

Fiery Feet Dance Studio

Examinations - information

Our dancers work toward exams with the British Theatre Dance Association (BTDA) who are in turn governed by the Graded Qualifications Alliance (GQAL.)

Our grades are as follows:

Pre-Prep (Tap only) Preparatory, Primary, Introduction to grade 1 (Ballet only) and Grade 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

In our Nursery class dancers work toward some less formal graded work – see 'On The Day' section.

Exams are a great goal for dancers to work toward, and mean that they gain formal recognition for their hard work.

Dancers prepare during class time, and when they meet or exceed their teacher's criteria an exam date and invoice is sent out to parents / guardians.

Entry into examinations is done on an individual basis - a whole class of dancers will not necessarily take an exam at the same time.

We take into account how a dancer is feeling about their exam too – we want them to feel completely prepared and confident.

When...?

We hold up to eight exam sessions each year, and all dates can be viewed in our 'Diary Dates' pdf (available on our website.)

Most exam sessions take place on a Sunday, though during our busier exam periods we may run double exam sessions which take place over a whole weekend.

When you initially receive your dancer's exam date you are required to keep the whole day free. Around two weeks before you will be given an arrival time. Dancers are required for no more than an hour and a half (less for the lower grades.)

We avoid setting exam dates that clash with school holidays.

Should your dancer be unavailable, we recommend that they take their exam at a later date rather than skip up into the next grade. The benefit of holding so many exam sessions is that there's usually not long to wait.

Where...?

All examinations take place at our studio, so dancers are in a familiar, friendly and professional environment.

On The Day

It is important that dancers arrive promptly at their arrival time (dancers are entered in groups of up to four so one dancer being late may cause a delay for others.)

The arrival time that we give dancers allows for thirty minutes to warm up, have a last minute practise and prepare mentally for their exam.

Dancers are expected to arrive fully ready. See 'Examinations – uniform and grooming' document.

One parent or guardian is required to supervise younger dancers on the day of their exam.

All dancers (and parents / guardians) wait in our small studio before their exam. We encourage that you a drink, small snack, hair supplies (spare hair grips etc.) safety pins and even a sewing kit.

As the time of a dancer's exam approaches, the supervising teacher will give them a numbered badge (1 – 4.)

They will then be asked to move across to the waiting area outside the main studio, and told to enter the room for their exam as the previous group exits.

Parents / guardians are asked to remain in the small studio throughout, and for almost all exams teachers are not permitted to enter the main studio with dancers.

Dancers perform their work for one of the BTDA examiners who will guide them through by asking for each exercise in turn. The only other person in the room is the music player – usually one of our older dancers.

At the end, the examiner will thank dancers and dismiss them and they will be guided back to parents / guardians in the small studio.

Dancers receive their results (a certificate, and comment sheet or score break down) around three weeks later.

For Nursery dancers this is slightly different as a teacher is permitted into the main studio to help dancers through their exercises. Nursery exams are like a slightly more formal class, which the examiner simply observes. Nursery dancers receive a trophy from the examiner at the end, along with a hand written results sheet. A printed certificate arrives around three weeks later.

Results

Up to grade 1, dancers might receive a pass, commended, highly commended, honours or honours star.

Grade 1 and above, dancers might receive a pass, pass with merit, pass with distinction or pass with platinum.

Feeling nervous...?

Butterflies in a dancer's tummy are completely natural before an exam!

In the run up to their exam, we recreate the exam environment within class time so that they have a good understanding of how it will work on the day.

Trust us! We would never enter a dancer for an exam if we didn't feel they are capable of doing well. The benefit of considering dancers for exams on an individual basis is that some can wait for a later session and have a few extra weeks practise if they would prefer.

It is very important to us that dancers think of exams as a positive and exciting event - not something to feel worried about. This starts with their teacher during class time, but firmly continues on the day of the exam. Though there are formalities that have to be met, we enforce these in a very positive and calm way, as does the examiner.

Pdf practise sheets and videos of most grades are available in the practise resources area of our website (password FF4EVA) which dancers can use at home to make sure they feel super prepared!

What can I do to help my dancer prepare....?

When deciding if a dancer is ready for an exam, our teachers look at the following criteria:

1. Knowledge – can the dancer remember the exercises / routines from one week to another?
2. Technique – is what the dancer is showing correct in terms of placement, stance, alignment etc.
3. Energy – is the dancer performing 'full out' with the required elevation, attack and flare required?
4. Performance – does the dancer use their whole body – including their face – to show confidence or reflect the music?
5. Improvement – are we seeing a clear improvement from one week to the next?

As long as dancers listen carefully and take on board what they are taught in class time all of the above can be achieved.

You can help support your dancer by:

1. Maintaining a high level of attendance – please do not agree to an exam if your dancer is going to miss lots of classes in the run up to it.
2. Ensuring that dancers have the appropriate kit (especially footwear) so that they can practise correctly during class time.
3. Downloading practise resources to use at home.
4. Where our timetable allows, dancers are welcome to attend additional classes closer to their exam date or book for a private tuition.
5. Where our timetable allows, older dancers are permitted to book a timeslot in our studio to allow them to independently practise their work.