

## Fuelling Dance: A Guide to RED-D Awareness & Support at Central School of Ballet

### Objective:

To establish guidelines and practices to identify, prevent, and manage Relative Energy Deficiency in Dance (RED-D) among dancers to ensure their health, well-being, and optimal performance. RED-D is an off shoot to the acronym RED-S (Relative deficiency in Sport)

### Introduction

Relative Energy Deficiency in Dance (RED-D) is a syndrome resulting from an imbalance between dietary energy intake and the energy expenditure required for health and activities of daily living, growth, and sporting activities. This policy aims to address RED-D in dancers by promoting awareness, prevention, early detection, and appropriate intervention. Dancers at Central School of Ballet are elite athletes and need to prioritise their nutrition in order to make progressive gains in their training. It is important to note dancers are different from athletes and have an aesthetic component to consider.

Central School of Ballet advises all dancers to take care of their nutritional and loading requirements and maintain a healthy weight. To add further clarity this document will specifically cover weight gain and weight loss in dancers.

### Scope

This policy applies to all dancers, artistic staff, safe guarding team, healthcare providers, and associated staff involved with students within the organization.

### Definitions

- **RED-D:** A condition of insufficient energy intake relative to the energy expended, affecting metabolic rate, menstrual function, bone health, immunity, protein synthesis, cardiovascular and psychological health.
- **Energy Availability:** The amount of dietary energy remaining after exercise energy expenditure has been subtracted from dietary energy intake.
- **Disordered Eating:** When eating is suboptimal for an individual.

### Awareness and Education

**Education Programs:** Central will deliver regular educational sessions for dancers, about the risks, symptoms, and consequences of RED-D.

**Resource Materials:** Develop and distribute material, including posters, and online content on Moodle highlighting the importance of adequate nutrition and energy balance, recovery and rest. We hope to raise the profile of being a healthy dancer in our environment.

### Prevention Strategies

**Balanced Diet:** Promote a balanced and nutritious diet tailored to the individual energy needs of dancers. Information delivered to Year 1 students through tutorials this will include diet/basic nutrition, recovery, sleep.

**Healthy Training Practices:** Encourage training programs that balance physical demands with adequate rest and recovery periods. Central is committed to a timetable that is well considered for young people in full time training. There will be a constant review of the timetable to assess training loads and adequate time to eat/fuel throughout the day. The culture will be endorsed and upheld from all faculties within the school. Students will also work with the S&C and Pilates team to learn good practice and instil healthy behaviours towards exercise.

**Access to Healthcare Professional:** Central will facilitate and give opportunity for dancers to speak with a healthcare professional about various aspects of their health/injuries/performance.

### Early Detection and Screening

- **Screening Protocols:** Central will uphold and implement routine screening protocols for early detection of RED-D symptoms, including fatigue, menstrual irregularities, decreased performance, and recurrent injuries.
- **Confidential Reporting:** Establish a confidential reporting system for dancers to report symptoms or concerns related to RED-D without fear of stigma or repercussions. Students to use the onsite physiotherapist as a first line of support. The physiotherapist will assess and triage the situation and follow the appropriate care pathway. The safe guarding team will be involved from the earliest moment of awareness.

### Intervention and Management

- **Multidisciplinary Approach:** A multidisciplinary team will surround the student to provide specialist support. The physiotherapist will work closely with the artistic staff to develop individualized timetables to monitor energy expenditure. Depending upon the severity of restricted dance activities and the impact on the course requirements the student may need to be referred into Support through Studies. The Leaf questionnaire maybe used as an assessment tool where appropriate. The Safe Guarding Team will be involved in 1:1 meetings with the physiotherapist and the student. All information will be held confidentiality.
- **Nutritional Support:** If this is recommended by clinical staff, the physiotherapist team will provide a list of practitioners that maybe suitable to offer support. This may not include in the healthcare insurance provision.

- **Medical Intervention:** Ensure timely medical intervention for any health issues arising from RED-D, including menstrual dysfunction, bone health concerns, and psychological support. The physiotherapist will lead on the external referrals and collate all information.
- **Modified Training:** Adjust training loads and schedules to allow for adequate recovery and address the health needs of the dancers. This will involve working closely with artistic staff and a referral into Support through Studies, with the Safe Guarding Team being constantly involved.

### Support and Rehabilitation

- **Psychological Support:** Psychological support will be offered as a first line of intervention to address any mental health issues associated with RED-D, such as anxiety, depression, or body image concerns. The physiotherapist will facilitate the referral process and keep in close contact with the psychologist.
- **Rehabilitation Programs:** Develop tailored rehabilitation programs to help dancers recover from RED-D and safely return to full training and performance. The physiotherapist will work closely with the Pilates and S&C team to ensure appropriate training programmes, with special consideration to energy expenditure.

### Monitoring

- **Continuous Monitoring:** Regularly monitor the health and progress of dancers recovering from RED-D, adjusting care plans as necessary. This will be carried out through the artistic team and medical team together
- **Policy Review:** Periodically review and update the RED-D policy to incorporate new research findings, best practices, and feedback from students and staff alike

### Responsibilities

- **Dancers:** Dancers are expected to take responsibility for maintaining a healthy lifestyle including proper nutrition and rest, and reporting any symptoms or concerns. Central also looks for compliance from the student. Whilst recognising the sensitivity of the situation active engagement with the proposed care pathways and support will be expected
- **Artistic Staff:** Foster a supportive environment, encourage healthy practices, and promptly raise any concern with the safe guarding team and physiotherapist if they notice any signs of RED-D.
- **Healthcare Providers:** This includes the onsite physiotherapist and off site specialist medical team to provide a comprehensive care, including prevention, early detection, and treatment of RED-D.
- **Organisation:** Central is committed to developing a culture and environment of trust so students feel at ease to bring sensitive issues forward. The pastoral care and health of the dancer will take priority over the dancing/course itself. We will ensure the implementation and adherence to this policy, provide necessary resources, and support ongoing education and training initiatives. If Central has a high level of

concern surrounding the student, the school will make contact with the parents to share the level of concern and risk.

### Conclusion

By adhering to this policy, we aim to safeguard the health and well-being of dancers, enabling them to achieve their full potential while minimizing the risk of RED-D. This holistic approach will foster a culture of health, awareness, and support within the dance community.

### References

[Relative energy deficiency in dance \(RED-D\): a consensus method approach to REDs in dance | BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine](#)

Gallant, T.L., Ong, L.F., Wong, L. *et al.* Low Energy Availability and Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *Sports Med* (2024).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-024-02130-0><https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38463191/>

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