

CSD EXAMINATION FAQs

WHAT ARE DANCE EXAMS? Examinations in ballet, jazz, and tap are held every year at Contemporary School of Dance. Our policy is to encourage students to take examinations providing we feel they have reached the required standard. From the Grade 1 level onward, students will be encouraged to take RAD (Royal Academy of Dance) ballet examinations and tap and jazz examinations in ISTD (Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing) syllabi. All students who participate in examinations will require additional coaching classes leading up to the exams.

For dance exams, students are taught a set curriculum for their level and are then assessed using a variety of criteria by a qualified examiner. Students are entered for dance exams in small groups, usually 3 or 4 dancers per exam. The exam setting is very formal, and only the examiner and music accompanist are permitted in the exam room.

The following is an explanation of a typical exam:

The examiner sits at the front of the room behind a large table. Teachers are not permitted in the exam room, so the dancers have to be well-prepared! The examiner rings a bell for the dancers to enter the exam room, and the dancers run in to greet the examiner. Throughout the exam, the dancers are expected to be polite and courteous, and there is no talking unless the examiner asks them a question or they have a question for the examiner. The examiner then leads the dancers through their exam, by asking for specific exercises that the dancers have prepared, as well as some unseen work at certain levels. Exercises can be seen all together, two at a time, one at a time, one after the other, etc. For the most part, teachers set the arrangements and spacing of the exercises beforehand in exam coaching sessions, so the dancers know exactly what is expected of them in the exam. Set dances (and free dances for jazz & tap) are usually seen as a solo after all of the set work. At the end of the exam, the dancers perform a Reverence (thank you) to the examiner and the music accompanist before leaving the exam room.

Between exams, the examiner is served meals (morning break, lunch, and afternoon break) on a tray which is brought into the exam room at specific times. Many students have commented that it is like the Queen is visiting the studio when they see the tray for the examiner!

WHY SHOULD A DANCER TAKE AN EXAM? Taking a dance examination enables the dancer to work toward an attainable goal, increase self-confidence, and continually improve his or her standard of technique and artistry. The examination process is invaluable in giving the child and their teacher an independent assessment of his/her progress and achievement. We encourage all of our students to achieve their personal best, whether they take an exam or not, but we do find that students who participate in dance examinations develop a better awareness of details in their dance technique and also develop a more mature sense of artistry and performance. When dancers have a goal to work towards, they work harder to achieve it! Students have a great sense of accomplishment when they complete an examination and know they have tried their best!

Taking examinations develops a sense of pride and confidence that can be helpful in other life situations, such as public speaking, presentations, and job interviews. Examinations may also lead to professional accreditation and a career in performance, dance instruction, or dance-related subjects.

ARE EXAMS OFFERED EVERY YEAR? It is important for students and parents to realize that examinations are not automatically taken every year. Some levels will take more than one year to complete, and this is completely normal. Obviously, as dancers advance through higher grade levels, the work gets more challenging. Dancers improve at their own rate, based on the amount of effort they put into their dance training and the number of classes that they take per week.

Different dance forms provide complementary training: ballet improves dancers' posture, alignment, and use of feet; jazz increases dancers' flexibility and strength, as well as encouraging use of different dynamics; tap definitely heightens dancers' musical awareness, including timing and rhythm; contemporary strengthens and lengthens the torso, and provides opportunities to develop use of travel and height in jumps; hip hop develops style and use of attack and fluidity in movement; yoga strengthens the torso and provides alternate methods to lengthen and strengthen major muscle groups. Taking different styles of dance and more classes provides more opportunities to learn and improve!

There are also many layers to learning dance, and sometimes it takes time to develop an understanding and awareness of what is required to reach the exam standard. Many dancers 'know' all of the exercises, but this is not all that is required. Dancers do need to be able to memorize the choreography and be able to pick-up movement combinations quickly, but they also need to be able to consistently demonstrate detailed, accurate technique, various dynamic qualities of movement, timing and correct coordination, and a genuine sense of performance and artistry. 'Knowing' the exercise enables them to concentrate on these other important ingredients needed in their dancing. If any of these 'layers' are missing, it affects their dancing overall.

As well, as bodies grow and change, the dancer needs time to adjust to their new instrument and sometimes after a growth spurt, flexibility, strength, balance, control, and agility is affected. Usually, once their muscle growth catches up to their bones, the dancer gains control of their body again!

Our policy is to encourage students to take examinations providing we feel they have reached the required standard. If we do not feel that they have reached the standard, we are honest with the dancer about what is needed in order to reach exam standard.

ARE EXAMS SCARY? Most students take examinations in their stride and do not find them to be a disturbing or terrifying experience. We ensure that the students are well-prepared, and confident in their exam work, and many students comment that the exam is like a class! We try to encourage students to take an exam in jazz or tap prior to taking a ballet exam; however, this is not a prerequisite. We look very carefully at each student to ensure that they will only benefit from the experience. We find that students who start taking dance exams at a young age have less difficulty taking them as teenagers, as they are used to the process and have more confidence in the exam setting.

Examiners appointed by the Royal Academy of Dance & Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing conduct examinations internationally. CSD has welcomed examiners from Brazil, Australia, Peru, Japan, United States, England and Canada! All examiners are teachers with students of their own who go through the same process.

HOW DO I SIGN UP FOR EXAMS?

1. During the week of **November 5th-11th**, parents are invited to attend the last 15-20 minutes of classes for a brief observation of some exam material. This will also give teachers and opportunity to provide parents and students with more information about exams at CSD and the process of committing to a dance examination.
2. If students are interested in being considered for a dance exam, they must submit their '**Exam Interest Form**' (last page of this document!) to their teacher or the office no later than **Saturday, November 11th**. Please note that we will only consider students for exams if they have returned their exam interest form to the studio. If a student does not hand in this form, we will assume that they are not interested in being considered for an exam.
3. Teachers will then be provided with a list of students who would like to be considered for examinations. They will assess whether to invite dancers to participate based on their current level of training and past exam history.

Students who are deemed ready and eligible for examinations will receive an examination invitation from their teacher, which will outline all current exam date information and fees involved. If the teacher feels a student needs more time before they are ready for the exam, they will receive a letter explaining which areas are in need of improvement for examination standard. Each student who notifies the studio that they would like to be considered for an exam will receive a letter either inviting them to participate or explaining why they are not ready at this time.

All examination entries are at the discretion of the Artistic Director and the decision to invite dancers to participate in examinations is made with the full interest of the student in mind. We want everyone's examination experience to be a positive one!

4. If a student is invited to take an exam, and they decide to commit to participating, they are required to submit a completed **Exam Commitment form** (which will be included with their exam invitation) along with exam fee payment to the CSD office by **Saturday, December 2**. In order to participate in spring exams, we must meet entry deadlines in December, so we are not able to accept late notifications.

Deadline for Exam Interest Form: Saturday, November 11, 2017

Deadline for Exam Commitment Form & Fee: Saturday, December 2, 2017

For more information on examinations at CSD, please visit the following link to our website:
<http://csdance.com/program-services/dance-examinations/>

WHEN ARE EXAMS? Dance examinations are held during the day in normal school and working hours, and/or on Sundays. We anticipate that jazz and tap exams will take place in April, and ballet exams will most likely be held in the beginning of May. Exact examination dates and times are determined by the RAD and ISTD associations.

In order to have examinations at our studio, the school submits the applicable exam entry forms and then we wait to be informed of our exam dates. We realize that it may be difficult for parents and students to commit to the exams when specific dates are not set in advance, but unfortunately, we have no control over the selection of dates for exams. The RAD and ISTD organizations plan the examiners' tours and slot each studio in the tour according to travel and a variety of other factors. While we are not able to request specific dates for exams, we are able to supply a list of 'impossible dates', so that conflicts with other studio events or exams do not arise. **Please notify the studio of any 'impossible dates' that you may have at time of payment for exam.**

HOW MUCH ARE EXAM FEES? Examination fees are determined by the RAD and ISTD associations. The school must meet examination entry deadlines and we are required to submit exam fees in one cheque from the school to the RAD and ISTD. We charge students the exact examination fee for RAD exams. For ISTD exams, we have to add a fee to cover the cost of conversion from CDN money. Students pay their exam fees to CSD and then the school submits one cheque for all of the exam fees with the examination entry form by the entry deadline. Please note that if we do not have your exam fee by the payment deadline, your dancer will not be entered for the examination.

ARE THE EXAM FEES REFUNDABLE?

Unfortunately, once the exam fee is submitted, it is non-refundable, even if the dancer is unable to attend the exam. If a dancer is injured and cannot participate in their exam, they must supply a doctor's note to the RAD or ISTD in order to receive a partial credit to be used towards a future exam fee. The RAD and ISTD have their own refund policies.

WHAT ARE EXAM COACHING CLASSES? Exam coaching classes are extra classes for each exam group (1-4 dancers) to prepare and practice for their exam, so that they are confident on their exam day. There are usually 2-5 coaching classes needed per group to prepare for their exam. Teachers will determine the number of classes needed.

Coaching classes are **ABSOLUTELY MANDATORY**; i.e. if a dancer misses an exam coaching class, they will not be permitted to participate in their exam, and there will be no refund of exam fee. Coaching classes are used to prepare each group of dancers for their exams, including spacing of dancers in the room, settings and arrangements of exercises, and in some cases, they learn new work for their exam in these classes as well. If a dancer misses a coaching class, they not only affect their own learning and preparation for the exam, but they also severely impact the other dancers in their group from properly preparing for the exam.

We also try to arrange that the music accompanist be present for at least 1 coaching class, so the students are used to them being in the room as well. For ballet, we try to have two practices with the pianist, as the music is played live in the exam.

When exam invitations are given out, we will provide dates for possible coaching classes. When payment is made for an examination, parents are also agreeing that their dancer will be available for those coaching dates. If you have a conflict with a possible coaching class date, you must inform the school in writing at time of payment for the exam so the teacher can see if they can re-schedule dates for classes. Once we know who is confirmed as participating in the exams, we can determine exam groups, and set specific times for coaching classes for each exam group. A coaching class schedule will be made for all exam coaching classes, and it will be emailed to all exam participants and posted at the studio. It is up to the parent and dancer to keep track of their coaching classes. Reminder: All coaching classes are **MANDATORY!** If you miss a coaching class, you will forfeit your exam and the exam fee.

IS THERE A FEE FOR COACHING CLASSES? Yes, there is an Exam Coaching Class Fee, which is approximately \$15.00 per hour. This fee pays for the teachers' rate per hour and the accompanists' rate per hour over the total number of coaching classes. If a student is entering an exam by themselves, they will be charged the private class rate of \$50.00 per hour. Each student will also be charged \$10.00 to contribute towards the accompanists' rate of pay on examination day. Coaching class fees will be charged to students' accounts and must be paid in full prior to taking the exam.

WHAT DOES MY DANCER NEED TO WEAR FOR EXAMS? Exam candidates must have the correct examination uniform in order to participate in exams, and all dancewear must be clean and free of runs or holes. Please consult the studio dance uniform at our website, or ask your teacher to make sure you have the correct attire needed for the exam. Dancers will be expected to wear their correct exam uniform to ALL exam coaching sessions.

EXAM HAIR & GROOMING

Dancers are expected to have impeccable grooming, including their hair, for every coaching class as well as the exam. For ballet, hair is slicked back into a proper bun with hair pins and hairnet (no bangs). For jazz and tap, teachers style the dancers' hair on the day of the exam in either french braids or sequential ponytails, with bows! The dancers usually love their hair-dos and can't wait to wear it back to school!

Please note that dancers are not permitted to wear **ANY** jewelry into an exam, with the exception of medic alert bracelets. If your dancer is going to get their ears newly pierced, please wait until after their exam, as their earrings will need to be removed for the examination (and end-of-year performance!)

HAVE A QUESTION? Please feel free to call the studio 519-725-0143 if you have any other questions regarding examinations. Our teachers are here to help and want to ensure that everyone is informed and has a positive examination experience!

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE RAD AND ISTD

Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) website: www.radcanada.org

Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) website: www.istd.org

CSD STUDENT EXAMINATION INTEREST FORM

*Please submit this form to your teacher or the CSD office by the deadline: **Saturday, November 11th, 2017.***

STUDENT NAME: _____

I **am** interested in being considered for the following dance examinations this year:

Ballet:

Jazz:

Tap:

I **am not** interested in being considered for any dance examinations this year.