



The National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership

EMPLOYING DANCERS

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INTRODUCTION

Dance is the fastest growing art form, with over 13% of the population now attending dance performances. (Arts Council England). With approximately 10.5 million viewers the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing is just one example of the way that dance's popularity is having an impact on every home in Britain today. With this increase in popularity has come and increase in demand for participatory activity. Dance artists now work in a wide range of contexts including theatres, museums, schools, pupil referral units, youth clubs, residential homes for the elderly, prisons and hospitals. At the same time there have been calls from employers who want dance artists to be able to articulate their work and demonstrate its value. As a result as they need many different skills to make a living from the art form that they love. As well as being skilled dancers they need good written and verbal communication skills, research skills, knowledge of legislation, health and safety, assessment and evaluation as well as the ability to identify useful contacts and sources of information and reflect on their practice in order to improve.

The Foundation for Community Dance has been working for some time to support dance leaders to become more articulate about their experience, qualifications and practice. As part of the Dance and Training Accreditation Partnerships (DTAP) the Foundation for Community Dance has been working with other organisations concerned with the creative and cultural sectors of dance to identify

the key skills and areas of knowledge that dance leaders need across their career. This list of skills and competencies is set out in the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Dance Leadership approved by Creative and Cultural Skills. NOS provides a check-list for dance artists so that they can reflect on their practice and consider the range of skills they need to develop in order to be most effective in their work.

The National Occupational Standards are also a useful tool for organisations that employ dance leaders to help them ensure that they have the right skills, knowledge and understanding to undertake specific roles.

This booklet is designed for organisations, employers and providers of dance in the arts, sport, health, education, voluntary and social sectors and:

- 🕒 Identifies the role of the dance leader and the current context for participative dance practice
- 🕒 Introduces the National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership
- 🕒 Provides a baseline for dialogue with dance artists about their skills' requirements, helping employers make informed choices about selection and recruitment

DANCE LEADERS AND THE BROADER DANCE CONTEXT

The term 'dance leaders' is used in this context to describe people who lead dance sessions. Dance Leaders go by many names. They might also be called teachers, artists or facilitators but they share a common goal in taking responsibility for individuals or groups who want to dance. Dance leaders may work in a variety of contexts, from schools to prisons or residential care homes. They might be working full time in an institution such as a school but will more likely be working as freelance professionals, or part time in a variety of places. The standards are written for all dance leaders so they are applicable to all dance styles and cultural traditions.

Taking part in dance activities is increasingly popular with participants recognising that dance gives them the opportunity to learn a new activity, remain physically and mentally active, meet new people and develop creative skills. Dance participants range in age from children under 1 to people in their 90's. While some dance practitioners lead dance sessions across these groups others specialise, either in relation to the target group of people that they teach, by the dance genre with which they engage people, or the level of creative opportunity offered through their practice.

Finding the right dance practitioner to meet the needs of a specific group is essential if the people participating in the dance activity are to enjoy themselves and experience the highest quality dance practice.

By learning about the National Occupational Standards in Dance Leadership employers can begin to identify the range of skills, knowledge and understanding that they should be looking for in the dance artists they engage to lead dance sessions in relation to specific contexts.



THE NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS

What are National Occupational Standards (NOS)?

NOS are statements of the skills, knowledge and understanding needed in employment. They clearly define the outcomes of competent performance required for practitioners in a specific sector. (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority definition)

In the dance sector the development of the National Occupational Standards was led by the Foundation for Community Dance in close consultation with the sector skills council Creative & Cultural Skills (CCSkills), and managed by a Professional Standards Working Group from the Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership (DTAP). This group consisted of representatives from the following organisations: Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD), Council for Dance Education & Training (CDET), Dance UK, Foundation for Community Dance, Laban, National Dance Network (NDN), National Dance Teachers' Association (NDTA), Standing Conference on Dance in Higher Education (SCODHE), South Asian Dance Alliance (SADA), Youth Dance England.

The National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership have created five headings under which the skills, understanding and knowledge required by dance leaders are listed. The headline categories are:

- Know and communicate your experience of leading dance to potential customers
- Develop working relationships with communities and supporting organisations
- Deliver effective dance leadership and engagement
- Evaluate your practice and develop an awareness of achievement in participants
- Reflect on and share evaluation findings to develop your own practice and role

Each of the five categories contain more detailed descriptions of the skills and knowledge that dance leaders need. Dance leaders already have many of these skills and can use the list to identify their strengths. The list can also be used to help identify skills or areas of understanding that they need to acquire if they want to move in to new areas of work or simply improve their current practice. Not all practitioners will need to be proficient in all of the skills outlined in the standards as the need for skills will be largely determined by each practitioner's level of experience and working circumstances. However having an overview of all the skills outlined in the standards should help employers identify which skills, knowledge and experience a dance leader might be expected to have to fulfil a specific post.

A full list of the standards can be found at:
<http://www.communitydance.org.uk/public/12013/NOS%20in%20Dance%20Leadership.pdf>

A TOOL FOR EMPLOYERS

The National Occupational Standards are a useful tool for dance employers because they:

- Help employers identify the range of skills that dance leaders may need to have
- Help employers make informed choices about the selection and recruitment of dance artists
- Provide employers and dance artists with a common language with which to define and agree expectations in relation to dance delivery
- Enable employers to identify the areas in which they can provide continuing professional development support for the dance artists they employ

The chart below and overleaf lists all the NOS for Dance Leadership under the 5 headings and provides a suggestion about which skills all dance leaders should have. Additional skills, areas of knowledge and understanding may also be required depending on the circumstances and context of the dance leader's employment.

Dance Leadership NOS	Essential for all dance leaders	Desirable for dance leaders
A: Know and communicate your experience of leading dance to potential customers		✓
Evaluate and communicate your skills in leading dance	✓	
Identify, research and understand your market	✓	
Identify and communicate with others, your personal skill and contextual knowledge of your dance style(s)		✓
Communicate how you carry our creative and compositional skills appropriate to your target market		✓
Communicate your competence and readiness to lead dance with specific groups of people and /or places		✓
Use different media and methods to communicate with your target market		✓

	Essential for all dance leaders	Desirable for dance leaders
B: Develop working relationships with communities and supporting organisations		
Design programmes of dance work that are appropriate to specific groups and individuals	✓	
Manage expectations of participating individuals, groups, funders and partners	✓	
Build relationships and trust with and within community groups to inspire take up to your session(s)	✓	
Build trust with host organisations and funders		✓
C: Deliver effective dance leadership and engagement		
Deliver safe and effective dance leading	✓	
Engage and manage groups through your dance leadership in a creative context	✓	
Demonstrate technical skill and knowledge in leading your dance style(s)	✓	
Structure dance for engagement of participants and groups	✓	
Collaborate with other art forms		✓
Work with volunteers, support workers and managers		✓
D: Evaluate your practice and develop an awareness of achievement in participants		
Evaluate the impact of your dance leading through engagement with your groups and stakeholders	✓	
Communicate the results of evaluating the impact of your dance leading		✓
Develop awareness of achievement in your participants and group	✓	
E: Reflect on and share evaluation findings to develop own practice and role		
Recognise your professional development needs	✓	
Research, identify and resource your continuing professional development (CPD)		✓
Reflect on and resource your professional delivery	✓	

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Why do I need to know about the standards?

The standards are a benchmark that dance artists can use to assess their own level of ability and gain an insight into the skills that they may need as their career progresses. They're important because they identify the skills that professionals across the dance sector agree need to be met in order to lead high quality dance practice. The major umbrella bodies across the dance sector will be encouraging dance practitioners to ensure they have the skills, knowledge and understanding described in the standards. The standards can be used by employers as the basis for discussions with dance artists using a common language and framework.

Are there qualifications that have been specifically designed to address the needs set out in the standards?

Yes. The Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership (DTAP) has been working with the examination board Trinity College London to devise a Level 6 qualification that addresses many of the standards. The qualification is called the Diploma in Dance Teaching and Learning. Members of DTAP are continuing to work on the development of other new qualifications that will specifically address learning outcomes identified in the standards. However the dance sector welcomes and encourages diversity and seeks to avoid

duplication. Its aim is to highlight the availability of training provision that meet the standards so that all dance artists – irrespective of their level of experience – have the opportunity to find training provision that is suited to their own specific circumstances.

How will dance artists learn about the standards and any related training provision?

The DTAP partnership have secured funding from the Arts Council of England to promote the standards to dance artists throughout the country. DTAP and its partners will be holding road shows to highlight the importance of the standards to the sector and signpost dance practitioners to related training provision. The Foundation for Community Dance will also be developing the continuing professional development of its website so that any training provider can highlight the provision that they offer which relates to the standards.

Where can I get further information or advice about the Dance Leadership standards?"

Visit the **Foundation for Community Dance's** website – **www.communitydance.org.uk** to download a version of the National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership or email **info@communitydance.org.uk** if you have any questions about the National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership.



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