

Professional Performing Arts Diplomas

Validation Requirements

Trinity College London
www.trinitycollege.com

Charity number 1014792

Patron HRH The Duke of Kent KG

Copyright © 2015 Trinity College London

Published by Trinity College London

Second edition, June 2015

Background information

About Trinity

Trinity College London is a leading international exam board, conducting over 700,000 assessments in over 60 countries each year. Trinity provides the highest quality of assessment, access to a unique range of research and development, a comprehensive curriculum framework and a wide-ranging support service for teachers and students.

Trinity validates courses leading to its qualifications which are offered by organisations in the state and independent sectors in the UK and worldwide.

Trinity is recognised by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), which regulates by setting standards and rules that awarding organisations need to meet when they design, deliver and award regulated qualifications. Trinity is also recognised by the Welsh Government (WG).

The Professional Performing Arts Diplomas

In 1999, the Department for Education and Employment announced a scheme of financial awards in dance and drama to enable talented young people to access high-quality training provided by a number of highly respected schools and colleges in professional acting, dance and musical theatre. These awards are generally known as the Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA).

The initiation of the awards led to the development of new qualifications, devised with advice from members of the theatrical professions and from the Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET) and the National Council for Drama Training (now Drama UK).

Trinity is the awarding organisation for these qualifications, which are moderated and assessed by experienced theatre and performance professionals who continue to work in the industry.

The Professional Performing Arts Diplomas are designed to be integrated within existing programmes of study, and course providers undergo a process of validation to ensure the qualifications are delivered to the appropriate standard. The validation process focuses on the ways in which **existing** courses fit into Trinity's requirements, rather than the other way around. Trinity only validates courses with at least three preceding years' graduate employment destination data.

Aim of validation

The validation process aims to ensure that course providers are able to deliver relevant courses at the high professional performance standard required for students to achieve Professional Performing Arts Diplomas. Course providers are normally validated for three years. After this period course providers are subject to revalidation by Trinity. If the course is revalidated, the term of validation will be stated. This may range from one to six years, and conditions/recommendations for revalidation may be made.

Status of course providers

All current course providers have been validated by Trinity to deliver one or more of the Professional Performing Arts Diplomas. Validated course providers are considered to be providing training of the highest quality for the performing arts professions.

This validation requirements document sets out the validation process through which course providers must demonstrate their ability to conduct programmes leading to the following qualifications:

- ▶ Level 6 Diploma in Professional Acting
- ▶ Level 6 Diploma in Professional Dance
- ▶ Level 6 Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre
- ▶ Level 5 Diploma in Professional Acting
- ▶ Level 5 Diploma in Professional Dance (Classical Ballet or Contemporary Dance)

All colleges wishing to apply for Dance and Drama Awards for their students are required to have been previously validated by Trinity to provide one or more of the above diplomas through their course(s).

Trinity does not have any responsibility for the allocation of the financial awards, and becoming a validated course provider does not guarantee funding.

It should be noted that a validated college, at its discretion, can offer courses leading to a Trinity Professional Diploma to all students, whether or not they are in receipt of DaDA funding.

Qualification status within further education

Trinity Professional Performing Arts Diplomas are recognised by Ofqual at Level 6 and Level 5 on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

The Level 6 Professional Performing Arts Diplomas are vocational qualifications with comparable standards of assessment to year three of a degree programme. The Level 5 Professional Performing Arts Diplomas are vocational qualifications with comparable standards of assessment to year two of a degree programme. The qualifications are designed to prepare students for a professional career in the performing arts, and therefore focus on professional competence and knowledge.

The diplomas are not degrees, but vocational qualifications which are recognised by the profession.

The following qualifications are recognised at Level 6 on the Qualifications and Credit Framework:

- ▶ Level 6 Diploma in Professional Acting (420 credits)
- ▶ Level 6 Diploma in Professional Dance (420 credits)
- ▶ Level 6 Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre (420 credits)

The following qualifications are recognised at Level 5 on the Qualifications and Credit Framework:

- ▶ Level 5 Diploma in Professional Acting (150 credits)
- ▶ Level 5 Diploma in Professional Dance (Classical Ballet or Contemporary Dance) (255 credits)

In order for a course to be validated it must meet the requirements as specified in the relevant syllabus.

The validation process – quality assurance

The validation process is undertaken in three stages and involves three categories of quality assurance. Colleges are encouraged to contact Trinity for prior discussion on the requirements before applying for validation.

1. The specific course

Assessing the ability of the college to fulfil the necessary specifications of the Trinity Professional Performing Arts Diplomas and to implement an agreed programme of internal and external assessment and moderation with Trinity.

2. The college

Assessing the ability of the college to provide effective, efficient and appropriate education and training.

3. Overall specialised provision

Assessing the ability of the college to provide learners with the specialist training needed for employment in the professions of acting, dancing and musical theatre.

In its validation process Trinity recognises other inspection and monitoring bodies such as CDET, Drama UK, Ofsted and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Applicant colleges who have approval by one of these bodies may be eligible for a lighter touch validation procedure, depending on the evidence demonstrated in these reports.

However, it should be noted that the main emphasis in validation relates to course design and implementation specifically for the qualification, rather than to wider institutional factors.

Additionally, the validation process is designed to be a creative as well as a standardising process, enabling the dissemination of best practice.

Ongoing scrutiny

After a college has been approved and validated by Trinity there will be ongoing scrutiny of the course provider and the course content. This is to ensure that high standards are maintained, and that students continue to achieve at appropriate levels.

Throughout the delivery period of the Professional Performing Arts Diplomas, Trinity will ask assessors to comment on the work of the provider's assessment and course content.

It is the ongoing role of Trinity assessors to highlight areas of good practice and raise areas of concern. Assessors' comments regarding good practice, areas of concern and any other matters form part of moderation and assessment reports which are sent to the course provider and copies of which are retained by Trinity. Where key issues (positive and negative) are identified in these reports, Trinity will discuss them with the course provider.

Note: Once validated, course providers are expected to register students for the Professional Performing Arts Diplomas in the next academic year and in each subsequent year throughout the term of validation. Trinity reserves the right to reconsider the validated status of that college if students are not registered.

Obtaining validation

Trinity cannot begin the validation process unless the current course meets the following requirements:

- ▶ at least three years' of graduating students' employment destination data is available
- ▶ the current course is the same length as the diploma (eg three years for the Level 6 diplomas)
- ▶ the current course is achieving the guided learning hours as specified in the relevant syllabus.

Introduction

The aim of the validation process is to ensure that students receive the appropriate tuition, support and assessment to meet satisfactorily the requirements of the Professional Performance Arts Diplomas.

Course provision and design, while remaining the primary responsibility of each college, must meet Trinity's specified criteria.

Validation by Trinity relates solely to the provision of the Professional Performing Arts Diplomas.

Validation process

The three-stage validation process provides support and feedback in order to ensure that courses of study meet the rigorous standards required.

Note: A course must have produced at least three years of graduates in order to provide the necessary employment destination data.

Stage 1: Pre-validation performance visit

A potential provider should email drama@trinitycollege.com expressing interest in being validated.

Trinity will send an assessor to attend a performance by graduating students in their final term to assess whether they are reaching the required performance standard to meet the requirements of the diploma.

A report will be sent to the college with advice and recommendations on student standards in relation to the requirements of the diploma as specified in the syllabus.

Trinity will also advise on whether the college should proceed to the next stage of the process.

Stage 2: Pre-validation provider visit

This is normally a one-day visit where the Trinity validation team visits the college's premises to observe classes in all years of the course and discuss course delivery with senior staff.

In advance of the visit the college must provide:

- ▶ course timetables
- ▶ course descriptions
- ▶ staff CVs
- ▶ publicity, PR material and a prospectus
- ▶ employment data for graduates from the preceding three years
- ▶ details of assessment procedures and methods
- ▶ any relevant reports from Ofsted, CDET, Drama UK or similar organisations, and any other external reports
- ▶ ongoing quality assurance and development information.

The validation team will produce a report on the standard of students in relation to the requirements of the diploma. The report will also comment on the standard of teaching, course structure, assessment methods and the college's potential to provide the qualification. Any conditions and recommendations should be met prior to proceeding to the next stage.

The pre-validation visit is an opportunity for any college to establish from Trinity which, if any, areas within the college need attention before it applies for full validation.

Stage 3: Full validation visit

The validation team will consist of Trinity staff and at least two senior assessors with relevant areas of expertise. The names of the senior assessors will be sent to the college in advance of the visit. Trinity will work with the college to ensure that there are no potential conflicts of interest or any other issues which might influence the impartiality of the validation team.

In advance of the visit, the college must produce the documentation listed under 'Information to be made available' on page 9 of these validation requirements.

The visit must take place at a time when the college is delivering a full timetable of classes and will normally last three days.

The validation team will require a private room to use as a base where they can review documentation and hold confidential meetings.

The team will discuss their findings informally with senior staff during the visit. A full report will be prepared and a draft will be sent for data-checking prior to the final report being issued. The report may contain conditions or recommendations which must be addressed before validation can be granted.

Implementation of a full validation visit does not guarantee validation.

Timing

Successful completion of the three stages of the validation process usually takes at least a year and frequently longer.

Trinity will not validate courses that do not meet the criteria. An unsuccessful outcome of the application process indicates that the course does not meet Trinity's requirements. It does not comment on the merits of the course.

A course cannot be promoted as leading to the Professional Performing Arts Diploma until the validation process has been successfully completed.

Fees

A separate fee is payable at each stage of the process. Details can be found at www.trinitycollege.com/dada

No reports can be released until payment is received in full.

Duration of validation

Validation is usually granted for a period of three academic years from the commencement of the academic year following confirmation of validation.

Once validated, the college is required to inform Trinity of any significant changes in resources, premises or course content. These include:

- ▶ changes in governance or ownership
- ▶ additions to, or replacement of, key staff including management and directors of courses
- ▶ major adjustments to the timetable
- ▶ additions or removals from the range of courses offered
- ▶ significant changes in entry criteria and procedures, group sizes or staff:student ratios
- ▶ major changes to premises including relocation or extension, particularly where these affect the space available for tuition, practice and performance.

Trinity reserves the right to request additional information or visit the college in these circumstances.

Running a validated course

Once a course has been validated by Trinity, students must be registered within 12 months of validation. Course providers who do not register students within this period must reapply for validation.

New course providers will be issued with a copy of the course provider handbook.

Revalidation

When the initial validation period expires Trinity will conduct a revalidation process to ensure that all diploma requirements continue to be fully met. Trinity will contact the course provider to arrange this process, the form of which will be dependent on ongoing moderation and assessment reports and other material changes as noted above. A fee will be charged for revalidation.

A course provider who fails to meet the requirements may have their validation withdrawn.

Continuing validation and withdrawal of validation

All colleges running courses validated by Trinity must comply with Trinity's validation requirements and the guidance as set out in the course provider handbook. A contract will be issued to the college, providing details of the terms of Trinity's agreement with a course provider, and if the terms are breached Trinity may withdraw validation.

Withdrawal will normally be preceded by a warning and a period of time during which the course provider can make good the infringement of regulations, unless it is considered appropriate to withdraw validation immediately in the interests of existing/potential students and/or Trinity's reputation.

Validation of courses by Trinity may be withdrawn, for the following reasons:

- ▶ the course provider delivers a course that does not comply with the criteria
- ▶ requirements for changes to course provision are not complied with (unless an alternative agreement is reached with Trinity in writing).

Validation can also be withdrawn without notice if:

- ▶ the course provider does not settle invoices for validation, moderation and other appropriate charges in full by the due dates reasonably announced
- ▶ the course provider is found to mislead or mistreat students in respect of their financial commitments
- ▶ the course provider is judged to have brought Trinity's procedures, qualifications or personnel into disrepute
- ▶ the course provider does not abide by the conditions of the contract.

Health and safety

Course providers are responsible for the implementation of local health and safety regulations appropriate to the venue(s) used. Trinity's health and safety policy may be consulted on application.

In the event of dance students under the age of 16 attending teaching practice sessions, special arrangements must be made to ensure that regulations regarding the health, safety and protection of young people are respected.

Special needs

Trinity is committed to creating an inclusive environment where candidates with special needs are able to demonstrate their skills and feel welcomed. Students with special needs who have successfully auditioned for a place on a course should communicate their requirements to the course provider in order that their needs may be met and special arrangements made as and where possible. Students with special needs should also make their GP aware of the nature of the course they are undertaking and be prepared to present a clearance note from their GP approving their participation.

Special needs and course provider responsibility

Each course provider is validated separately and within this procedure the course provider needs to show that they are making reasonable adjustments to adapt their course and assessments to provide for students with special needs. Course providers should inform Trinity regarding the special needs of individual students so that assessors are appropriately informed prior to visits.

Reasonable adjustments and special consideration

By regularly reviewing the way in which we provide our services, Trinity aims to identify the barriers or impediments to access.

The validation visit

Trinity believes that it is important for validation visits to be carried out in a way that secures the co-operation and confidence of the management, staff and students of the college being validated. In order to achieve this:

- ▶ assessors will be fully prepared for the validations they undertake
- ▶ potential course providers are briefed before validation visits so that the inspection process and their involvement in it are fully understood
- ▶ the time devoted to the visit is adequate for the range of courses being assessed for validation
- ▶ the validation will be conducted in a way that engages the college's staff, and keeps them informed of emerging issues and findings
- ▶ the validation team will interview groups of students about their experience of the course and consider their responses as part of the evidence for validation
- ▶ evidence already submitted and assessed for other statutory, professional or vocational scrutiny will be taken fully into account.

Information to be made available

In addition to the information made available at Stage 2 (pre-validation visit), the college may also be asked to provide further details of the following:

- ▶ course outline and description
- ▶ assessment procedures and criteria
- ▶ graduate destination data for the past three years
- ▶ audition and interview procedures
- ▶ teachers' CVs/biographies
- ▶ quality assurance documents, including appeals procedure and all policies (eg health and safety, grievance)
- ▶ management structure of the organisation
- ▶ information on student support and guidance.

Validation scrutiny

During the validation visit the Trinity team will consider the following areas of provision:

- ▶ timetable in relation to the requirements of the diploma
- ▶ student attainment and progress
- ▶ teaching, learning and assessment
- ▶ course structure and content
- ▶ potential to provide the qualification
- ▶ student support and guidance
- ▶ resources
- ▶ leadership and management, including quality assurance processes.

During the validation visit the team will:

- ▶ scrutinise documentation
- ▶ interview students, teachers, course leaders and other relevant staff
- ▶ observe classes and rehearsals
- ▶ undertake a tour of the premises.

Key areas of consideration

1. Achievements and standards

Does the college:

- ▶ provide premises and resources appropriate for the delivery of a course leading to the diploma?
- ▶ achieve consistently high standards across its provision of training?
- ▶ give students sufficient and appropriate opportunities to perform?
- ▶ prepare students effectively for participation in the world of work relevant to their course of study?
- ▶ take steps to ensure that assessment is used to monitor and inform students about their progress and how they might develop further?

Do students:

- ▶ make appropriate progress throughout their course of study?
- ▶ develop lifelong learning skills and the capacity to work both independently and within a team?
- ▶ reach required levels of key and supporting skills by the final year of training?
- ▶ observe appropriate standards of attendance and punctuality?
- ▶ develop skills of critical analysis, research and independent learning?
- ▶ progress to viable and appropriate employment?

2. Teaching training, learning and assessment

Assessors will consider:

- ▶ forms of assessment and quality of feedback
- ▶ fairness, accuracy and regularity of assessment
- ▶ how assessment is used to guide course development
- ▶ whether the assessment and moderation procedures meet Trinity's minimum requirements
- ▶ quality of information given to parents, employers and others with a legitimate interest in student progress
- ▶ the extent to which teaching staff show technical competence and relevant expertise at a level consistent with effective delivery of the diploma.

Assessors will consider the extent to which teachers:

- ▶ plan effectively with clear objectives understood by their students
- ▶ use methods and styles of teaching and training consistent with the aims of the course, the provision of the Trinity diploma(s) and learners' personal objectives
- ▶ challenge and inspire learners
- ▶ set, use and mark assignments and other tasks in order to encourage student progress
- ▶ work with students to develop individual learning plans informed by initial assessment that is reviewed and updated regularly
- ▶ promote a creative and supporting learning environment
- ▶ use materials and teaching methods that promote equality of opportunity in learning.

Do students:

- ▶ acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to develop their ideas and increase their level of understanding?
- ▶ understand and have confidence in their progression and objectives?
- ▶ demonstrate that they are stimulated by, and interested in, their work?

3. Courses and resources

Assessors will consider how effectively the college gives learners access to:

- ▶ a curriculum which is planned, resourced and managed effectively to provide coherence and progression, and which meets the minimum guided learning hours requirements as specified in the relevant syllabus
- ▶ a programme which takes into account employers' needs
- ▶ an appropriate range of courses to achieve suitable qualifications
- ▶ a curriculum which is socially inclusive, ensuring equality of access and opportunity

- ▶ a suitable range of enrichment activities to broaden their experience and personal development
- ▶ a coherent well-planned timetable with sufficient and appropriate breaks
- ▶ contact with the professions including employers, unions, associations, specialist media, with any corporate memberships held by the institution.

Under this heading the validation team will also look at staffing within the college and whether there are sufficient staff to meet the needs of the course and the students.

Assessors will review how the college:

- ▶ provides and/or supports the professional development of staff to contribute to their effectiveness
- ▶ provides appropriate premises, specialist equipment and materials to meet current industry standards and to support staff in good teaching practice
- ▶ maintains appropriate staff:student ratios.

Assessors will also consider:

- ▶ provision of learning resources for students for effective independent study
- ▶ the safety and appropriateness of the students' work environment
- ▶ the ability of resources and accommodation to provide for full participation by all students.

4. Support and guidance for learners

Assessors will consider the ways in which the college supports students through the following:

- ▶ tutorial arrangements and how they are managed
- ▶ careers education and guidance
- ▶ procedures to monitor and manage poor punctuality, non-attendance and poor performance
- ▶ induction processes and student support resources
- ▶ recognition of individual learning needs and effective additional support and access to support services
- ▶ providing effective pastoral care including access to specialist support services
- ▶ procedure and guidance for dealing with injuries.

5. Leadership and management

Assessors will consider how the management and leadership of the college establish:

- ▶ clear direction through strategic objectives, targets and values that are understood by staff
- ▶ targets for retention, achievement, progression and employment
- ▶ quality assurance arrangements which are systematic and informed by the views of all interested parties
- ▶ rigorous self-assessment which leads to identified priorities and targets for improvement
- ▶ priorities which are supported by sound financial management
- ▶ information systems which meet the needs of managers and other staff and are used effectively to benefit students
- ▶ performance management, staff appraisal and review which are effective in improving the quality of provision
- ▶ explicit aims, values and strategies which promote equality for all
- ▶ effective measures to ensure appropriate standards of behaviour
- ▶ effective procedures for dealing with appeals and complaints
- ▶ supervisory boards which effectively oversee the provider's strategic direction and their own performance
- ▶ effective use of resources.

6. Course-specific provision

Assessors will consider:

- ▶ course structure, including the proportion of compulsory and optional units within the diploma
- ▶ course design in terms of the learning outcomes for each unit (including key and supporting skills and integrated professional studies), and for the course as a whole
- ▶ course implementation in terms of approach, method and technique for each unit
- ▶ documentation concerning assessment processes and performing opportunities
- ▶ records of achievement of past students in entering employment and progressing to further employment.

Meetings

Meetings will normally be required with some or all of the following staff:

- ▶ the director/principal or chief executive
- ▶ the deputy-director/vice-principal
- ▶ heads of relevant departments
- ▶ directors of courses
- ▶ staff responsible for the delivery of courses and pastoral care
- ▶ staff responsible for health and welfare, first aid, accommodation
- ▶ students following the programmes being scrutinised (all year groups)
- ▶ staff responsible for auditioning, monitoring and internal assessment.

The conduct of the validation team

Members of the validation team will uphold high professional standards in their work. They will:

- ▶ be impartial and objective – this requires that they have no connection with the college that could undermine their objectivity
- ▶ be open and transparent in the way they work, providing feedback on the validation visit
- ▶ carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity
- ▶ act with the best interests of learners as a priority
- ▶ report back to Trinity honestly and fairly.

The quality of validation

Validations will be conducted in such a way that:

- ▶ the evidence gathered from observations, learners, staff and others, and from documentation, is sufficient to sustain secure judgements
- ▶ judgements are consistent with the evidence, and overall findings reflect the balance of evidence and the collective view of the validation team
- ▶ the communication of findings, orally and in writing, is clear, well-argued, succinct and based convincingly on evidence gathered before and during the validation.