

# The new National Occupational Standards for Dance Leadership - what do these mean for you?

**Lisa Craddock**, Programme Manager, Professional Development, Foundation for Community Dance (FCD) and **Catherine Willmore**, Dance Training Accreditation Partnership (DTAP) Project Manager, explain what they are, how they came about, and why you might want to use them

### **What are National Occupational Standards (NOS)?**

Quite simply National Occupational Standards describe what an individual needs to do, know and understand in order to carry out a particular job, role or function. While any profession can set its own 'professional standards', NOS are a set of agreed standards that have been formally recognised by that profession's sector skills council. In the case of dance the professional standards, which have been developed by DTAP, have been converted to NOS by Creative & Cultural Skills, (CCSkills). The standards become adopted as NOS after the UKNOS panel (comprising the UK regulatory bodies) review and approve the processes by which the standards were developed. In order for them to retain their formal status as NOS, CCSkills will review and update them periodically – probably every three years or more frequently should working practices change significantly.

### **Why do we need NOS for Dance Leadership\*?**

Dance leadership includes a diverse range of professional skills. Those working in it range in terms of the levels and type of training and experience they have, the genres of dance they deliver, the settings in which they work, and in the content and purpose/s of the activities they deliver. NOS help to cut through this diversity by identifying knowledge, skills and experience that are indicative of good practice, regardless of setting, genre, and so on, and helping identify the level of experience at which a practitioner is operating.

The benefits of this are many: dance leaders can more easily identify where they sit in terms of experience, and where their skills gaps are. This helps them applying for work, negotiating fee levels, and keeping their professional development up to date. It can help them identify what transferrable skills they might have, as well as what additional training they might need, should they wish to move into new market/s.

Those who employ dance leaders can use the NOS to write job descriptions and design appraisals, to identify whether someone they are thinking of employing is fit for the job, and to negotiate pay levels. Organisations who provide professional development opportunities for dance leaders

(such as dance agencies, dance training schools, teaching societies and so on), can map their existing courses and qualifications against the NOS and can choose to provide new courses to plug any gaps that their existing training may not reach if they want to meet all of the standards through their own specialist training.

In terms of the profession as a whole, having a set of NOS in place presents dance in a good light: it shows the dance profession is a serious industry which, despite the diversity of its practice, works together as a whole and wants to ensure effective practice across all dance genres.

### **Who was involved in writing the NOS?**

The Foundation for Community Dance led the process on behalf of DTAP, working closely with CCSkills. A number of working groups were convened with broad memberships designed to represent the diversity of the profession. The draft standards were presented for consultation at the DTAP conference held in May 2010, and were refined as a result of this. The next version was sent for consultation around the UK in Autumn 2010, and the final draft has been held on the CCSkills website for consultation during November.

Details of the working groups, as well as video footage of the DTAP conference, are on the DTAP website (see end of article).

### **How will dance leaders and employers know the NOS exist?**

DTAP will be working with CCSkills to initiate a press and communications campaign to raise awareness of the NOS. Members of FCD, DTAP and the dance industry as a whole, can all collectively make an effort to communicate about them, and to use them in their practice. DTAP will also be working with CCSkills to initiate a press campaign to spread the word.

### **How will DTAP ensure they are used and remain relevant?**

The more the industry uses the NOS, the more useful they will become. It's important therefore that professionals continue to use and discuss them. Anybody who uses them >



can give feed back to FCD at any time if they are aware of new ways of working that we might need to investigate when the time comes to review them. The more we discuss the roles that we undertake, the better we get at describing the functions of our practice.

To remain relevant the NOS will be reviewed periodically. The current new NOS will be allowed to 'settle in' for three years. After that CCSkills will request another consultation from FCD / DTAP. FCD will then review and re-consult with industry bodies, bringing members of DTAP together to support this process.

#### **Are the NOS enforceable?**

This is not a top down approach, and it is not up to DTAP to enforce these standards. They are written with and for the people who use them - the dance teachers, artists, leaders and facilitators who lead dance work with people, and who employ people to lead dance. As such, it is important that they stay appropriate and relevant – that way they become 'self-enforced' because a critical mass of those who use them is created.

#### **How do the NOS relate to what else DTAP is working on?**

As part of its work DTAP is investigating how much our dance leading industry wants to regulate its work, and is currently in the final stages of a piece of research into what a system of national regulation that encompasses the profession in its broadest sense might look like. Developing the NOS was the first stage of this process as they identify overarching standards used within the profession. DTAP will also be working with CCSkills to support the next process of mapping qualifications against the new NOS. This will include national qualifications and courses already in existence as well as new ones emerging, including the new qualification developed by DTAP with Trinity College London, a level 6 Diploma in Dance Teaching and Learning Qualification (Children and Young People).

**contact** [lisa@communitydance.org.uk](mailto:lisa@communitydance.org.uk) / **visit** [www.communitydance.org.uk/cpd](http://www.communitydance.org.uk/cpd)

\* Leadership is used here to represent the widest range of practices and settings in which dance takes place in the community (i.e. outside formal education). Those who call themselves dance teachers, choreographers, workshop leaders, coaches, and so on, are all covered by this term.

#### **Further information**

For frequently asked questions (FAQs) on how NOS can be useful to professionals, employers and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) providers

**visit** [www.ukstandards.co.uk/About\\_occupational\\_standards/default.aspx](http://www.ukstandards.co.uk/About_occupational_standards/default.aspx)

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