karina Lund**  
klund@royalacademyofdance.no / t: +47 95920812  
www.royalacademyofdance.no

**Philippines**

The British Council  
RAD Representative: **Lendl Agassi Concha**  
lendl.concha@britishcouncil.org.ph / t: +632 555 3000  
www.britishcouncil.org.ph

**Portugal**

National Director: **Margarida Sa Fialho**  
radportugal@rad.org.pt / t/f: +351 21 383 1849

**Republic of Ireland**

Interim examinations contact: **Léonie Locke**  
locke@rad.org.uk / m: +44 (0)7554 457260 / t: +44 (0)1453 767851  
Singapore

**Royal Academy of Dance Singapore**

National Director: **Mona Lim**  
mona.lim@rad.sg / t: +65 6762 8993 / f: +65 6762 4031  
www.rad.sg

**South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe**

Examinations Manager: **Idalina Lume**  
ilume@rad.org.za / exams@rad.org.za / t: +27 (0)11 887 0459  
www.rad.org.za

**South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka)**

Royal Academy of Dance, South Asia  
National Manager: **Ranmali Mirchandani**  
radsouthasia@gmail.com / t: +94 777 349399

**South Korea**

RAD Representative: **Hyun Joo Ham**  
hjham@radkorea.org / t: +82 10 3793 1910  
www.radkorea.org

**Spain, Andorra and Gibraltar**

Royal Academy of Dance SL  
National Director: **Maria José Antón**  
info@rad.org.es / t: +34 977 34 24 89 / t/f: +34 977 34 19 35  
www.rad.org.es

**Taiwan**

National Manager: **Shu-Yu Lin**  
linshuyu82@hotmail.com / t: +886 22 871 5615 / f: +886 22 874 7783  
www.rad.org.tw

**Thailand**

RAD Dancing (Thailand) Co Ltd  
National Director: **Glenn van der Hoff**  
info@radthailand.org / t: +6653 274841 / m: +668 51564 562  
www.radthailand.org

**Turkey**

The British Council  
Exams Operations Manager: **Idil Bulut**  
customer.services@britishcouncil.org.tr / t: +90 (0) 212 355 5657

**United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman**

The British Council  
RAD Representative: **Shabnam Habib**  
shabnam.habib@ae.britishcouncil.org / t: +971 (0)4 3135568 / f: +971 (0)4 3370703  
https://www.britishcouncil.ae/en

**United States of America**

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