

Performing Arts Awards Musical Theatre and Dance Qualifications Summer 2020

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During the current Covid-19 crisis, RSL are wholly committed to helping schools to continue to offer their students the opportunity to achieve PAA qualifications where safely possible, including Musical Theatre, Jazz Dance and Street Dance graded exams.

As the UK lockdown eases and schools re-open, this document is designed to help facilitate the delivery of PAA exams, and answer important questions that teachers may have. It is subject to change based on the evolving situation regarding the pandemic and lockdown, and associated government guidelines.

Note that it is the responsibility of the performing arts school/organisation to decide when and how their school could reopen, based on up-to-date government guidelines.

When my performing arts school reopens, how can we deliver PAA exams, whilst following UK Government guidelines for health and safety?

Arrival and Departure from the examination venue:

- Try to avoid public transport when travelling to and from the school/venue.
- Parents or other persons accompanying the candidate should wait outside the school/venue during the exam.
- Candidates and their parents or other persons accompanying them should spend as little time as possible in the school/venue, for example by arriving no earlier than the time required to warm up before the scheduled exam time, and by departing immediately after the exam.

Section 1. Effective infection protection and control at the venue:

- Schools should ensure thorough cleaning between each exam (using disinfectant spray/wipes etc.) of any frequently touched surfaces.

- Floor cleaning between exams: For all dance exams, and for Musical Theatre exams if choreography includes floorwork, floors should be cleaned and dried between exams. Extra time should be allocated for this, and centres must ensure that floors are completely dry before the start of the next exam.
- Candidates and staff should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds, before and after the exam.
- Hand sanitiser should be available for candidates in the examination room.
- Sneezing/coughing: Schools should ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- If a candidate or member of their household has visible symptoms (eg. cough, temperature) before the examination they should not attend the examination.
- Before taking the register, the examiner will informally ask all candidates if they have any symptoms (temperature, feeling unwell, new continuous cough, loss of taste or smell). If any candidate declares any symptoms, the exam will be suspended.
- If a candidate develops visible symptoms (eg. cough, temperature etc) during the exam and/or feels uncomfortable continuing, the exam will be immediately suspended.
- If an examiner or member of staff develops symptoms (eg. continuous cough, temperature etc) while at the venue, the exam will be suspended.
- Perspex dividing screens (to divide the examiner from the candidates) may be used if available.
- Facemasks/face coverings are not mandatory for candidates but may be worn for the dance component, on a discretionary basis.
- The music operator and any chaperones required during the exam should wear a facemask where possible.
- Note that it is highly likely that the examiner will be wearing a facemask.
- Ventilation: Centres should ensure as far as possible that the exam room is well ventilated, with windows open to allow for fresh air.

Section 2. Singing

Currently, UK Government guidance states that group singing may present a risk of infection, and therefore singing in groups is not recommended.

In response to this, and in order to support schools and centres during the Covid-19 pandemic, the requirements for singing within PAA Musical Theatre exams have been temporarily revised as follows:

1. Group Performance

- Candidates are not required to demonstrate group singing. Instead, each candidate will perform a specified amount of solo singing
- During the song, there should be a maximum of 8 candidates present, and candidates must be positioned 2m apart
- Teachers should ensure that, when each candidate sings their solo line(s), they are positioned at least 3 metres away from the examiner and the rest of the group. The solo singer should be facing the front, with their back to the rest of the group
- Teachers should aim for the backing track to be continuous, however, the singing need not be continuous, for example, when one candidate has finished singing their solo line(s), there may be a few bars of instrumental music to allow them to return to their original position and another candidate move forward
- For grades Premiere and Debut, the music operator may count in the candidate, as necessary, and this will not impact on the candidate's marks
- Candidates, including those not singing, should respond physically to the song as appropriate
- More than one song may be performed, for example to accommodate different ages, grades, and number of candidates
- The chosen song(s) may be performed after the acting and dancing performance, with reasonable time taken for candidates to get into position; however, the overall Group Performance must be continuous
- Within their Group Performance, schools may include a group song to a music track with recorded vocals to which the candidates lip-sync, if they feel it is relevant to their chosen piece, however this is not a requirement and will not be assessed
- For grades Premiere to 3, candidates may repeat the song at the discretion of the teacher. This is in recognition of the fact that (particularly younger) candidates may experience a greater degree of nerves than they would have if singing in a group
- At any grade, Examiners may ask for the song to be repeated
- Depending on the number of candidates and the grades taken, the whole song may not be required, however teachers must ensure that all candidates perform the minimum solo singing for their grade
- For grades Premiere to 3, where the total solo lines do not amount to a full song, teachers may pre-record the song with partially included vocals, ie, the singer on the recording leaves relevant gaps for each candidate's solo line(s). The voice on the recording could be that of the teacher or another designated singer, but must not be a candidate

Below is the minimum number of solo singing lines required by each candidate, depending on the grade taken. Note that these are minimum, and candidates may have more solo lines if desired and as appropriate to the chosen piece:

GRADE	Indicative Content		
	NUMBER OF SOLO LINES	BARS IN MUSIC	TIME IN SECONDS
Premiere/Debut	1	2-4 bars	5-10
Grade 1-3	2	4-8 bars	10-20
Grades 4-5	4	8-12 bars	20-30
Grades 6-7	6	16-20 bars	40-50
Grade 8	7	20-28 bars	50-70

2. Technical Skills Demonstration

If singing is chosen for the Technical Skills Demonstration, candidates must adhere to the above protocols for social distancing, and will perform their song extract solo. Therefore, the minimum durations have been amended as follows:

GRADE	DURATION
Grade 1-3	20-30 seconds
Grades 4-5	30-45 seconds
Grades 6-7	45-60 seconds
Grades 8	60-75 seconds

Section 3. Social Distancing

How do I deliver PAA Musical Theatre exams whilst adhering to the RSL and UK Government guidelines around social distancing?

2 metre distancing should be observed as much as possible before, during and after the exam, with 3 metre distancing for the solo singing component (see above). It should be noted that, in accordance with official UK guidance for schools (as of 1st July 2020), it is recognised that in a group performance where candidates are mobile, some brief, transitory closer proximity may be unavoidable.

The following tips may help schools deliver PAA Musical Theatre exams whilst adhering to social distancing guidelines:

- Smaller group sizes are recommended for all elements of the exam. A minimum of two applies, and the maximum would depend on the size of your performance space. For example, you may decide that four candidates is the maximum that can be safely accommodated, in order to keep a 2-metre distance between each candidate for the maximum time possible.

- Fixed groups: Each exam group should be fixed and candidates within their fixed group should not mix with other groups before or after their exam.
- The Group Performance. As there will be fewer candidates in each group it is permissible to perform shorter extracts than for a normal group of eight. However, teachers must ensure that all candidates perform the minimum requirements for acting (number of lines), singing and dancing for the grade taken.
- Revue format. Candidates may perform short extracts from musicals in small groups. For example, a group of four candidates might perform part of the orphanage scene from “Annie” or the ‘Mad Hatter’s Tea Party’ scene from “Alice In Wonderland”, keeping a 2-metre distance between each character. This could be followed by a song, then a dance, from different sources, so the overall performance is in the style of a short revue of pieces.
- Dance routines. Candidates should be positioned 2 metres apart as much as possible throughout the dance routines, and the wearing of facemasks for candidates over the age of 11 is recommended. However, in accordance with UK Government guidelines, passing each other fleetingly is considered low risk, and this may be considered when choreographing routines.
- Full shows will not be possible, and audiences are not permitted, at this time. Some schools may have been preparing for full shows before the lockdown, and may, of course, adapt the same repertoire where possible. For example, you could take extracts from the full show and adapt or edit them for fewer characters. You may take scenes that already have fewer characters (and may be more adaptable for social distancing) and repeat them with different casts. Please get in touch with us if you have specific questions about your repertoire.
- Remember it is your responsibility to ensure that candidates keep the 2m distance from each other as much as possible. You may consider marking the floor, particularly for younger candidates.
- For the Technical Skills Demonstration and Understanding and Reflection sections, a member of staff must be present to ensure the candidates are keeping a 2m distance from each other and from the examiner.

- As the group sizes are smaller, so the duration of all elements of the exam will be less.

Below is a table of estimated durations for four candidates.

Timings are based on four candidates. Note these are estimated timings only, and the examiner may ask candidates to repeat any aspect of the performance if clarification is needed.

Premiere

Performance: **5-6 minutes**

Understanding and Reflection: **6 minutes**

Debut

Performance: **6-8 minutes**

Technical Skills Demonstration and Understanding and Reflection: **12 minutes**

Grade 1

Performance: 8-10 minutes

Technical Skills Demonstration and Understanding and Reflection: **15 minutes**

Grade 2

Performance: 10-12 minutes

Technical Skills Demonstration and Understanding and Reflection: **15 minutes**

Grade 3

Performance: 12-14 minutes

Technical Skills Demonstration and Understanding and Reflection: **15 minutes**

Grade 4

Performance: 14-16 minutes

Technical Skills Demonstration and Understanding and Reflection: **20 minutes**

Grade 5

Performance: 16-18 minutes

Technical Skills Demonstration and Understanding and Reflection: **20 minutes**

Grade 6

Performance: 18-20 minutes

Technical Skills Demonstration and Understanding and Reflection: **25 minutes**

Grade 7

Performance: 20-22 minutes

Technical Skills Demonstration and Understanding and Reflection: **25 minutes**

Grade 8

Performance: 22-24 minutes

Technical Skills Demonstration and Understanding and Reflection: **30 minutes**

How do I deliver PAA Jazz Dance and Street Dance exams whilst adhering to the RSL and UK Government guidelines around social distancing?

2 metre distancing should be observed as much as possible before, during and after the exam. It should be noted that, in accordance with official UK guidance for schools (as of 1st June 2020), it is recognised that in a group performance where candidates are mobile, some brief, transitory closer proximity may be unavoidable.

The following tips may help schools deliver PAA Jazz Dance and Street Dance exams whilst adhering to social distancing guidelines:

- Smaller group sizes are recommended for all elements of the exam. For example, you may decide that four candidates is the maximum that can be safely accommodated, in order to keep a 2-metre distance between each candidate for the maximum time possible.
- Note that solo exams are permissible for all grades, with the exception of Street Dance Grades 6-8, due to the freestyle 'battle' element.
- Dance routines/combinations. Candidates should be positioned 2 metres apart as much as possible throughout the dance routines, and the wearing of facemasks for candidates over the age of 11 is recommended. However, in accordance with UK Government guidelines, passing each other fleetingly is considered low risk, and this may be considered when choreographing routines.
- Remember it is your responsibility to ensure that candidates keep the 2-metre distance from each other as much as possible. You may consider marking the floor and, in the case of Jazz Dance, the barre, particularly for younger candidates.