Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

Guidelines on Inclusive Practice and Alternative Forms of Assessment for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School

Central School of Ballet

circus space

LAMDA

the place London Contemporary Dance School

Northern School of Contemporary Dance

RAMBERT SCHOOL of Ballet and Contemporary Dance

RADA

Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

Conservatoire for Dance and Drama
Tavistock House
Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9JJ

Cover photo: LAMDA by Richard Hubert Smith © LAMDA Limited

GUIDELINES on INCLUSIVE PRACTICE and ALTERNATIVE FORMS of ASSESSMENT for STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Contents

Appendices

A note on the guidelines

1. Introduction

> **What is an 'alternative assessment'?**

Students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) such as dyslexia have many different talents, learning styles and ways of achieving success. Some have significant difficulties with academic or contextual work but are quick to learn the technical, practical aspects of the course. Others can cope well with work that requires reading and writing but have difficulties with physical co-ordination, learning sequences and memory of movement. Many students with SpLDs struggle with organisation, short term memory and time management, although they are likely to have significant strengths in other areas such as visual memory, creativity and artistry.

We know from experience that students with specific learning difficulties often have problems with literacy skills such as researching written materials, spelling and organising ideas into formal pieces of writing. These students will always underperform in writing essays or dissertations and have greater strengths in verbal skills.

This is particularly relevant for our students who are studying dance and circus arts degree programmes where academic and contextual work is an assessed part of the course. It means that these students can be at a significant disadvantage when asked to present their knowledge and understanding in traditional, written form. It is extremely helpful and in legal terms 'reasonable' to provide dyslexic students with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a different or 'alternative' way.

Essays, dissertations and similar assignments can be assessed through a viva (an interview using a 'question and answer' format), group discussion or visual presentation where students can be encouraged to use power point or poster presentations. Students who present work for assessment using a largely visual presentation will usually be asked to include a commentary which can be spoken, written or a combination of the two. This will often be followed by discussion with the markers. Detailed information about how to prepare for a viva, including information on what needs to be included in the presentation, who needs to be present, what the presentation should include, assessment and grading can be found in **Appendix 1.**

An alternative form of assessment which uses visual and oral forms of presentation should not be seen as an 'easy option' or provided on compassionate grounds. It needs to be equally demanding in terms of research, preparation and organisation of ideas. Work presented in an 'alternative' way should be equally rigorous in terms of the learning outcomes, even if students use a different route to display this and assessors should be prepared to use the full range of marks when grading the work.

> From interviews with Conservatoire students with SpLDs:
>
> *'The most frustrating thing is not being able to get what I want to say down on paper.'*
>
> *'If they could just look inside my head, they could see what I want to say.'*
>
> *'I spent an hour on the computer and I ended up with just three lines. I wasn't happy with any of them.'*

> ➤ **Why do we offer alternative forms of assessment to students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs)?**

In addition to general good practice, there is a legal reason for offering students with SpLDs alternative forms of assessment. Under the Equality Act 2010 (previously the Disability Discrimination Act), HEIs are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' so that disabled students are not unfairly disadvantaged in relation to their non-disabled peers. Dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties are conditions which, under the Equality Act, *'have an adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities'* and people with specific learning difficulties are covered by this legislation.

In affiliate schools where academic/contextual studies are part of the degree programme (our dance schools and at Circus Space), it is *reasonable* to expect all students to undertake some form of research and observation and to demonstrate a critical understanding of the context of their art form. But where we know that students with SpLDs are likely to underperform in formal written assignments, it is reasonable to provide them with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in an alternative way.

> ➤ **Deciding whether an oral presentation is an appropriate reasonable adjustment**

An oral presentation of work is not suitable form of alternative assessment for all dyslexic candidates and a decision needs to be made carefully with advice from a dyslexia specialist. It is a vehicle to help a candidate express their ideas and offer an analysis of a particular topic in the way that is most likely to reflect their ability and understanding. It is however, of little or no use asking a candidate to undertake an oral examination if they are 'dysfluent', i.e. if it is difficult for them to speak in front of people or retrieve words under pressure. Everyone gets nervous before any examination and an informed decision needs to be made about the most suitable form of assessment. The candidate's dyslexia report will have information about their strengths and weaknesses which may help to inform the decision.

The candidate needs to be part of this decision process and it is helpful to set up a pre-meeting to discuss this.

2   Inclusive Practice

➢ What is inclusive practice?

Inclusive practice means considering the needs of *all* students, including specific groups and individuals in all aspects of course/module design and delivery. Sometimes 'inclusion' is used in a more narrow sense to refer to strategies which enable students with an identified learning need to participate and demonstrate their learning, but it is better understood as practice where flexible teaching styles and different modes of assessment are routinely offered to *all* students. This differs from the more traditional model where there is only one teaching and learning style (most often a lecture or seminar and library based research) and where students are all assessed in the same way (usually through a written essay or dissertation).

Over the last few years affiliate schools have become more confident in constructing creative and flexible assignments which are designed to allow all students the opportunity to meet the learning outcomes and demonstrate their critical understanding of a course or module. There are many examples of inclusive practice in the Conservatoire where students are given the opportunity to study for and present work for assessment in different ways. These include:

- negotiated projects
- visual presentations
- group discussions
- research methods that include interviews and discussions with performing arts practitioners
- research which uses videos, blogs and websites.

Some examples of inclusive practice in affiliate schools are included in **Appendices 2 and 3.**

➢ Additional support and tutorials

Tutors and lecturers who support students with SpLDs report that a proactive approach to inclusion can have the unexpected effect of reducing the time they would otherwise spend working on a one-to-one basis helping students to prepare for an alternative to a traditional, written assignment.

3   Quality Assurance: Maintaining Academic and Other Standards

➢ Maintaining equivalent standards

Alternative forms of assessment need to be planned using the same or similar learning outcomes, for example, the ability to present, express and discuss work constructively and analytically and answer critical questions. Both the school and the awarding university need to feel confident that assessments which use or incorporate oral and visual material are comparable to a traditional essay or dissertation in terms of learning outcomes and need to be marked using the same or similar grade criteria.

➢ Quality assurance

It is important that any reasonable adjustments made to assignments normally submitted in the more traditional form of an essay or dissertation are open to quality assurance procedures and do not compromise 'academic' standards. Below are some things to consider in relation to quality assurance of alternative assessments:

- They should not compromise standards, neither advantage nor disadvantage a candidate or be driven by compassion.

- They should be designed around the same learning outcomes as a written assignment, with measurable and achievable criteria that connect directly to the assessment criteria used to judge achievement.

- Changes to the *mode of delivery* should not make any difference to the learning outcomes. A helpful way to think about this is for those involved in planning and marking an oral assignment is to think about the 'core elements' of the work and ensure that these can be demonstrated and assessed. So, for example, an assignment previously described as '*structure and compose a formal piece of extended writing which demonstrates a conceptual understanding of their art form*' can become '*structure and compose an oral presentation which demonstrates a conceptual understanding of their art form*' without altering the core elements or learning outcomes of the task.

- There is a need to ensure:

  - *consistency* between the different modes of assessment;

  - *transparency* in the way the assessment is conducted and;

  - *clarity* so that staff and candidates are confident that they understand the learning outcomes, the grade criteria and the difference between poor and excellent standards of achievement.

- Candidates who present work in an alternative mode need to find a way to demonstrate research, analysis and originality of thought. Their work needs to be clearly referenced even where a different format is used. Candidates should be able to incorporate and reference many different forms of research and evidence, including, where appropriate, traditional, book based research and more formal kinds of writing.

- Vivas and other forms of alternative assessment should be reviewed and approved at affiliate Academic Board Meetings.

- Alternative forms of assessment (even where they are better described as inclusive practice and used for all students) need to be included in the validation of new courses. The guidelines offered to markers assessing a viva will include, where appropriate, adapted learning outcomes. Some learning outcomes will require little or no change. For example, where a learning outcome stipulates 'clear, effective *written* communication', this can be redrafted as 'clear, effective *verbal* communication.' Other marking criteria may require more significant changes in order to ensure that they are achievable and assessable and meet the learning criteria. Adapted marking criteria used to assess a viva at NSCD is included in **Appendix 4**.

➢ **Marking and grading alternative forms of assessment.**

An alternative or less traditional assignment such as a viva, group discussion or visual needs to be marked against the same or similar measurable learning outcomes as those applied when assessing an essay or dissertation and marked using the same grade criteria. Examples of criteria currently in use in affiliate schools are:

- the ability to understand and analyse current dance practice and the range of processes by which a dance performance is created, realised and presented and/or;

- the ability to reflect on and analyse a performance within the wider framework of current dance and culture.

Candidates presenting work as an oral presentation (or viva) will normally include a question and answer session. A candidate will usually be expected to demonstrate their methods of research and investigation with either formal references, a guide to the contents of their work/presentation or some other way of producing evidence of their research methods. See **Appendix 1** for guidance on planning and preparing students for a viva or other oral presentation.

Alternative forms of assessment will often include an element of written work as part of the assignment, for example a commentary, hand-out or written bibliography.

4   Quality Assurance – keeping records

For quality assurance purposes and to ensure consistency and transparency, it is important to retain a clear record of what has been agreed and understood. This 'paper trail' should be stored in the students' file with due regard for confidentiality. It can include:

- **A written request** for the student to submit an alternative form of assessment. This request needs to be made to the appropriate senior staff member. It can come from the student, a tutor/lecturer or the support tutor.
- **Notes on the decisions made at the 'pre- meeting'.** The purpose of this meeting is to agree on some important decisions about the viva, for example, timing, location, length, format, how the candidate should prepare the first draft for their tutorial, date of tutorial etc. Notes on these decisions need to be given to all present and lodged in the student's file.
- **A consent form** is completed by the student and a copy retained in their file (see **Appendix 5**)

APPENDIX 1: GUIDANCE ON A VIVA OR OTHER ORAL PRESENTATION

The following information is useful in planning and preparing students for a viva or other form of oral presentation.

> ### The pre-meeting: what should it include?

Before a final decision is made about an alternative form of assessment, at least one teacher/assessor (and ideally the dyslexia specialist) should meet the student to discuss and agree some or all of the following:

- Whether a spoken presentation or group discussion is the best form of assessment for this candidate
- What it will entail (see below for more information on this)
- Advice on the work the candidate needs to do to prepare for this assessment
- Any equipment needed, e.g. video or Powerpoint equipment and/or visual displays such as posters
- Whether the candidate will see the questions in advance and if so, when they will be given to them
- Who is going to take responsibility for recording the viva.

> ### The consent form

Once the above decisions have been agreed, the candidate needs to sign a consent form showing that they understand the process and agree that the assessment will be recorded for marking and external examination purposes. See **Appendix 5** for a sample consent form.

> ### Helping the candidate prepare for their alternative assessment

An oral presentation is not an easy option and will require at least as much study and preparation as a piece of written work. A candidate preparing for this form of assessment should be given the same kind of support as one who is preparing a written assignment.

Once it has been agreed that the candidate will be assessed by viva, a date needs to be set for a tutorial. The teacher/assessor should review the content and delivery of the presentation as s/he would a draft essay or dissertation and offer the student advice and suggestions on ways to improve both the content and the presentation. The tutor will offer advice on its delivery in the same way as for a draft essay or dissertation and with the same learning outcomes in mind. This might involve watching videos, power points, reviewing poster presentations or other media.

> ### Who should be present?

Affiliates will decide the best way to assess the viva, but a panel of three members of staff might be the best way to do this. This could include the course tutor/lecturer, a second

marker and a third person who acts in the role of observer and whose role is to oversee the rules of the viva or presentation. This might be the school's dyslexia specialist or support tutor and ideally, it will be someone who is not involved in teaching or marking, although in small schools, this is not always possible.

> **The performance**

Timing: The viva or other will normally last up to (but rarely longer than) **1 hour.** The presentation will last a *maximum* of **30 minutes** during which time the staff may take notes and the questions will last up to a further 30 minutes.

Asking questions: If the panel has decided not to give candidates the questions before their viva, they need to meet in advance to compile the key questions and agree on how the questions will be shared between them. It is generally considered helpful for the candidate to have some idea of the questions before the assessment although the school can decide the best way to do this. Each question should have equal weighting and validity in relation to the presentation and field of enquiry. Candidates will also benefit if:

- They are given a definition of key words in advance, for example the meaning of 'evaluate', 'discuss' and 'analyse'
- They are told in advance that they can ask if they don't understand what the question means. Sometimes dyslexic students struggle not because they don't know the answer but because they don't understand the question!
- Pen and paper are to hand to make a note of the question before they answer (if they find it helpful)
- Panel members avoid long preambles to questions and offer signposts e.g. '*I want to ask you about…*'
- Panel members ask open questions (what, how, why) that give candidates the opportunity to answer in a number of different ways. Where candidates have been identified as having problems with working memory, it is reasonable for the panel to repeat questions or instructions. The candidate needs to be given time to answer each question with supportive evidence for their answer.

What should be included? In addition to a straightforward question and answer session, an oral presentation can include one or more of the following for all or part of the presentation:

- A portfolio, reflective log or diary presented in a visual rather than written format e.g. a video
- Powerpoint presentation

- A prepared, referenced review of a performance
- A visual presentation such as a poster which illustrates research and investigation
- Mind mapping presentations (e.g. using Inspiration software)

Candidates can also be encouraged to use audio-visual material to present and further support their work, for example a short film showing a personal performance or choreographic work.

➤ Problems to avoid

In order to ensure that the session goes well, it is helpful to take steps in order to avoid:

- A dysfunctional start or finish to the assessment
- Covering the ground too fast or too slowly
- Examiners/assessors talking too much
- Candidates talking too much or staying too long on irrelevant topics.

➤ Recording the presentation or viva

The viva must be recorded/filmed for the use of the marker and the external examiner. The recording needs to be filed securely up to the point when the mark has been agreed by the panel and approved by the external examiner. The candidate will have signed a consent form giving permission for the recording to be used in this way and where schools feel this is appropriate, used for staff training. See **Appendix 5**.

➤ Marking

Taking notes: Panel members should take notes during the viva. A chart with a summary of the marking criteria/grade boundaries can be useful at this stage.

Discussing and agreeing the marks: This should be done as soon as possible, ideally immediately after the session or as soon as possible after this. Where there is disagreement about the mark, the recording and other visual material used by the candidate can be a useful back up and resource.

The external examiner: The recording needs to be stored safely and be easily available for the external examiner to see as requested. Once the mark has been agreed, the recording can be deleted.

APPENDIX 2: Inclusive Practice at Central School of Ballet
Information for 2nd year students on how to prepare for a viva on their
Design 4 Dance Project (D4D)

The following guidance on how to prepare for an assessment was circulated to all 2nd Year Students at CSB. The work was presented and marked on a group discussion (or viva) and is an example of an inclusive assessment i.e. one where all students, including those with specific learning difficulties can take part.

Guidance for Students:

You will attend the vivas (verbal presentations) in small groups and will answer questions on your experience of the D4D work. The types of questions asked will be as follows:

- **Choreography:** What artistic decisions were made about the starting points, inspirations and choreographic intentions for the piece? In what ways did the music and design contribute to the piece? How effective was the collaboration with the choreographer and designer? How did you or the choreographer you were working with go about realising the artistic vision for the piece (i.e. choice of movement, structures and contribution of the dancers)?

- **Rehearsal:** What was the starting point, theme or idea for the piece (s) you were involved in? What methods and processes were used to create and rehearse the piece (s)? What contribution did you make? How successfully did you, or the choreographer, overcome any difficulties faced in rehearsal?

- **Performance:** Evaluate your performance and what you could have done to make improvements. How was the D4D experience different from other previous performance experiences, for example the end of year show?

- **Preparation for employment**: In what ways has the D4D project contributed to developing skills required to be a professional dancer (including technical / artistic skills, and personal skills: working with others / time management)? What advice would you give to students commencing the project next year?

APPENDIX 3: Alternative Assessment at Circus Space: a case study on helping a dyslexic student prepare for an oral assessment with a visual presentation

Report by Nancy Cranham, Head of Academic Administration, Circus Space

Circus Space has a very diverse student body and students come with very different educational backgrounds. Alongside the intense physical and creative training which places many demands on them, each year group is required to complete one module with a more 'academic' or critical focus. In Year 1 of the Foundation Degree, this is *'Understanding Circus'* and in year 2, *'Performance Review and Analysis'*. In addition, each year group is required to complete a reflective essay, focussing on their own creative processes and the influences of other practitioners.

When I started in April 2013, student X had completed the majority of the Foundation Degree programme. Despite some issues with attendance and punctuality, he had achieved a good overall level of achievement in his discipline and other creative areas. However, there were problems with his written work. Although he had completed three out of four written requirements for the Foundation Degree, he had just scraped a pass with one assignment and there were issues with plagiarism and academic misconduct with the other two.

Student X is dyslexic. He had been offered additional tutorial support from the module leader, tutorials with a specialist support tutor and extensions to deadlines. However, the school had not yet offered him an alternative form of assessment (e.g. a viva) as a reasonable adjustment to the written elements of these modules.

His final written requirement for the Foundation Degree was for the Student Devised Piece module, the initial brief was as follows:

"Please write a 3000 word essay, placing the rehearsal process, final performance and your own work during the module into a wider artistic context. To do this, you must reference other creative practitioners, companies, ideas, and techniques that you have studied (in classes or independently)."

The module tutor and I met with Student X and discussed the possibility of an alternative method of assessment, and together we agreed on a viva voce. The student asked to be able to show a video of his performance at the start of the viva and use a Powerpoint presentation. This was also agreed.

We adjusted the brief to accommodate this adjustment (see following page). This was given to the student along with an acknowledgement, a copy of the grading criteria and a consent form allowing us to film the viva for the external examiner. The student signed this form.

The student's viva was a success. The marker's feedback noted that the viva had enabled student X to: *'provide a clear outline of the goals of his performance and the process he undertook to achieve them. He dealt very well with the questions that were given to him and showed a promising level of insight and analysis.'*

Student X was given a 'C' grade for the assessment, which was a significant improvement on previous grades for his written assignments. Encouragingly, our external examiner commented that this was *'a notable example of good practice'*.

Circus Space intends to continue to use this type of adjustment in cases where it will clearly be of benefit to a student as it was in this case. There are certainly improvements to be made in the implementation. These will include earlier discussions with students with SpLDs about their options with regards to reasonable adjustments and alternative assessment methods in the 'academic' parts of the course and adapting the existing grade criteria.

The following information was given to student X following the initial meeting:

Foundation Degree in Circus Arts

Alternative Assessment Brief – agreed with student X at a pre-meeting on 13 June 2013

Module CA209: The Student Devised Piece (Written Element)

Student:

Reasoning for the use of alternative assessment

Due to your dyslexia, which can affect your ability to accurately structure and present your ideas in written format, it has been agreed, with your consent, that an adjustment will be made to the method of assessment for the essay component of this module. Through a discussion between you, Rishi Trikha and Nancy Cranham at a meeting on 29th May, it was agreed that the reassessment would take the form of a viva voce, which is intended to be a better and more productive way for you to reflect on your creative process during this module than writing an essay.

Timetable for the assessment

- Thursday 20th June, 4.15pm, in the Library
  A tutorial with Rishi Trikha to discuss the assessment and your ideas
- Tuesday 25th June: A tutorial with Sylvia Mackewn for advice and guidance on how to structure your ideas and ensure you are supporting your ideas with examples. An equivalent to a draft essay.
- Thursday 27th June, 4.15pm, in the Library
  A second tutorial with Rishi Trikha to discuss the assessment and your ideas

- Tuesday 2nd July, 3pm, in the Library
The assessment

Procedure for the assessment

The viva will be evaluated by Rishi Trikha (Academic Leader) and Tim Roberts (Higher Education Courses Director). The Head of Academic Administration, Nancy Cranham, will also be present and will record the session so that it can be viewed by examiners.

The viva will start with your presentation, using video footage (a computer will be set up so that you can access youtube etc). This should last between 5 and 15 minutes, and will then be followed by a question and answer session.

You will be asked questions about the process of devising your piece, and how this fits into a wider artistic context. You will be assessed on your ability to discuss your own work in relation to other practitioners whose processes and/or outcomes were relevant to your own, and on your ability to show why you think they are relevant. Rishi and Tim may ask for clarification of certain answers to ensure your understanding of the subject.

You can use prompt cards with words or brief notes which you can refer to if you need to.

The viva will last for 1 hour and will take place in the library. At the beginning of the assessment:

- you will be reminded of the structure

- you will be advised that you can ask for questions to be repeated or clarified

- you will be advised that you will be given time at the end to present any additional information that you might not have been able to provide in direct reply to questions posed to you

APPENDIX 4: Template mark-sheet for oral assessments using learning outcomes and grade criteria
Learning outcomes and grade criteria used at Northern School of Contemporary Dance

Grade descriptor & marks	Learning Outcomes					
	Evidence: the selection and evaluation of relevant materials.	Analysis: consideration and interpretation of the evidence within the formation of an argument.	Argument: the development, exploration and establishment of a specific idea.	Structure: an organisational approach which supports the development of ideas.	Articulation: the ability to communicate the argument, including support of academic conventions where appropriate.	First mark
Outstanding 100-85 • Learning outcomes met to an outstanding standard • Critical, in-depth, reflective thinking and engagement with subject and task • Challenges current thinking • Complex issues articulated with rigour and insight • Highly advanced application of complex research skills and consistent use of academic conventions						

	Evidence	Analysis	Argument	Structure	Articulation	First Mark
Excellent 78-72 • Greater proportion of learning outcomes met to excellent standard • Ability to articulate key issues showing highly informed, perceptive and in-depth understanding and analysis of key issues • Advanced application of complex research skills and consistent use of academic conventions, where appropriate						
Very good: 68-62 • Greater proportion of learning outcomes met to good standard • in-depth engagement with subject and task and creativity/reflection of at least a good standard • Clear articulation of relevant issues • Consistent and proficient application of research skills and academic conventions in a range of contexts						

	Evidence	Analysis	Argument	Structure	Articulation	First Mark
Good: 58-52 • Greater proportion of learning outcomes are met to above satisfactory standard • Balance of strengths and weaknesses • sound and generally consistent engagement with subject and task with balance of strengths and weaknesses • Clear understanding of relevant issues which exceeds description and imitation • Sound standard of research, presentation and use of academic conventions						
Satisfactory 48-42 • Learning outcomes are met to satisfactory standard but with considerable room for improvement • No more than basic engagement with subject and task • Communication and articulation are underdeveloped: mostly descriptive and imitative • Satisfactory standard of research and presentation and use of academic conventions • Application of relevant skills is generally insubstantial and/or inconsistent						

	Evidence	Analysis	Argument	Structure	Articulation	First Mark
Poor: 38 -32 • Fails to meet one or more of the learning outcomes • Demonstrates minimal critical or creative engagement with subject and task • Evidence of some understanding and application of application of relevant skills						
Unacceptable: 20-0 • Does not meet majority of learning outcomes • Serious lack of critical engagement with subject and task • No evidence of understanding of relevant skills • Evidence of academic misconduct • Work not presented						

APPENDIX 5: Sample Consent Form

Name of Student

Course

Year

Name of Head of Course………………………………………………………………

Tutor's Name………………………………………………………………………

Dyslexia Support Tutor (where appropriate) ………………………………………………………….

Condition or specific learning difficulty…………………………………………..

I receive the Disabled Students Allowance: Yes….   No………

I have chosen to undertake a recorded viva or other kind of oral presentation and have received advice in relation to undertaking this kind of assessment.

I understand that the viva will be recorded for assessment and may be used for staff training.

Print Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 6: London Contemporary Dance School: BA3 Negotiated Project

At LCDS, the **Negotiated Project** is a compulsory final year project worth 30 credits. Whilst it can take the form of a traditional written dissertation, it can also include a piece of practice-based research.

The title of the module reflects the approach to the design and assessment process. There are some specific requirements and parameters to the project but as far as is possible, the focus, research methodology and submission format is individually negotiated between the student and their supervisor.

LCDS has tried to develop and embed an inclusive approach to learning and assessment. This means that whilst reasonable adjustments may still need to be made on an individual level, we proceed from the assumption that the design, delivery and assessment of the Negotiated Project (and other modules) should be sufficiently flexible to anticipate and support the needs of individual learners.

Assessment Rationale

In order to familiarise students with the process, we give them three separate preparatory tasks. These are designed to equip students with the requisite research skills and strategies that are needed to undertake a major research project. In addition to one-to-one supervision, there are typically 10 compulsory and 5 optional lectures to support the negotiated project.

We ask students to do three preparatory tasks and these are usually completed in the following order:

- **An annotated bibliography**. This constitutes the first stage in locating and reviewing relevant literature and other resources. (10%)
- **A written proposal** which requires the student to articulate a clear rationale and appropriate parameters for the project. (10%)
- **A written/diagrammatic structural outline** will assist in determining the overall design and direction of their investigation. (10%)

Task 4 is the final part of the project. This requires the students to work autonomously with minimum direction on a self-designed, extended piece of work (70%) in which they demonstrate:

- their knowledge and understanding of a specific topic,
- the ability to select appropriate methodologies and research methods in order to interrogate the topic and;
- the ability to present their findings in an appropriate form.

Students negotiate the exact details of the format of the final project with their supervisors. They can be wholly written or part written and part practice-based.

Over the past few years, Negotiated Projects have included work presented in the following formats: installations, films, sound-scores, educational projects, photography exhibitions, durational events, community dance projects, dance science investigations, careers programmes, arts management proposals, funding proposals, extended essays and sector-focused reports.

The following guidelines apply:

- The expected word length for a fully written document: is 6000 - 8000 words
- The expected length of a music recording / video presentation is usually between 4-6 minutes with accompanying written documentation of no more than 3000 - 4000 words.
- Design / costume presentations might involve fully realised design and completion of a costume plus accompanying written documentation of no more than 3000 - 4000 words.

Reasonable Adjustments that have become standard as part of the process

Students with an identified SpLD can:

- Access specialist support from the Lecturer in Academic Support to assist them with each of the preparatory tasks and the final written document.
- Access additional tutorials (beyond the designated ones) with their own supervisor.
- Through discussion with their supervisor, the Lecturer in Academic Support and/or the module leader, negotiate an extension to the deadline. In some cases, this will be automatically granted (e.g. all dyslexic students are eligible for an extension of one week for the first 3 tasks). If an individual student requires additional time, this is negotiated separately.

Examples of other reasonable adjustments that have been made in the preparatory stages

- Students who find it easier to approach the three preparatory tasks in a different order have been able to do this.
- Students have approached the three preparatory tasks in the same order, but delayed submission of the annotated bibliography until later in the process to allow them the necessary time and space to read the sources at a pace that suits them.
- Students with dyspraxia have often found it easier to combine the proposal and the structural outline as one assignment. It can be helpful for them to combine the philosophical and conceptual aspects of the work with the tangible, logistical elements.

Examples of reasonable adjustments that have been undertaken later in the process

- Students who initially opted to undertake a significantly written project have changed their mind and produced part-written and part-oral presentation, viva or lecture demonstration.

How is it possible for us to be so flexible?

The assessment criteria for this module measure knowledge, skill, critical thinking, analysis, creativity and show evidence of an individual voice/perspective.

The criteria do not specify the format of the final submission. In order to meet the assessment criteria, students need to:
- Undertake a planning exercise where they identify examples of evidence they could use to fulfil each criteria;
- Insert these examples into the third column of the Assessment Grid (see chart at the end of Appendix 6)
- As the project develops, they then use the Assessment Grid to ensure that they are on track.

Published Assessment Criteria for the Negotiated Project, Tasks 1-4

- Develop the necessary breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding to interrogate a specific idea, problem, or hypothesis.

- Identify, locate, select and organise multiple research sources.

- Undertake perceptive analysis and critique of the chosen sources with minimum guidance.

- Design a research project which comprises a clear and achievable rationale, appropriate parameters and a logical structure.

- Select and apply relevant theoretical perspectives, methodologies and research methods.

- Employ a sophisticated level of critical reflection and problem-solving at all stages of the process.

- Work autonomously, taking responsibility for managing their time and resources.

- Employ taught and tutorial sessions effectively in order to access and respond to tutor feedback.

- Reveal originality of thought and a clear personal perspective/opinion through the construction of an extended interrogation or argument.

Assessment Grid

Assessment Areas	Assessment Criteria	What evidence could you provide? (completed by student – small group task)
Research process (40%)	• Develop the necessary breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding to interrogate a specific idea, problem, or hypothesis. • Work autonomously, taking responsibility for managing time and resources. • Employ taught and tutorial sessions effectively in order to access and respond to tutor / peer feedback.	
Use of data and sources (20%)	• Identify, locate, select and organise multiple research sources. • Undertake perceptive analysis and critique of the chosen sources with minimum guidance.	
Creativity, originality and appropriateness of response (20%)	• Design a research project which comprises a clear and achievable rationale, appropriate parameters and a logical structure. • Select and apply relevant theoretical perspectives, methodologies and research methods.	

Development of an independent, critical authorial voice (10%)	• Employ a sophisticated level of critical reflection and problem-solving at all stages of the process. • Reveal originality of thought and a clear personal perspective/opinion through the construction of an extended interrogation or argument.	
Presentation (10%)	• Criteria specific to the content, mode and media of final product to be agreed with supervisor.	

Helen Angove, Head of Learning and Teaching, LCDS until September 2013.

Now Head of Quality and Registry, Conservatoire for Dance and Drama.