

WHAT ARE GRADE EXAMS?

As of 2018, dancers are required to have completed all of their grade exams in order to take their T.C.R.G. (Teaching Certificate of Irish Dance).

These exams are offered a few times a year, often in conjunction with a feis. Any dancers can take these exams if they think that they may be interested in writing their teacher exam sometime in the future. Or, these exams are a great way to practice your steps in front of another teacher and get some feedback.

The grade exam syllabus can be found on the CLRG website:

<https://www.clrge.ie/index.php/en/feiseanna-exams/graded-exam.html>

HOW LIKELY IS IT TO PASS/WHAT IS A PASSING GRADE?

We are pleased to have had a 100 per cent pass rate so far. The exams have been a positive learning experience for our students. In the Grade exams, you will receive feedback on areas for improvement so be sure to practice hard so that your feedback helps you get to the next level instead of having the examiner write down old habits.

The pass rate for exams is 40 so there is room for error but I like our students to be as prepared as possible.

Unlike a feis where you will still get ranked regardless of performance, grade exams are pass or fail so you want to make sure you feel comfortable with the material required and can perform it to a reasonable standard.

WHAT LEVEL SHOULD I BE FOR EACH EXAM?

Grade exams are meant to assess your skill and help you improve. Therefore, be sure you are comfortable with the complexity level of the material required for each exam and can perform it to a reasonable standard. The chart below shows which competitive levels are best (but not required) to take each exam grade.

LEVEL OF DANCER	EXAM GRADE	WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR THE EXAM
Beginner (after 1 year of dance)	Prelim	This is a great exam for very young or very new dancers.
Beginner/Advanced Beginner (After 2 years of dance)	1, 2, 3	Hard shoe is required for the Basic Heavy Jig in grade 3.
Novice/ Prizewinner	4, 5, 6	Dancers at this level will find the Advanced Slip Jig in grade 6 to be quite challenging.
Preliminary Champion	7, 8	The advanced Heavy Jig in Grade 7 and the Advanced Hornpipe in grade 8 CAN be learned as a Prizewinner dancer but will be easier for a Preliminary Champion
Open Champion	9	Most dancers will have learned at least two set dances by the time they reach Open Championship.
Open Championship	10, 11, 12	The amount of material needed for these exams and the skill level expected most likely requires that the dancer be in Open. Please note that dancers need to be at least 16 years of age for grade 11.

HOW MANY DANCERS ARE IN THE ROOM AT THE SAME TIME?

In terms of what to expect on the day, dancers should be prepared to dance by themselves (including counting themselves in) however it's likely other candidates will be in the room at the same time. The examiner will also likely have at least one person in the room assisting them with music and paperwork. Teachers and parents will be asked to wait outside so dancers should be prepared to a level that they can be independent during the exam process.

It's our experience, however, that the examiner will do whatever they can to put the dancers at ease and bring out their best performance. Dances are performed in order according to the syllabus and candidates stay in the exam area until all grades in their exam group are complete. Certificates are usually handed out before leaving.

WHAT DO I NEED TO WEAR?

Another way that grade exams are different from feiseanna is costuming. No wigs, dresses or vests are worn during exams. Instead, candidates wear sports clothes, usually all black with poodle socks (black socks for boys) simple dresses, school spirit wear etc. Think something you might wear to dance class, but kicked up a notch. Dancers in Championship usually just wear their blackout costumes.

For your hair, think professional. Back from the face in a ponytail or bun are best.

CLOSING TIPS

Expect the unexpected and have your dances prepared well. Each exam is run by a different school/group and a different examiner so there may be small differences in execution of the process. As long as dancers know their material thoroughly and are prepared to go with the flow, all will go well.

In order to take future grades, a dancer must prove they have passed the previous ones. Hold onto your certificates and grading sheets. Try taking scans or photos so you have digital copies just in case, and bring them to your future exams to ensure a smooth process.