

Teacher feedback

Introducing RAD Online Exam Entries

Benesh exams



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Welcome to this edition of Focus on Exams

One of the key topics we've been focused on recently is **timescales for issuing results and certificates**. We're aware that over the last couple of years - in a number of countries and regions - these have not been acceptable. We understand the pressure that this puts teachers under, when they have eager candidates, parents and carers who are waiting for results.

Something to be aware of, and for teachers to communicate to parents, is that the 'target date' is the date by which we aim to have certificates printed and dispatched from RAD results processing centres. This has been the case for many years, but some recent communication has suggested that some teachers are not aware of this, and assume that this is the date when they can expect to receive certificates.

After certificates are dispatched from RAD headquarters, they are sent to our distributors to be collated, packaged, have the medals added, and forwarded to teachers via courier. This process can take a further week or so, depending on volumes (which during the summer months are substantial). We hope that by managing candidate and parent/carer expectations, we can lessen the disappointment felt when certificates are not received on the advertised target date.

That said, managing expectations is **not** our answer to this issue. We want teachers and candidates to have the best examination experience possible, and currently, for results delivery, we are falling short of this goal. At the beginning of 2019 we had a significant problem with staff illness and turnover in the data processing department, which effectively cancelled out the gains we had been working towards with the roll-out of online exam entries. We are now up to capacity again.

We promise that staff globally are working as hard as they can, across different projects and departments, to ensure that results and certificates are delivered in a timelier manner.

Find out more below about the procedures and projects that we are rolling out to improve our result and certificate delivery time.

In this issue:

- Updates and reminders
- Teacher feedback – how we use this to improve your exams service
- Benesh exams – an innovative pilot project

If you have any questions or feedback about RAD exams, contact us at exams@rad.org.uk

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

We would love to include examples of candidates' exam experiences, perhaps against the odds or in unusual circumstances, and particularly as we move towards our centenary - visit <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HFHWS5D> to share your story.

Dr Andrew McBirnie
Director of Examinations



Teacher and candidate feedback

We appreciate teachers and students taking 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.

You said:

Results and certificates are not sent fast enough

We agree.

As noted in the foreword, we are working as hard as we can to speed up our results and certificates processing. This work is across several projects, departments and offices and includes:

- worldwide roll-out of our new online exam entry system (which, we are told, teachers love). Nearly all our members now have access to this platform, meaning exam data will be on the system before exams take place, significantly reducing our processing times post-exam. **(It's important to understand that this is the single biggest reason for the delays over the last 18 months),**
- moving result processing and certificate printing for the Americas to our Canadian office, reducing volumes at headquarters,
- working with increasing numbers of international offices to provide exams data to headquarters earlier, even when teachers are not yet online, so we can begin the process of data entry more quickly,
- training additional staff to help with certificate printing in the UK and exploring outsourcing options with our system suppliers, Advanced Secure Technologies, and

- development and roll-out of the new **examiner marking app**, which means that results can be uploaded directly to our host database, bypassing manual data entry.

Teachers can still help though – by registering students' names and information correctly – more in this in our reminders below.

You said:

We want more differentiation in marking bands (for example: "I would love to get a wider marks range ... for those students who deserved higher distinctions")

After long consideration and consultation, we will be revising attainment bands for examinations with effect from 1 January 2021:

Result classification	Total marks	Medal classification (graded exams only)
Standard not attained	0 – 39	n/a
Pass	40 – 54	Bronze
Merit	55 – 64	Silver
High Merit	65 – 74	
Distinction	75 – 84	Gold
High Distinction	85 – 100	

These new attainment bands will be shown on certificates, however, at this stage there will be no changes to medals. It should also be noted that candidates will not be able to change their banding retrospectively; i.e. replacement certificates for exams awarded before 1 January 2021 will still use the current bands.

We hope that these new attainment bands will be helpful to candidates and teachers, and will prove a more accurate reflection of achievement.

You said:

Can we have class awards for Grades 6-8?

We have decided to replace Grades 6-8 presentation classes with class awards to match the rest of the graded syllabi. This change will take effect from 1 January 2021. However, there are no current plans to change the Grades 6-8 syllabi in the foreseeable future.

You said:

Examination Feedback Seminars are fine, but please can we have optional discussions again?

'Optional discussions' (one-to-one discussion sessions between teachers and examiners) were withdrawn some years ago due to concerns about the ways in which information provided can be misinterpreted, and that it sometimes put examiners in a difficult position. We have no plans to re-introduce them at the current time, but we do appreciate how much teachers appreciate engaging with examiners and benefitting from their knowledge, wisdom and experience, so we will keep under review different ways in which we might enable this to happen.

We understand that one of the key services expected from an examination service is detailed feedback about why marks were awarded as they were. The new examiner marking app provides us with the potential to issue much more detailed information about the performance of individual candidates than is currently provided. Once the marking app is up and running globally, we will look at how we might put this into practice.

You said:

The RAD never listens to us!

We do listen! We collate feedback from teachers, candidates, RAD staff, examiners and parents/carers/guardians, this is then reviewed by relevant staff members, and we use this advice to develop our strategy, policies and procedures.

We are aware, however, that this needs to be done more regularly, and teachers need to know that we are taking their concerns seriously. And so we have undertaken a feedback review. This has allowed us to see what information we are collecting, why we are collecting it, how we are using it to improve our services, and to highlight how we confirm that action has taken place. This is still work in progress, but ultimately we hope to provide more articles like this, where we let you know about specific issues raised, and what we are doing about them. In general, the way we process feedback is as follows:

- compliments for a job well done are sent to relevant staff members, so that they can see that their hard work is appreciated by teachers,
- any complaints are reviewed and followed up with the relevant parties,
- feedback regarding examiners is constantly reviewed by the team that manages the Panel of Examiners, and informs further training and development, and
- comments about operational matters and logistics are sent to the relevant office. We take this information into account when we review our policies (on an annual cycle), and often make changes to procedures in light of comments and advice received.

All this work does take time – particularly if there are issues that need investigating with several parties. We are still working on our feedback review, but the outcome from this should be more regular responses to your feedback, so please, do keep it coming.



Photo: Carrie Nissiotis

Candidate stories

An RAD family...

We often hear from our members that the RAD feels like a family; this is literally the case for this ballet dancing family from South Africa!

It isn't every day a boy in South Africa wants to start ballet class. 13-year-old Einon was enjoying kickboxing classes when he heard that ballet would help him with balance and flexibility. As he had been diagnosed with ADHD, his mother, Zany, helped out by attending some classes and helping Einon practice out of hours. Zany, who had no previous dance experience, then plucked up the courage to join an adult ballet class herself. Being a working mum in a busy job in insurance, she found that her ballet classes were a great stress reliever.

Einon's dad, Pierre, had taken ballet as a child, but had to give it up as he was bullied by other boys his age. Zany persuaded Pierre to join her adult class, believing that it would be great for the family to do something fun together – it also made life easier when Zany and Einon talked about tendus and relevés; Pierre now had an idea what they were talking about!

Ballet has enriched the life of the entire family. It has helped Einon with his memory and co-ordination, and, outside of the ballet studio, his schooling has improved. Zany feels less stressed and physically stronger. Pierre enjoys the physical benefits of ballet, and feels proud to be an ambassador for Einon and for boys and men who want to dance.

Einon has stopped kickboxing to pursue ballet and has just passed his Grade 5 Solo Performance Award with distinction!

Introducing RAD Online Exam Entries

If you aren't already using RAD Online Exam Entries, you will have recently received an email from Membership regarding this exciting new development in the Members' Area.

Your local office will let you know when they would like you to use this to create your exam entries; however, please don't wait for your next exam session to take a look! You can log in now and view your previous entries and results. You can also register new students: they will be registered to your school instantly – you don't have to complete a form and submit it to headquarters or your local office.

Simply log in to the Members' Area, check out the guidelines and video, then click on the 'Exams' link.

Technical issues and downtime

We are usually aware of 'downtime' with RAD Online Exam Entries in advance. Where there are planned improvements, we will try to make sure that the updates do not affect key dates when teachers are using the system, and will communicate with teachers to make them aware.

If you experience unexpected technical issues, email your local exams organiser in the first instance. They should be able to help you, and can escalate an issue if necessary. If a technical problem affects the system on an exam closing date, local organisers will liaise with teachers to allow extra time to make exam entries, and will, of course, waive any late fees.

Registration and amending student details

Offline

If you are sending registration forms by email or post to the RAD, ensure that you do this well before your exam closing date. There is usually a two-week turnaround for student registrations completed by the ID Registration team (most teachers worldwide send in their registration lists during May-June, in advance of our busiest time of the year). Therefore, don't expect registration to be instantaneous.

The text used to register students will be used for all documents and certificates, so ensure each name is spelled correctly, and is listed in the correct order (e.g. the way that you would like it to appear on the certificate).

Ensure the registration form is the correct version. We cannot handle non-GDPR compliant forms and will simply ask you to re-send the information on the correct document. The most up-to-date version can be found on the website.

Where results are made available in advance of certificates, check the spellings of your students' names – this is what will be printed on their certificate. You can email the results team to notify them of any errors and these will be corrected before the certificates are printed. If you wait for the certificates to be sent out and then notify us of an error, you will be charged for a replacement certificate.

RAD Online Exam Entries

Teachers can register their own students in RAD Online Exam Entries. All teachers worldwide now have this facility. The process is instantaneous and ID numbers are immediately available.

The text used to register students will be used for all documents and certificates, so ensure each name is spelled correctly, and that the 'display name' (i.e. the way that you would like the name to appear on the certificate) is correct. Ensure that there are no extra spaces, and don't use capital letters like this::

Milly Thomas ✓
MILLY THOMAS ✗

When you add/change a student's name in RAD Online Exam Entries, ensure you change all necessary name fields, including the 'display name' field in the 'further details' tab (this is the ordering of names which will be used on the certificate – see screenshot below). This does not update automatically, but once the details are updated in 'Manage My Students', it will be correct on the exam entry and certificate.

STUDENT (FIELDS WITH RED ASTERISKS ARE MA

SAVE SAVE & CREATE ANOTHER SAVE AND CLOSE CLOSE MERGE STUDENT

Student First Name * Milly Middle Names

Title Miss Student Number

Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY) * 01/01/2000

SCH# Nationality

Business School Has Reduced Fees

HESA unique student identifier Disabled Student Allowance

Student Support Number Include in HEAPES return to HEFCE

LJA Number

Further Details Access Registrations Events Programme Registrations

Previous Surname(s)

Display Name * Milly Thomas

Where results are made available in advance of certificates, **check the spellings of your students' names – this is what will be printed on their certificate.** You can email the results team to notify them of any errors and these will be corrected before the certificates are printed. If you wait for the certificates to be sent out and then notify us of an error, it will take longer for the student to get their certificate.

Contact information

We now have a series of email addresses for specific queries. If you need information that you can't get from your local office, using the emails below can help speed up your query as relevant staff members monitor these inboxes:

- General queries/not sure who to email – exams@rad.org.uk
- Queries about certificates, results or certificate replacements – certificates@rad.org.uk
- Result enquiries, reasonable adjustments, special considerations, complaints, appeals – examscustomerservices@rad.org.uk
- School or candidate registration – idregistration@rad.org.uk

For help with RAD Online Exam Entries teachers can consult the user manual – available on the website (www.royalacademyofdance.org/exams/policies-and-guidelines). If this is not helpful, teachers can contact their exam organiser. If necessary, the exam organiser can help you escalate a problem.

Changes to the exam schedule after the closing date

- If a change is required to your exam entry after the closing date, you should first contact your exams organiser to discuss whether any updates are possible.
- Where changes are agreed, a surcharge will be normally applied to your entry and an additional invoice will be generated for any changes.
- The RAD reserves the right to impose a surcharge retrospectively if teachers make changes to their exam entry without the knowledge of the local office. This includes changes made on the exam day.
- More information on surcharges can be found in the Specifications, available online.

Solo Seal

If a candidate is using a pianist provided by the RAD for a Solo Seal exam, they need to submit the music for their coda with their variation choice information.

When attending a Solo Seal, the audience does not have to remain silent during the judges' marking time. Quiet conversation is permitted, which creates a more relaxed atmosphere for the judges to concentrate on their marking.

Syllabus and music amendments

A reminder that any syllabus and sheet music publication amendments are summarised at <https://www.royalacademyofdance.org/specifications-and-syllabus>

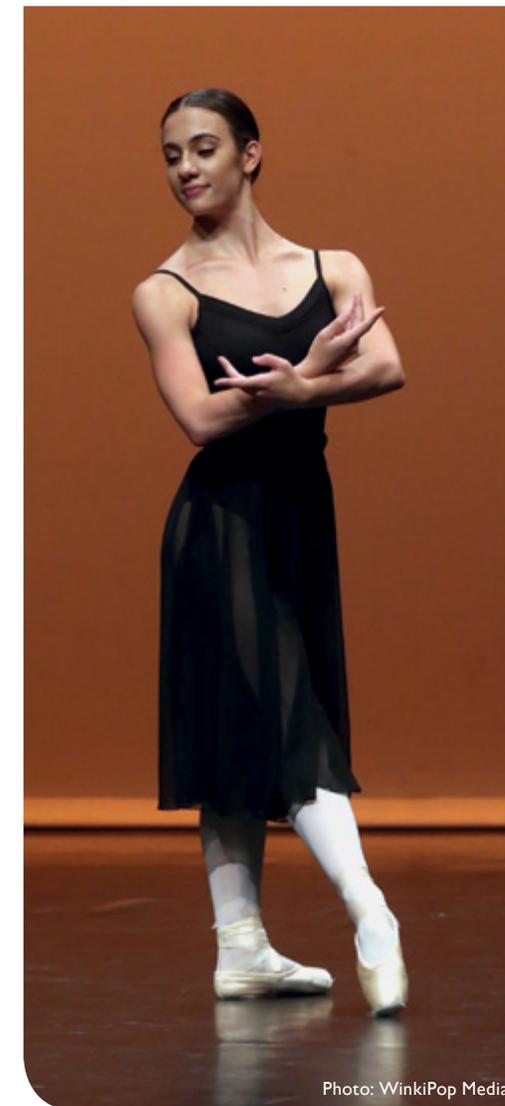


Photo: WinkiPop Media

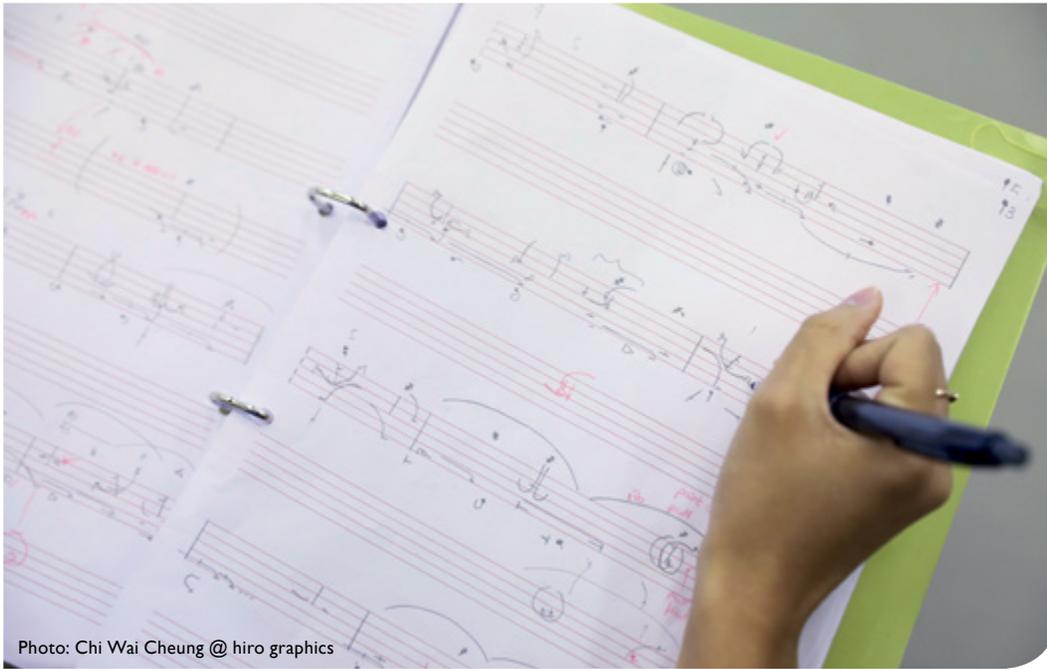


Photo: Chi Wai Cheung @ hiro graphics

Benesh exams

Benesh International and the RAD Examinations Department are collaborating on a unique pilot project – a series of exams designed for beginners to learn and use Benesh Movement Notation (BMN).

Teachers will be familiar with the appearance of BMN - it is included in the exam syllabus books as an extra resource to help users engage with the choreography. BMN was devised by Rudolf and Joan Benesh as a written system for recording human movement, and is widely used in the recording and restaging of dance works.

Benesh exams comprise a mixture of written and practical work – encouraging candidates to work with Benesh scores, and to start to understand and incorporate notation into their dancing practice. Recommended for learners aged 7 and upwards, the exams will be accessible to vocational students, university students, dance teachers, examiners and professionals, as well as those with an interest in dance notation and research.

During the project, the challenges surrounding the use of an unfamiliar language have become clear, but students' initial responses of 'it's really hard' changed rapidly as they became familiar with BMN, and started to incorporate this knowledge into their dancing practice.

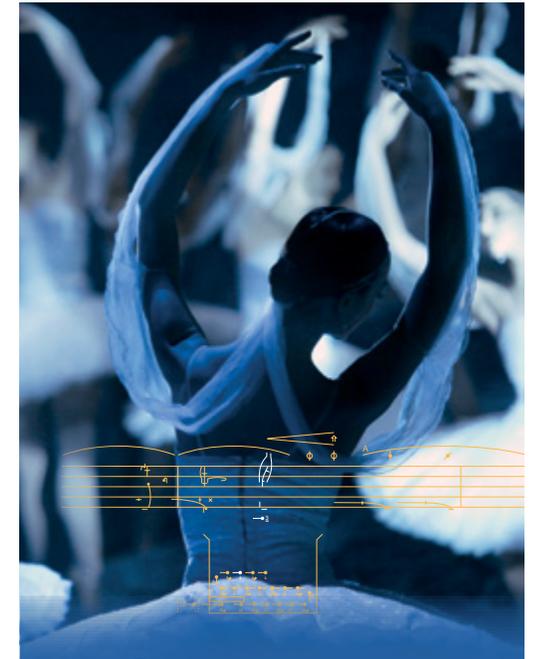
BMN can be helpful to dancers in a variety of ways. It increases understanding of individual movements, as well as the flow of movement from one position to the next. This in turn develops phrasing and musicality. As well as appealing to younger learners, BMN can be helpful for mature dancers, allowing them to approach their work in a more thoughtful way, developing quality of movement and spatial awareness by using a broader range of tools.

Benesh exams are a fun, practical way to help students achieve, and broaden their dance education. The exams are divided into four sections: Reading and reconstruction, Performance and creativity, Communication and comprehension, and a Portfolio element. By including a pre-prepared portfolio of work, along with practical and verbal demonstration in response to unseen content, the exam facilitates a unique display of knowledge from candidates. The exams are offered across four levels giving a clear system for progression. There are no pre-requisites for any level.

Trial exams have been taking place globally, with teachers in Canada, Greece, Germany, France and the UK taking part in 2019. The pilot phase will continue over the next two years.

If you are interested in taking part in Benesh exams, or would like to know more, visit our website, or email Suzie Partridge, Examinations Qualifications and Partnerships Officer spartridge@rad.org.uk to register your interest.

There will also be more information available at the Benesh International Congress, with a special Benesh Exam Discovery Day taking place on Monday 25 May 2020. Again, you can register your interest on our website at www.royalacademyofdance.org/between-the-lines



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or call 020 7326 8035.

royalacademyofdance.org/Benesh-training

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DANCE

Photo: Maria-Helena Buckley

In memoriam

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of RAD examiner **Tina Pilgrim** and former RAD examiner **Shirley Treacy** OAM FRAD.

Welcome

We are delighted to welcome to the Panel UK examiner **Gillian Perry**, who successfully completed her training in March 2019.

Fond farewell

UK-based examiner **Elizabeth Hill** has recently retired from the panel. We thank Elizabeth for her wonderful contribution over the past 33 years.

Correction

In our July 2019 edition, we incorrectly listed new examiner **Serena Su** as a resident of China. Serena currently lives in Canada.

Future recruitment and training

There are no current plans to recruit for further RAD examiners this year. However, any future recruitment campaigns, including details of the 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. For general queries about examiner recruitment, please contact examiners@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 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:

Canada

Sophie Higgins (March 2019)

Kyra Soo (March 2019)

UK

Jessica Templeton (June 2019)

Examinations staff

UK Regional Manager for the North of England, **Debbie White**, is leaving her role after 20 years working at the RAD. We know that teachers, staff and students will miss her greatly! Recruitment for a new Regional Manager is taking place and Debbie's successor will be communicated to teachers as soon as possible.

Peter Wright, our Examinations Business and Customer Service Administrator, is leaving his post due to a relocation. We wish him the best of luck for the future.

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