



The National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership

SUPPORTING DANCERS

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INTRODUCTION

Dance is a diverse and growing sector with dance professionals operating in a wide range of roles including those of performer, teacher, community dance leader, health facilitator and coach.

Dance artists work in an increasingly wide range of contexts including theatres, museums, schools, pupil referral units, youth clubs, residential homes for the elderly, prisons and hospitals. Dance artists need many different skills to make a living from the art form that they love. As well as being skilled dancers they ideally 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.

As part of the Dance and Training Accreditation Partnerships (DTAP) the Foundation for Community Dance has been working with other national organisations in the dance sector to identify the key skills and areas of knowledge that dance leaders need across their career. This list of skills is set out in the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Dance Leadership and 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 providing continuing professional development opportunities because they highlight the particular skills and areas

of knowledge that dance practitioners will be seeking to improve, thereby enabling CPD providers to target their training offer more effectively across the dance sector.

This booklet:

- introduces the National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership
- provides information about the importance being placed on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) across the dance sector
- illustrates the benefits to CPD providers of linking CPD provision to the National Occupational Standards



THE NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS (NOS)

As well as having the ability to dance and match movement vocabulary to the different groups they may be working with, dance artists also have a wide range of additional skills that enable them to gain access to and sustain themselves 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 has given the dance sector strength, and a clear message 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:

- 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 contains 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 dance artists plan what they need to learn in relation to their future skills needs.

The NOS also enable CPD providers to identify which courses and skills dance artists are most likely to be interested in.

A full list of the standards can be found on the Foundation's website:

www.communitydance.org.uk



CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE NOS

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 dance practitioners need on-going support to enable them to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.

The Foundation for Community Dance together with the other members of the Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership are encouraging dance artists to become reflective and reflexive practitioners, engaging in CPD opportunities that can raise levels of self-confidence and the quality of dance practice across the sector. This is one of the core objectives of the Partnership and is closely linked to the

publication of the National Occupational Standards as dance practitioners need to understand which areas of knowledge, understanding and skills they need to develop in order to be most effective in their practice.

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.

CPD providers across the sector can help to make their courses more accessible to dance practitioners by gaining an understanding of the National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership and highlighting the links between the learning outcomes set out in the standards and the learning outcomes that will be achieved by the practitioner through engagement in the CPD activity.



PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The Foundation has recently updated its website in order to provide additional information and support to its members who are looking for continuing professional development opportunities. The Professional Practice section of the website provides access to our Knowledge Bank and list of Courses and Conference. These contain lots of information about where dancers can find CPD that meets their 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.

We would like to encourage training providers to send information about the training opportunities they offer and their relationship to the National Occupational Standards to **info@communitydance.org.uk** so that we can advertise a comprehensive range of training options to dance practitioners.

The more closely CPD providers can illustrate the link between the learning outcomes that their course delivers and the learning outcomes specified in the NOS the easier it will be for dance artists to ensure they are investing their time and resources in training options that meet the needs they have identified for their own development.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

What are National Occupational Standards?

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)

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.

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. By showing clear links between training provision and the outcomes described in the standards, course providers will highlight the relevance of their training offer to dance artists.

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.

What do you mean by 'dance leaders'?

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.

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 section of its website so that any training provider can highlight the provision that they offer which relates to the standards. A form is available from the Foundation's website to enable training providers to submit information about the provision that they offer.

NEXT STEPS

Visit the **Foundation for Community Dance's** website – **www.communitydance.org.uk** to download a version of the National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership.

Tell your students about the Standards and encourage them to visit the Foundation's website and access the Professional Practice section of the website.

Make clear links between the CPD opportunities that you provide and the NOS so that dance artists can easily identify opportunities that will meet their needs.

Send information to the Foundation about the CPD opportunities that you provide for inclusion on the Foundation's website.

Contact Trinity College London for further information about the Diploma in Dance Teaching and Learning.

Email **info@communitydance.org.uk** if you have any questions regarding the process of mapping the learning outcomes offered by your training provision to the National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership.



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