



The National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership

KNOWING YOUR ROLE

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INTRODUCTION

As dance artists we need many different skills to make a living from the art form that we love. Artists need the ability to communicate effectively with others, identify useful contacts and sources of information and reflect on their practice in order to improve.

In addition to its Professional Code of Conduct the Foundation for Community Dance has produced the National Occupational Standards developed in partnership with the Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership (DTAP) with the aim of providing community dance artists and practitioners with a suite of guides to effective practice, behaviours and skill development. DTAP hope this will help you throughout your career to reflect on your practice and consider the range of skills and understanding you need to develop in the future in order to be most effective in your work.

This booklet has been designed to help you cross-reference the National Occupational Standards with the skills that you need to be more effective practitioners. This has the benefit of helping you identify where to find training to help you fill skills gaps and identify the transferable skills you need to move in to new markets.

The booklet will:

- Explain recent actions that the dance sector has taken to improve the quality of dance leadership
- Prompt reflection on the skills you need in order to progress as a leader in dance



How can I improve technique in creative dance sessions?

What would a warm up look like for a Street Dance class?

What licenses do I need to play recorded music?

How do I research the movement capabilities of the people I work with?

How could I have supported people's learning better in my last session?

Do I need a child protection policy?

DANCE ARTISTS' SKILLS AND THE NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS

As well as having the ability to dance and match our dance ability to the different groups we may be working with, dance artists also have a wide range of additional skills that enable us to gain and sustain ourselves in work. The National Occupational Standards for dance leadership have identified these skills and areas of understanding and placed them under five headline categories for ease of reference. Developing these standards collectively will give our sector strength and clear messages to be able to communicate about the competencies required for successful dance teaching and leading to other professions and to employers, parents, carers and participants. The headline categories are:

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

Each of the five categories contains more detailed descriptions of the skills and knowledge that dance leaders need. As dance leaders we already have many of these skills and can use the list to identify our strengths. The list can also be used to help us identify skills or areas of understanding that we need to acquire if we want to move in to new areas of work or simply improve our 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 learning to become a reflective practitioner and having an overview of all the skills outlined in the standards should help us plan what we need to learn in relation to our future skills needs.

So if you've just started working in the dance sector or if you're a specialist who has worked in dance for years the standards should help you identify your current strengths and help you identify skills you need to develop for the future.

A full list of the standards can be found on the Foundation's website: www.communitydance.org.uk

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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 with dance practitioners working in a widening range of genres and contexts. 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 we move on through our professional life from new dance practitioner to expert in our particular part of the sector we need to review and refresh our skills, knowledge and understanding on a regular basis by engaging in continuing professional development (CPD).

CPD can be undertaken in a host of different ways: from reading journals and newsletters through to attendance on courses or on-the-job learning. CPD doesn't have to be expensive, but if dance artists are to keep their skills, knowledge and understanding relevant to the changing world they practice in, CPD needs to happen on an on-going basis.

Visit the Professional Practice section of the Foundation's website to access our Knowledge Bank and list of Courses and Conference. These contain lots of information about where you can find CPD that meets your needs. The Knowledge Bank includes copies of our Information Sheets that cover a wide range of supporting topics including legislation, health and safety, finance and working with new media. The Courses and Conference section of the site list courses and events around the country that offer CPD opportunities to dance practitioners at different stages of their careers.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Who identified the skills that are set out in the standards?

The development of the National Occupational Standards was led by the Foundation for Community Dance on behalf of the Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership (DTAP). The Foundation worked in close consultation with the sector skills council Creative & Cultural Skills (CCSkills), and managed by a Professional Standards Working Group which included current practitioners, representatives from the dance teaching societies and from the Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership (DTAP)

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. There is an increasing demand for participatory activity coupled with a growing demand from employers for practitioners to articulate our work and demonstrate its values. The Foundation will engage with employers to help them understand the value of the NOS and the benefits they bring to the dance sector.

Are the standards some sort of qualification?

No, the standards are not a new kind of qualification. Most qualifications list the things that people will be able to do once they've gained the qualification. This list is usually referred to as the 'learning outcomes'. A qualification usually states how an individual will be tested to see whether or not they have acquired the skills stated in the learning outcomes and in what context they have been seen to apply them [eg the candidate demonstrates the ability to delivery a safe warm up (skill) for people over the age of 60 (context)]. The standards also contain learning outcomes, however they do not specify a particular context (eg delivering dance to older people) and do not propose a means of testing an individuals' ability to meet the learning outcomes. The purpose of the standards is not to regulate or prescribe an approach to dance leadership. They are there entirely as guidance for dance practitioners and employers about the range of skills and abilities that dance leaders need to have in order to be most effective.



Are there courses that I can attend that will enable me to gain the skills and understanding identified in the standards?

There is a wide range of skills identified in the standards that range from CV writing through to dance technique skills. The Foundation for Community Dance is currently working with CPD providers to encourage them to identify the ways in which their courses/events meet the outcomes set out in the standards. Many courses will help dance artists improve their skills in the ways indicated within the NOS and enable practitioners to become more reflective about their practice. One qualification – the Diploma in Dance Teaching and Learning (Children and Young People) has already been linked to the NOS. Course providers around the country have developed courses that support practitioners to gain this qualification. Ask potential course providers which standards their courses meet or work towards. And remember, there are many different options that you can take to engage in continuing professional development (CPD) – reading, talking to other practitioners or observing other people's classes may be just as valid a means of learning as attending a course, as they also are part of the process of becoming a reflective practitioner.

Will gaining skills identified in the standards help me gain employment?

Being able to describe your skills and knowledge to prospective employers will increase your chances of employment in the sector. The standards have been designed by the dance profession to raise standards across the sector. The Foundation for Community Dance and the DTAP partners will be working with dance employers to ensure they know which skills the profession believes are essential for the provision of high quality dance delivery.

Do I need to be able to do all the things listed in the standards?

Probably not. It's not possible for us to answer this question unambiguously without knowing more about your dance practice and the context you work in. Most dance artists will already have many of the skills outlined in the standards. If you've just begun your dance career you may have fewer skills than some of the more experienced practitioners. Give yourself time: you don't have to acquire the skills listed in the NOS all at once.

NEXT STEPS

Visit the **Foundation for Community Dance's** website – www.communitydance.org.uk to view an up-to-date list of CPD opportunities and gain access to information sheets on a range of issues.

Have a look at the Foundation's two sister publications, aimed at employers and continuing professional development providers to see how the Foundation is promoting the use of the National Occupational Standards to employers and course providers.

There are also a wide range of organisations that offer information, resources and guidance to enable individuals to navigate their chosen route into and through the dance profession. As well as individual education and training providers you may wish to look at the recourses provided by the DTAP partners:

Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD)	www.adad.org.uk
Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET)	www.cdnet.org.uk
Dance UK	www.danceuk.org
Exercise, Movement and Dance Partnership (EMDP)	www.emdp.org
The Foundation for Community Dance	www.communitydance.org.uk
National Dance Network (NDN)	www.nationaldance.co.uk
National Dance Teachers' Association (NDTA)	www.ndta.org.uk
Standing Conference on Dance in Higher Education (SCODHE)	www.scodhe.ac.uk
South Asian Dance Alliance (SADA)	www.southasiandance.org.uk
Youth Dance England	www.yde.org.uk





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