QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

Comparability, Moderation and Standardisation Processes

Policy Owner: Head Office
Oversight Committee: Examinations & Standards Committee
Final Authority: Grand Council
Applies to: All regulated and unregulated I-PATH qualifications
Review Cycle: Annual or following regulatory or operational change
Last updated: 9th February 2026

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how International Performing Arts & Theatre Limited (I-PATH) assures the validity, reliability, comparability and consistency of assessment outcomes across all qualifications.

It ensures that:

- assessment standards are maintained over time, between examiners and across centres
- results are fair, defensible and evidence-based
- professional judgement in performance assessment is applied consistently
- risks to standards are identified and addressed promptly
- I-PATH meets Ofqual expectations through robust internal controls and awarding organisation oversight

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- graded and vocational examinations
- face-to-face, live video and recorded video examinations
- regulated and unregulated qualifications
- all examiners, centres and candidates

It operates alongside the Assessment Policy, Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, Sanctions Policy, Examiner Policy and Governance Framework.

3. Core Quality Assurance Principles

I-PATH's quality assurance framework is based on the following principles:

- **Comparability** - standards are aligned across time, examiners, centres and the wider sector
- **Consistency** - assessment criteria are applied uniformly

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- **Transparency** - processes are documented, auditable and clearly governed
- **Proportionality** - controls are appropriate to the risks inherent in performance assessment
- **Independence** - quality assurance activity is free from conflicts of interest
- **Continuous improvement** - findings inform training, guidance and assessment design

4. Governance and Oversight

4.1 Examinations & Standards Committee (ESC)

All quality assurance activity is overseen by the Examinations & Standards Committee, which:

- meets at least quarterly
- operates independently of delivery functions
- reports directly to the Grand Council
- maintains oversight of comparability, moderation and standardisation
- conducts an annual internal audit against regulatory expectations

The ESC has authority to approve moderation activity and recommend escalation to the awarding organisation where required.

5. Comparability

5.1 Sector Comparability

I-PATH ensures its qualifications remain comparable with those offered across the performing arts sector.

This includes:

- attendance at an annual comparability meeting with the awarding organisation
- review of marking standards, grade boundaries and benchmarking against other exam boards
- consideration of sector-wide trends and developments

5.2 External Sector Benchmarking

Through the awarding organisation:

- I-PATH is represented at the Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre (CDMT)
- an annual comparability test is undertaken, during which selected grades and disciplines are compared across major performing arts exam boards
- outcomes are reviewed to ensure alignment of mark ranges, level demand and grading standards

Findings inform assessment review and examiner training where required.

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6. Standardisation

6.1 Purpose of Standardisation

Standardisation ensures that all examiners:

- interpret assessment criteria consistently
- apply marking standards accurately
- exercise professional judgement within agreed benchmarks

Given the inherently subjective nature of performance assessment, standardisation is critical to maintaining fairness and public confidence.

6.2 Annual Standardisation Programme

All examiners must participate in I-PATH's annual standardisation programme, which includes:

- marking a set of real Recorded Video Examinations (RVE) selected from previous sessions
- submission of marks for statistical analysis
- comparison of individual examiner marks against cohort norms

All data is entered into the I-PATH Standardisation Spreadsheet, enabling identification of:

- outliers
- standard deviations
- emerging marking trends

6.3 Analysis and Intervention

Where analysis identifies inconsistency:

- targeted feedback is provided
- additional training is mandated
- examiners may be required to complete further standardisation exercises

If marking irregularities are:

- isolated - remedial support is provided
- systemic - further action is taken across the examiner cohort

This may include:

- training led by a Senior Examiner, and/or
- discipline-specific intervention led by the Artistic Director

Further standardisation testing is required until consistency is achieved.

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6.4 Attendance Requirements

- All examiners must attend the annual Standardisation Meeting
- Where attendance is not possible, a mandatory one-to-one meeting with Head Office is required
- Failure to complete standardisation requirements may result in suspension of examining activity

The awarding organisation attends the standardisation meeting annually and provides oversight and guidance.

7. Moderation

7.1 Purpose of Moderation

Moderation is used to:

- identify patterns of over- or under-marking
- address unexplained variations in results
- protect candidates from unfair outcomes

Moderation does not replace examiner judgement; it is applied only where evidence indicates a systemic issue.

7.2 Monitoring of Results

Head Office monitors all examination results, including:

- centre-level trends
- year-on-year comparisons
- examiner-specific patterns

Examples that may trigger review include:

- significant changes in outcomes for the same cohort across years
- unusually high or low distributions of grades
- divergence from historical centre performance without reasonable explanation

7.3 Investigation and Approval

Where concerns arise:

1. Head Office investigates contextual factors (e.g. changes in cohort, teaching, examiner)
2. Discussions are held with:
    - the examiner
    - the centre or teacher
3. If moderation is considered necessary:
    - approval is sought from the Examinations & Standards Committee

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7.4 Moderation Outcomes

Moderation may result in:

- no adjustment
- cohort-level adjustment
- grade-band adjustment

Moderation is applied only within defined parameters and always with documented rationale.

Where adjustments exceed a 5-mark uplift or downgrade, approval is sought and, where appropriate, support is requested from the awarding organisation.

8. Independence and Conflicts of Interest

- Moderation and standardisation are carried out only by individuals with appropriate expertise
- Individuals must declare conflicts of interest
- No individual moderates work they were involved in examining or delivering

These safeguards align with the Conflicts of Interest Policy.

9. Records, Evidence and Audit

I-PATH maintains secure records of:

- comparability activity and outcomes
- standardisation data and analysis
- moderation decisions and rationale
- training and intervention actions

Records are retained in line with data protection requirements and made available for awarding organisation audit.

10. Escalation and Regulatory Assurance

Where quality assurance activity identifies:

- significant risk to standards
- potential adverse effect on learners
- systemic issues beyond I-PATH's internal control

the matter is escalated to the awarding organisation without delay.

11. Continuous Improvement

Findings from comparability, standardisation and moderation inform:

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- examiner training
- assessment design
- guidance materials
- policy review

This ensures that I-PATH's quality assurance framework remains effective, proportionate and forward-looking.

12. Review of Policy

This policy is reviewed:

- annually
- following regulatory change
- following significant assessment or quality incidents

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