

AUDITIONING AND INTERVIEWING FOR DANCE AND DRAMA COURSES

CODE OF PRACTICE

and

GUIDANCE ON DEVISING
AN APPEALS PROCEDURE

COUNCIL
for **DANCE**
EDUCATION AND TRAINING


NCDT

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR DRAMA TRAINING

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SCOPE OF THE CODE



This Code of Practice governs the conduct of auditions and interviews ('the Code'). It is designed to provide a framework within which vocational schools offering training in dance and drama, audition and interview potential students. The Code was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) as part of the Dance and Drama Awards ('the Awards') and the Precepts are compulsory for all schools offering Awards. Schools offering Awards should be able to demonstrate that they follow the six precepts outlined in this Code in establishing their own audition and interview procedures. The Guidance on Devising an Appeals Procedure ('the Guidance') has been drafted because Dance and Drama Awards schools must have in place a procedure enabling students to appeal against decisions made about the allocation of Awards.

The intention in drafting a Code and Guidance was to assist schools in ensuring that their policies and procedures for interviewing and auditioning students are transparent, robust and fair. A formal mechanism for appeals protects the school as well as allowing students a formal method of challenging the allocation process.

Neither the Code nor the Guidance is intended to be prescriptive in its detail. The DfES sees the Code as a foundation for auditioning and interviewing, it recognises that most schools' practice is over and above the requirements of the Code. Schools should implement policies and procedures in line with the precepts. Specific examples of good practice are provided in an appendix and are designed to illustrate the Code. On that basis it is hoped that the Code and the Guidance will be applicable across the dance and drama sectors and not limited to schools participating in the Awards.

Prepared by the Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET) and the National Council for Drama Training (NCDT), with assistance from the Conference of Drama Schools (CDS).

July 2002

INTRODUCTION

The Code of Practice governing the conduct of auditions and interviews

The Code covers six elements of an application procedure, referred to as its 'precepts'. These precepts are the key principles underpinning a fair and transparent procedure. They were arrived at through a review of how auditions were conducted by a variety of schools auditioning candidates for courses in dance, acting, dance teaching, musical theatre, stage management and technical theatre.

The Code forms the basis for the fair and consistent treatment of candidates. Potential students are considered to be 'candidates' from the point at which they make an application to the school. The precepts cover the process of considering applications, selecting candidates for interview or audition, the conduct of the audition and interview, the decision-making process and how this is communicated to the candidate.

Each precept is underpinned by an explanation and benchmarks for judging good practice. Further examples of good practice in action have been drawn from the observation of auditions and interviews in a number of vocational dance and drama schools. These are included in an appendix at the end of the Code.

The Code is intended as a guide to help schools draft their own procedures and policies in line with an agreed industry standard. Schools may, of course, wish to exceed the basic requirements set out in the Code in their own standards of practice. The DfES recognises that this is the case with most schools. The Code has taken account of the relevant equal opportunities legislation and has been drafted to meet the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998 which incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into English law.

Guidance on devising an appeals procedure

The Guidance offers advice on how a school should devise a fair and transparent procedure for reviewing decisions made at audition and interview. As noted above, publicly funded institutions are required to have an appeals procedure in place. Other schools are, however, strongly advised to put in place an appeals mechanism. The Guidance advises on the grounds, method and suggested outcome of any appeal, with notes on approaches to drafting a procedure.

Access to vocational training

Creating access to potential candidates who might not otherwise pursue vocational dance or drama training is outside the remit of this Code. Nevertheless, ensuring that students are drawn from a wide spectrum of backgrounds is a concern of public funding agencies. As well as operating a fair and robust audition and interview process, schools are urged to review their policies on advertising courses and providing opportunities for talented students to enter into vocational training. Examples of good practice found during the research of the Code included:

- targeting candidates from under-represented groups (for example, encouraging male students to consider a dance training);
- providing open days and other opportunities to visit the school; and
- reviewing the representation of the school and its students in all published materials.

CODE OF PRACTICE

GOVERNING THE CONDUCT OF AUDITIONS AND INTERVIEWS

PRECEPT ONE: A school undertakes to consider all applications

All applications will be considered within a published timescale, against the same criteria. Not all applications will necessarily result in audition/interview. Equal opportunities will be practiced in the consideration of every application.

A school should:

- have clear written criteria for the initial assessment of students;
- ensure that initial selection criteria are used for all candidates;
- make provision for candidates with different access requirements at the application stage;
- ask students to disclose information that may have a bearing on their application or audition / interview.

PRECEPT TWO: A school undertakes to provide candidates with the necessary information before and at the selection process

Candidates will be told in advance about the method of selection, eg audition, interview or a combination. Candidates will also be told how, where and when the audition and/or interview will take place.

nb In cases of applications from candidates under 18 years, information about the audition should also be sent to the parent / guardian.

The candidate should be provided with:

- good notice of audition and/or interview dates;
- information about the location of the school and on physical access to the building;
- details of the school's criteria for assessing applicants;
- the timetable for the audition/interview including, where applicable, stages at which candidates may not be invited to continue;
- the school's policy on the composition of audition/interview panels.

PRECEPT THREE: A school undertakes to provide information on the availability of and criteria for the allocation of public funding

Candidates will be given information about public funding dispensed by the school including how many Dance and Drama Awards the school has to offer at the time, where possible. The school will have devised a standard procedure for allocating Awards, in line with its criteria for selection at audition and interview.

A school should provide:

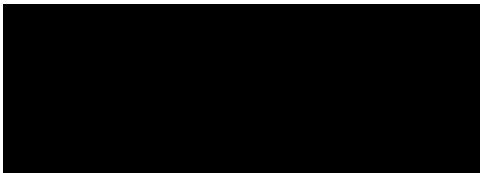
- relevant information on public funding, including Dance and Drama Awards;
- a published deadline for applications should they wish to be considered for an Award or other funded place;
- criteria used by the school to allocate funding in line with government requirements;
- information about how Awards criteria will be applied to applicants;
- an indication, where possible, of what ratio of the intake is likely to receive an Award or other funded place.

PRECEPT FOUR: A school undertakes to give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their potential to fulfil the aims of the course

Candidates selected for audition / interview will be given the opportunity to show their potential in relation to core elements of the course. Not all candidates will necessarily be invited to participate in the entire audition / interview process.

A school should:

- endeavour to create an appropriate and positive atmosphere;
- give candidates the opportunity and space to warm up appropriately;
- ensure that the audition/interview is relevant to the course;
- make provision for applicants with disabilities (ie visual impairment, dyslexia, illiteracy, mobility difficulties);
- give candidates sufficient opportunity to rest or change between different elements of the audition / interview process;
- refer to the importance of suitability for the training and specific demands of the course.



PRECEPT FIVE: A school undertakes to ensure that the decision making process is fair and transparent

The school will have clear criteria for making judgments and these will be used in reaching decisions on each candidate. The application process will be in keeping with the school's equal opportunities policy. Those responsible for auditioning / interviewing will have comprehensive understanding of the criteria for assessment and refer to this in their observation and assessment of each candidate.

A school should:

- have devised clear, written criteria for the assessment of students, both for a place on the course and for the allocation of an Award;
- ensure that all criteria for assessment are in keeping with the aims and objectives of the course, which should in turn be relevant to industry requirements;
- ensure that objective assessment criteria are used;
- ensure that those responsible for auditioning / interviewing have the appropriate skills and expertise and are trained in audition/interview techniques;
- ensure, where possible, that the panel includes both male and female members and represents the diversity of the training at the school;
- ensure that those responsible for auditioning / interviewing, know the aims of the course and are able to assess potential in relation to those aims;
- ensure that those responsible for auditioning / interviewing use assessment forms alongside the criteria and keep clear, accurate and appropriate records of their findings;
- promote an inclusive decision making process. The auditioning / interviewing panel should discuss their observations and all should have an input into making decisions.

PRECEPT SIX: A school undertakes to ensure that candidates are informed of the outcome of an audition / interview

Candidates will be told how and when they will know if they are to be offered a place on a course, and / or whether they have been offered an Award. Successful candidates will be told of the obligations placed on a potential student, including how and when they must accept or decline the offer of a place and / or Award.

A school should:

- inform candidates of audition/interview outcomes in writing as soon as is practicable;
- have a policy on the provision of feedback and make this known to candidates;
- if feedback is provided, ensure that it is given sensitively, fairly and in relation to the criteria for assessment;
- allow access to records on request. (In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, schools are permitted to charge a fee for this.)

DEVISING AN APPEALS PROCEDURE

GUIDANCE

Notes for schools wishing to devise and implement an appeals procedure.

It is a DfES requirement that all schools offering Dance and Drama Awards have an appeals procedure.

Introduction

The information given below provides a framework for good practice and is intended as guidance for those who wish to ensure that their procedures conform to quality standards provided in the sector.

Although this material specifically refers to the appropriate procedures to be used in the event of appeals against not being allocated an Award, many of the same principles apply to similar situations that could arise as a result of the auditioning process.

In both of these circumstances schools should ensure that all appeals guidance material is:

- clear;
- easily available in a form intended to reach all interested parties;
- issued to promote equality of treatment for all applicants.

Information to be included in the written appeals procedure and guidance

Circumstances and procedures in schools will vary, but appeals guidance should be written and should include the following information:

1 Right of appeal

Unsuccessful candidates should be advised that they have the right of appeal. They should be informed of the appeals procedure on request.

2 Acceptable grounds for appeal

It should be made clear to unsuccessful candidates that appeals will only be considered where it is claimed that there were irregularities in the audition / interview procedure.

3 The recommended method of appeal

An appeals procedure should give details as to who can legitimately make an appeal, to whom the appeal should be addressed and how the appeal should be handled.

As a guide, the procedure should state that:

- the appeal should be made in writing by the person who signed the original entry form (in the case of candidates under eighteen, an appeal should be made by a parent / guardian);
- the appeal should be addressed to the relevant authority (such as the Principal, Director of Studies or Registrar);
- the grounds for appeal should be clearly stated and supported by supplementary evidence;
- appeals should be post marked at a specified date (e.g. within 14 days) following the initial notification of failure to obtain an Award or access to written appeals procedure;
- the receipt of all appeals will be acknowledged within a specified period (e.g. within 7 days);
- on receipt, the appeal will be passed to the person responsible (this varies between schools).

4 The appeals procedure used

Details of how the appeal will be conducted should be given to the candidate or parent / guardian. As practice within each school will vary, basic information should be provided concerning the process used, to include the following:

- who is responsible for administering the appeals procedure;
- how the appeal is processed;
- the likely outcomes of an appeal.

The person bringing the appeal should be advised to contact one person responsible for the administration of the appeals procedure. In some schools this is the Admissions Officer or Registrar.

On receipt of the appeal the school should undertake a review of the auditions process to satisfy itself that legitimate grounds for an appeal have been established. In order to help ensure objectivity, measures should be taken to involve a senior member of staff or external representative who was not involved in the original awarding/auditioning process.

The school should satisfy itself that:

- the procedures used conform to the precepts of the Code specified for auditions and no irregularities have occurred;
- that in the case of the awarding process, the procedures used conform with the specifications of the funding body;
- in the allocation of Awards / places all candidates were treated equally.

As the decision making process can be quite complex, schools should be prepared to provide evidence of fair practice in the implementation of their procedures. Schools should take note of the fact that in the event of a successful appeal, if the original audition did not conform to the Code, then a repeat audition would have to be held.

5 The likely outcomes of the appeal

Unsuccessful candidates should be informed that there are two outcomes of an appeal:

EITHER the appeal is upheld and the candidate is re-assessed at a fresh audition;
OR the appeal is denied.

6 The method of providing feedback

The unsuccessful candidate should receive written confirmation of the result of their appeal within 7 days of an outcome being established.

7 Respect for confidentiality

The school will wish to keep a record of the details of the appeal, including the circumstances, nature of the complaint and the decision making process. This information should be kept in a secure place, as part of the school's data protection procedures.

APPENDIX

Examples of good practice observed in dance and drama schools

Examples supporting Precept One

A school undertakes to consider all applications

- Staff from the school visit youth groups in inner cities to talk about vocational training. Young people from under represented groups are also targeted through specific advertising campaigns.
- Prospectus and application forms are available in large print for those with visual impairments.
- Dance youth groups, run by the school, offer the opportunity for audition preparation. If unsuccessful at audition, candidates are given feedback on how they could improve or are invited to an Easter or summer school where they have a chance to develop their skills and experience before they audition again.
- A 'road show' tours Britain throughout the year offering classes and workshops by teachers on the faculty. Promising students are encouraged to attend an audition later in the year.

Examples supporting Precept Two

A school undertakes to provide candidates with the necessary information before and at the selection process

- The Principal welcomes candidates and explains the focus of the course, outlining the need for candidates to have a good understanding of the particular training on offer. The Principal gives examples of other types of training and candidates are reminded that they should be clear about what they want from the course.
- Candidates are shown a video at the beginning of the day that covers all aspects of the training, the school and the employment gained by graduating students. The video highlights the quality of the training and includes interviews with casting agents and choreographers. It emphasises the level of commitment and personal qualities expected from the students. The video is followed by a question and answer session with senior members of staff. Parents and guardians have the opportunity to ask any further questions while the candidates prepare for class.
- All applicants are provided with an information pack with comprehensive guidance listing fundamental and desired physical and qualitative requirements for course entry. The pack also includes timetables for auditions, guidance on how to prepare, funding and other information. Candidates who make it to the recall stage are invited to one of the school's open days, where they can observe, take part in classes and ask questions.

Examples supporting Precept Three

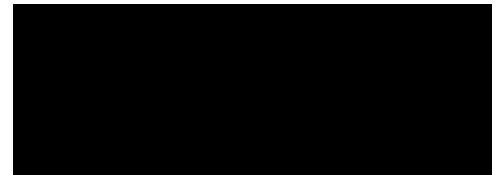
A school undertakes to provide information on the availability of and criteria for the allocation of public funding

- Comprehensive written guidance is given on funding, listing contacts for LEA, trusts and foundations and other bodies which can offer further advice on funding. The school directs candidates to CDET / NCDT and CDS for information.
(www.cdet.org.uk or www.ncdt.co.uk and www.drama.ac.uk)
- Candidates are told about the public funding available for training and how the school allocates its Awards. Candidates are told about the criteria against which they will be assessed. A school advisor, with knowledge of funding from private and public sources, is available to talk to candidates.
- It is stated in the prospectus that candidates wishing to be considered for an Award must apply before the end of June. The criteria for selection are stated and candidates are informed that senior staff will make final decisions regarding entry and scholarship places. The school aims to notify students within three days.
- Award auditions are held at stages throughout the audition process. All candidates have already gone through a first stage audition and academic screening process. External judges contribute to the decision-making process. Judges are asked to rank candidates in three categories: Awarded, Reserve and Not Awarded.

Examples supporting Precept Four

A school undertakes to give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their potential to fulfil the aims of the course.

- Classical ballet classes are followed by movement and improvisation sessions to assess the candidates' freedom of movement and imagination. Additional time is allowed to see candidates again if required. The audition includes a warm-up barre that is not observed or assessed by the panel to allow candidates to relax and warm up thoroughly.
- Dyslexia is addressed in sight-reading in consultation with the British Dyslexia Association (www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk). Candidates with dyslexia are asked to read a specifically created text developed in consultation with the BDA.
- Candidates sing a song together and warm-up as a group. Trust games are played. The combination of vocal and physical warm-up, speeches, sight-reading and movement workshops gives participants an opportunity to demonstrate their potential for learning. A screen test interview gives an opportunity for candidates to talk about themselves. The movement workshop gives them the opportunity to improvise, use their imagination and show commitment and focus.
- Each candidate is given 15 minutes with the panel to perform their speeches. Direction is given during this time to explore understanding of the text and character; ability to connect with the text and response to directive input. Qualitative input is given in classes to give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate an ability to process information.



Examples supporting Precept Five

A school undertakes to ensure that the decision-making process is fair and transparent.

- The criteria for assessment, available to candidates both in the school's prospectus and on request, are clearly referred to in directions given for speeches.
- Each panel member has a comprehensive form listing criteria for assessment, which include specific technical ability as well as creative achievements. The form enables panel members to make notes as well as give grades for each criterion.
- A short section of contemporary dance is observed. Consideration is given to the fact that candidates may have limited experience, as the school's main focus is ballet. This enables the panel to observe the candidates' potential to develop in this discipline.
- The panel, comprising heads of each department, observe the entire audition as a group. They meet at stages throughout the day to discuss their observations. If there are any discrepancies in opinion amongst the panel, the candidates in question are auditioned further and extra time is allocated for this purpose.

Examples supporting Precept Six

A school undertakes to ensure that candidates are informed of the outcome of an audition / interview.

- Unsuccessful candidates may call the school and discuss why they were not considered right for the training. Feedback is based on observations and assessments recorded on report forms in relation to given criteria.
- At stages throughout the day, candidates are invited individually to meet the panel and be informed of the outcome of their audition by the Course Director. He gives feedback with clear reference to the criteria for assessment and advice on how they may develop their experience/skills. Those declined places are given clear reasons. Candidates on the reserve list are informed as to why the panel has reservations about offering them an unconditional place and are advised on what they can develop. All candidates are made to feel at ease and are invited to ask questions.