

**79th ISTD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2024, 11:00 GMT**

VIA ZOOM AND AT 22-26 PAUL STREET, LONDON EC2A 4QE

In attendance

Attended in person: Michael Elliott (Chair), Ginny Brown (CEO), Jeremy Kean, Gemma Matthews, Nikki Stewart, Alison Melville-Cline, Louise Molton, Julie Campbell, Ben Gurney

Attended remotely online: Lynn Chandler, Juliet Diener, Tom Hobden, Peter Meager, Leanne Kirkham, Keith-Derrick Randolph, Christina Fotinaki, Elizabeth Nyman, Catherine Hutchon, Louise Mellin, Antonio Barone, Carla Moore, Dionisis Dimitrakopoulos, Angeliki Andrinopoulou, Penny Meekings.

Minute taker in attendance: Liam Mills

Apologies were received from: Mary Cooke, Suzanne Hodson, Alison Jenner, Frederick Way.

Welcome:

The Society's Chair, Michael Elliott, welcomed those attending and informed them of some housekeeping points and of the agenda that would be followed during the meeting. Mr. Elliott informed the meeting that for agenda item 4, Questions, no questions had been submitted in advance, and attendees were invited to submit questions during the course of the meeting, and he described how questions could be submitted.

Item 1: Chair's welcome and address

Mr Elliott gave an address on behalf of the Board of Trustees (Council) (see **Appendix 1** for a summary) before moving on to the agenda for the remainder of the meeting.

Item 2: Minutes of the last meeting held on 22 November 2023

The minutes of the previous AGM held on 22 November 2023 were received. There were no comments made. Mr Elliott approved the minutes.

Item 3: To vote on ordinary resolutions

Mr Elliott announced the resolutions to be voted on and the electronic ballot was opened. For those attending the meeting in person, voting slips were distributed and collected. Mr Elliott announced the first two resolutions which were as follows:

- 3.1. To elect Elizabeth Nyman
- 3.2. To re-elect Leanne Kirkham for a second term of office

Mr. Elliott then handed over to the Society's Chief Executive Officer, Ginny Brown, who announced the third resolution which was:

- 3.3. To re-elect Michael Elliott for a second term of office

A short film was presented, after which voting was closed.

Item 4: Questions

Ms. Brown reminded attendees that questions could be submitted during the meeting and added that a further invitation to ask questions or make comments would be made following the presentations.

Item 5. Chief Executive address

Ms Brown delivered the Chief Executive Address (**Appendix 2**)

Item 6. 2021/22 Accounts presentation

Ms Stewart, Director of Finance and Resources, presented the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 and the reports of the charity trustees and auditors. (**Appendix 3**)

Item 7. Qualification Development Strategy

Ms. Campbell, Head of Qualification Development, delivered a presentation on the Qualification Development Strategy (**Appendix 4**), after which she invited Mr. Elliott to present the remaining items on the meeting agenda.

Item 4a: Questions

Mr. Elliott informed the meeting that no questions or comments had been submitted during the meeting.

Item 7. Voting results

7a: Appointment of Charity Trustees

Mr Elliott confirmed that the votes had been counted and announced the results as follows:

- 3.1. Elizabeth Nyman was elected
- 3.2. Leanne Kirkham was re-elected for a second term of office
- 3.3. Michel Elliott was re-elected for a second term of office

7b: Faculty Elections

Voting in the 2024 elections to Faculty Committees had closed on 11 November 2024. The results of the elections were announced by Mr. Elliott as follows:

- **Modern Ballroom Faculty**

The following members were elected unopposed to the Modern Ballroom Faculty Committee:

- Stephen Arnold
- Teresa Jay
- Nick Jury
- Michelle Lawrence
- Argo Oblikas
- Claire Thompson

- **Modern Theatre Faculty**

The following members were elected by ballot to the Modern Theatre Faculty Committee:

- Angeliki Andrinopoulou
- Ruth Armstrong
- Valerie Jones
- André Koschyk
- Penny Meekings
- Sadie Morgan

- Elizabeth Reeves

- **Tap Dance Faculty**

The following members were elected by ballot to the Tap Dance Faculty Committee:

- Andrea Ashton
- Antonio Barone
- Alison Forrester
- Andrew Hindley
- Aaron Lissimore
- Carla Moore
- Carole Moseley

Item 8. Any other business

No other business was brought to the meeting.

Mr Elliott thanked those present for their attendance at, and participation in, the AGM and closed the meeting.

Appendix 1: Summary of Chair's address given by Michael Elliott

Mr Elliott welcomed attendees to ISTD's 79th Annual General Meeting

Noting that this was the year in which the 120th anniversary of the Society's formation was celebrated, Mr. Elliott said that on 25th July 1904 nearly 200 independent ballet and ballroom dance teachers came together in the Hotel Cecil in London and ever since that day the Society had been led by dance teachers for dance teachers. ISTD qualified teachers were represented within every facet of the Society, including among its Trustees, staff, Faculty Committees, Examiners and Lecturers.

Mr Elliott said that during the last financial year, ISDT had sought to further strengthen both its relationship with its members, and its governance structures to help it to remain responsive to the needs of all members and foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for everyone involved.

Mr. Elliott said ISTD had sought to equip the Society to meet its members' contemporary needs more effectively through the establishment of two subsidiary companies – ISTD Academy to advance the Society's educational mission and ISTD Enterprises to increase the Society's commercial income and partnerships.

ISTD had also embarked on:

- a qualifications development strategy to future proof and enhance the relevance and attractiveness of the Society's offer in a rapidly changing and uncertain educational, social and economic context for members, their students, and those supporting them;
- a project to transform the organisation's digital capabilities and business processes, and
- steps to maximise the value and potential of the Paul Street offices to support the Society's mission.

Mr. Elliott said that the ISTD founders' aim to elevate and advance the art of dancing, whilst improving the standard of work and teaching throughout the UK remained as relevant and as important now as it was at the beginning of the last century.

Mr Elliott reported that as ISTD embarked on then next chapter in its history, its vision and strategy were firmly focused on:

- the future development of its qualifications and the support of progression and the highest possible standards
- the support of its members and their businesses, and
- campaigning for greater access, equity, diversity and inclusiveness in dance.

Mr Elliott said that ISTD would be hugely supported in those endeavors by the Society's new President, Shirley Ballas, who had been appointed earlier this year following the very sad passing of Dame Beryl Grey at the end of 2022. Shirley was known globally as the Strictly Come Dancing head judge and a champion ballroom dancer with a long list of championship titles to her name, and Mr Elliott said that most importantly she was an ISTD member, dance school owner, teacher and lifelong advocate for the value of dance for all. Shirley's appointment and that of Vice Presidents from other genre to be announced in 2025, marked the beginning of another exciting phase for the Society.

Mr Elliott said that the 120th anniversary had provided a unique opportunity to reflect on ISTD's legacy while setting ambitious goals to expand its membership, enhance its services, and deepen its impact in the wider dance community.

Mr Elliott added that none of those developments would be possible without the continuing encouragement, support and constructive challenge of its members, who daily faced significant challenges in the growth and development of their teaching and businesses. ISTD's Trustees and staff continued to study, admire and celebrate its members' innovation, tenacity and determination, and sought to serve them with a matching passion, sensitivity and effectiveness.

Mr. Elliott expressed thanks to ISTD's leadership team and staff team ably led by Ginny Brown, the Chief Executive, and all its Trustees, including those who had left in the last financial year, for their exceptional commitment and determination to serve the Society's members and enhance the fortunes of the Society in ever challenging times. He paid a particular tribute to the exceptional nine years of service given by Sho Shibata as Trustee and wished he every success in his role as Director of OutdoorArtsUK. Mr Elliott said that as Chair of the ISTD Council, he was indebted to them all and to his two Vice Chairs, Frederick Way and Leanne Kirkham, for their wise counsel and support.

Appendix 2: Chief Executive address given by Ginny Brown.

1. Chief Executive address

During this year we saw the green shoots of new growth as our members' business gradually recovered from the aftermath of the pandemic. This resulted in a 13% growth in examinations and a total membership of 5917, with a full member retention rate of 95%.

Our Graduation Ceremony took place on Tuesday 13th February 2024, attended by the largest number of graduates to date. In total we celebrated 606 graduates, who achieved 842 teaching qualifications between Sept 2022 and December 2023. The event was well received by those who attended and 1.7K people joined us online to watch the live stream. We also presented Imperial Awards to Jacqui Norton, Helen Green and Diane Durant.

We were delighted that our *Find Your Dance Space* campaign was recognised by three Memcom Excellence Awards. These celebrate some of the best work in the sector and ISTD received awards for:

- Best Member Support (winner);
- Best Integrated Marketing or Membership Campaign (winner) and
- Best Public Awareness Campaign or Advancement of a Cause (highly commended).

On 31st March 2024, Liz Dale retired as Director of Dance following five successful years at ISTD. To ensure her good work continues, a new Qualification Development Team has been formed, led by Julie Campbell and the events and CPD team have been combined under the direction of Louise Molton. Julie and the team have made great progress in the past six months, and she is with us today to provide a report on our new Qualification Development Strategy.

Future plans

ISTD celebrates 120 years

To celebrate the Society's 120th anniversary, we planned a host of events designed to celebrate our heritage as an inspiration for future growth and to strengthen connections with our members and the dance industry. These include:

- Launching a refreshed Street Dance syllabus to coincide with break dancing entering the Olympics;
- A new ISTD uniform that is high quality, fully inclusive and made of sustainable materials and
- The launch of our new Advanced 1 Tap syllabus.

Heritage

To secure our heritage, we supported Coventry University to successfully apply for a Midlands4Cities Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDA) for a student to work with the Society's historic collection to create an accessible archive. The Society's archival materials are currently uncatalogued and dispersed and therefore at risk, this is an excellent opportunity to gather, sort, catalogue and then share our significant archive which traces the evolution of dance teaching. A PHD student is just starting work on this project which will span a four-year period, with the aim of making our archive accessible in time for the Society's 125th anniversary in 2029.

Dance for All

We have also progressed our advocacy commitments with the launch of Dance for All: Extending Our Ambition for Dance. This sets out a series of sector-wide commitments that we intend to support and advocate for. I am pleased to report that some of these are already coming to fruition through the Let's Dance campaign. This is led by Angela Rippon, with broad support from the dance sector, and aims to raise public awareness of the many benefits of dancing by shining a light on the amazing work of dance teachers across the nation. Let's Dance day is Sunday 2nd March and we are excited to see all the creative ways our members get involved.

None of this would be possible without the dedicated hard work of our assessors, examiners, lecturers, representatives and staff, nor the steady guidance, support and professional knowledge of our Faculty Committees and Board of Trustees - skilfully led by Michael Elliott. Sincere thanks to all for devoting their expertise and passion to build a strong future for dance education.

Remembering

I would like to take this opportunity to remember some key ISTD members who we lost over the past year:

Drusilla Duffill, a Life member of the Society, Imperial Classical Ballet and National Examiner.

Barbara Fewster, a member of the ISTD Grand Council and former Chair of The Cecchetti Society Trust.

Richard Glasstone, who was recently awarded an Honorary Fellowship for his exceptional work in Cecchetti Classical Ballet.

Andrea de Granda Cabral de Andraca, a long-term ballet teacher, principal and advocate for the Society based in Mexico

Shelia Lucas, a committed and passionate advocate for our Modern Theatre and Tap faculties and supported us at so many events.

Joyce Miles

Joy Spriggs, a Life member of the Society and a Modern and Tap examiner of over 40 years.

Ian de Souza, a former Ballroom Committee member and examiner.

Appendix 3: Presentation of the Annual Accounts by Nikki Stewart, Director of Finance and Resources

The organisation's income for the year to 31st March 2024 was £5,454k – a 12% increase on the previous year driven by a stronger demand for examinations.

Due to operational efficiency and tight budgetary control, our expenditure for this period was £5,960k. The reduction in expenditure, combined with an unrealised gain of £271k on investments, resulted in a deficit of £305k – a vast improvement on the prior year's deficit of £1,528k.

However, it should be noted that before exceptional costs of £70k, our unrealised gain of £271k and our spend on designated reserves of £495k – our deficit was only £11k.

The deficit for the year to 31st March 2023 was driven by investment in the organisation's strategic digital transformation to unlock further efficiencies, develop our offering to our members and future-proof the organisation.

For the current financial year, we have seen a fall in exam entries in the UK. We are currently investigating the drivers behind this fall.

Funding position

There are a couple of important points to note in the accounts that record the decisions our Trustees designed to sustain and develop the Society's operations, services and financial security

During the year, the trustees reviewed the Reserves Policy and concluded that a minimum of £1.9m be held in unrestricted reserves. This is the minimum level that the trustees consider sufficient for society to respond to unforeseen events which might cause a downturn in planned income.

This amount is based on 6 months of expenditure on our overheads.

The balance of the free reserves at 31st March 2024 was £3.6m.

Appendix 4: Report on the Qualification Development Strategy Presented by Julie Campbell, Head of Qualification Development.

The ISTD has a strong reputation for providing high quality and thoroughly considered syllabi. The Society's qualifications are deeply rooted in practices and concepts that have been developed throughout its history and have enabled a trajectory of growth and development over a 120-year lifespan. The established model of learning syllabi and being examined on the content still remains a cornerstone for dance teachers, as a way of benchmarking learner achievement and in supporting dance progression.

This examinations model requires that learners commit to disciplined and rigorous training, in which they are constantly challenged, inspired, motivated, and supported by well-trained and knowledgeable dance teachers. However, the commitment required and the financial impact that this type of training has on families is becoming increasingly more of a concern to the ISTD's membership.

Competitions, tv shows and social media are undoubtedly affecting the way that young people perceive dance and this in turn leads to expectations of progressing through dance levels faster. Training methods have also evolved, and new styles and approaches emerge all the time and so being able to respond to trends in the sector is a very important aspect of future planning for the ISTD.

The ISTD's syllabi are a huge asset to the organisation. They are the embodiment of a significant number of exceptional dance teachers' experiences who, over the years, have taken the lead with updating the highly specialized genre content, with passion, integrity, and generosity. Continuing the journey for these syllabi is essential and ensuring they are nurtured and developed is key to their continued longevity.

Our qualification development strategy addresses the need to maintain the highest standards within the syllabi, ensuring that the ISTD is future proofing qualifications for the next generation of dance teachers and their pupils, as well as aligning with the ISTD's charitable purpose to provide dance education for all.

Overarching Principles for Qualification Development

In developing this strategy, a number of overarching principles and aims became clear.

- The importance of maintaining industry relevance
- Supporting teachers in all settings
- Underpinning our qualifications with the principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Ensuring that our syllabi and resources are current
- And ultimately, supporting the ISTD to grow its membership

When these principles are aligned with the ISTD's strategic objectives and charitable purpose some clear intentions and outcomes for our qualifications are evident.

Strategy

- We want to diversify the talent pipeline, supporting dancers from all backgrounds into the industry as professional dancers and teachers
- We need to support the study of dance for all, in whatever way people want to engage with dance and make sure that ISTD teachers have access to a full range of qualifications to support everyone
- To keep current we need to embed our qualifications with up-to-date research and EDI principles, thinking about removing barriers wherever we can
- We want to expand the ISTD's membership beyond its traditional sphere and consider how we can use the knowledge and experience of the ISTD to support teachers from a broader range of settings

- And finally, we need to retain and grow our reputation for being world leaders in dance teacher training

Qualification pathways

The ISTD has 357 qualifications within its current portfolio and so finding ways to streamline, categorize and prioritise our qualifications has been an essential step.

To do this, we have identified 3 distinct pathways: industry and professional, recreational and community.

Although defined separately, the intention is to create flexible pathways and qualifications that provide learners with a range of progression options at each stage of their dance experience.

The Industry Pathway is for children, teenagers and adults who are engaging in dance in formal settings and who have the potential and/or desire to progress through the grades and into vocational levels. The emphasis is currently on technical development and progression and on supporting dancers from childhood into the dance profession as teachers and performers.

It is acknowledged that younger children embarking on these grades will not always have the aspiration to become a dance professional and children starting on this pathway can move between the recreational offer and industry offer as needed.

The Recreational Pathway supports children, teenagers and adults who attend classes regularly because they love dance, want to enjoy it, and for exercise, within formal teaching settings. This pathway is largely made up of unregulated qualifications which provide progressive opportunities to develop performance skills, supported by some technical training.

We know that the number of learners taking graded exams reduces as the grades work becomes progressively harder and so using the recreational qualifications for those who want to continue dance but not make the full commitment to dance as a career, has the potential to retain learners in dance for longer.

The Community Pathway addresses the ISTD's charitable purpose and is for participants who are engaging in dance in informal settings and as a creative, health related, or educational activity.

This pathway is marked by providing teachers with tools to work within a range of settings and with a very wide range of participants.

What does this Strategy mean in practice?

- It means that we will be able to take a focused approach to qualification development, across the organisation, giving clarity to our members. The strategy sets out processes and principles that enable us to approach all qualifications in a coordinated and strategic way.
- Member feedback is placed at the centre of the strategy and no syllabus developments will go ahead without gathering the opinions and ideas of members and Examiners
- We are also able to ensure we are meeting our responsibilities as an Ofqual regulated Awarding Organisation by creating strategic plans for all qualifications, to ensure that they are robust and fit for purpose, easy to understand, use appropriate assessment methods and are supported by high quality resources and training opportunities
- We are also able to place EDI considerations within our qualifications at the point of design, ensuring that we are creating qualifications that remove barriers and are truly accessible

This is an exciting time for the ISTD, and we look forward to working with members to make this vision a reality.