

U.DANCE REGIONAL PLATFORMS 2027

Group Leader Guide



WHAT ARE U.DANCE REGIONAL PLATFORMS?

U.Dance Regional Platforms are inclusive, non-competitive performance opportunities that also connect young dancers with other groups, workshops and industry insight. The aim is for young people to have a high-quality, positive experience, learning new things and connecting with others.

Please note: This guidance forms general advice for preparing your piece and creating an application for a U.Dance Regional Platform. All U.Dance Regional Platforms vary, so please contact your regional organiser for specific processes and procedures.

YOUR APPLICATION

U.Dance Regional Platforms will generally ask to see a recording of a part-choreographed or work-in-progress routine as part of the application. Check your own platform's requirements carefully: each Regional Platform has its own application process and may accept a recording of the final piece or work in progress.

Where a part-choreographed routine is requested, make sure the material you submit is the material you are planning to present at the Regional Platform. Avoid submitting one piece and then changing to a substantially different work.

Choose music and choreography that supports the dancers. Check lyrics and themes, and choreography, for age appropriateness and family-audience suitability.



A reminder of the criteria:

1. Demonstrate excellence in performance.
2. Present excellent and engaging choreography.
3. Show dancers taking clear ownership of the choreography, which is appropriate for their age and experience.
4. Demonstrate respect and consideration to all (demonstrated through both the group's conduct and the appropriateness of performance content).

Filming Basics - if a filmed application is required

We know your application is not the finished product! These tips will help you present a clear application, showcasing your group's work to its best. It's not necessary to spend too much time on editing, effects or multiple camera angles to present the work.

- Film the whole piece in one continuous take where possible; keep all dancers in frame and avoid zooming/panning. A static, landscape shot from a sensible distance is usually easiest for a panel to assess.
- Use the clearest available picture and sound. Avoid very dark rooms, strong backlighting, loud background noise or filming from directly behind an audience.
- Start with a few seconds of stillness before the music/movement begins and leave a few seconds at the end. Make sure the full beginning of the routine is captured, if it's ready to be shared.
- If the application asks for a work-in-progress, it is helpful for the recording to show the choreography, spacing and performance intention as clearly as possible.

File Naming

Where required, include your group's name in the file name so the organiser can immediately identify the submission, photo or music file. For example:
UDance2027_[Region]_[GroupName]_[PieceTitle]_Application.mp4

If submitting an updated version, add a clear version/date: *..._v2_2027-01-15.mp4*

Follow your U.Dance Regional Platform's specified file type, upload method and naming requirements if they differ.

Costume Choices

- While not essential, it's helpful to have costumes, hair and/or makeup that creates a 'look' that elevates the piece and ties in to its theme. Choose costumes that support the dancers and are suitable for family audiences. They do not need to be expensive - we welcome thrifted or upcycled costumes.
- Keep costumes safe, practical and characterful: dancers should be able to move, see, hear and perform confidently. Avoid anything that creates avoidable trip, snag or visibility risks.
- Do a full costume-and-music run before the event. Label every item and decide who is responsible for props/costume changes.

ON THE DAY: PRODUCTION AND EXPERIENCE

Lighting Considerations

When creating your piece, think about how lighting could support the choreography, atmosphere and focus. Here are some ideas:

- **Washes** – a broad, even light across the stage. Useful for group sections where you want everyone clearly visible.
- **Specials** – a light focused on a particular area of the stage, which can draw attention to a soloist, duet or specific moment.
- **Corridors of light** – strips or areas of light that dancers can move through, around or between. These can be particularly effective for entrances, exits or travelling choreography.
- **Pools of light** – defined areas that create a sense of space, isolation or intimacy.
- **Side lighting** – can emphasise the shape, quality and physicality of movement, particularly in contemporary or more abstract work.
- **Backlighting / silhouettes** – can create strong visual moments, but think about whether faces and movement still need to be visible.
- **Colour** – consider whether a change in colour could support a shift in mood, section or musical quality. Simple changes are usually more achievable than lots of different colours.
- **Levels of intensity** – brighter doesn't always mean better. A change from bright to low-level light can help create contrast and focus.
- **Transitions** – consider whether a lighting change should happen suddenly, gradually, or at a particular musical/choreographic moment.
- **Space and focus** – ask yourself: Where do I want the audience looking at this moment? Lighting can help reinforce the choreographer's intention.
- **The first and final image** – think about what you want the audience to see in the opening and closing moments and whether the lighting can help make that image stronger.

Keep the technical rehearsal in mind

U.Dance Regional Platform technical rehearsals are normally short - around 15–20 minutes per group. Plan lighting ideas that can be explained and set up quickly.

Rather than requesting lots of individual cues, it can be useful to identify five key lighting ideas that really matter to the piece.

Before You Arrive

- Confirm your U.Dance Regional Platform's timetable, venue requirements, arrival/check-in point, performance slot and any technical submission deadlines with your regional organiser.
- Bring the right supervising adults. U.Dance Regional Platforms expect safer recruitment checks; adults should have appropriate DBS/equivalent checks and safeguarding training. Check local chaperone/licensing requirements early as applications can take 8 weeks or more. Paper copies of DBS certificates should be brought on the day.
- Hold essential information securely: emergency contacts, medical information/allergies and access needs for every participant and accompanying adult.
- Check that movement, costumes, music and lyrics are age-appropriate and suitable for a family audience.
- If you want U.Dance National Festival consideration, make sure your application indicates this and plan for the Group Leader Briefing on the Regional Platform day. Attendance is essential for eligibility.

What To Bring

- Performance costume + a complete spare/repair kit
- Dancewear, warm layers and comfortable shoes for the day
- Music file in the format requested by the organiser + backup copy
- Any approved props, clearly labelled and packed safely
- Participant emergency/medical information and access information
- DBS/safeguarding/chaperone documentation as required
- Water bottles, snacks/food appropriate to your group
- Phone/charger, timetable, venue contact and travel details



Stagecraft Reminders

- Silence in the wings; stay focused until fully off stage.
- Wait for blackouts/cues where instructed; don't rush exits.
- Practice bows and exits so the ending feels intentional.
- Know where everyone is immediately before and after the performance.
- No audience photography or filming should be permitted. Follow the venue/platform's safeguarding instructions and request that families/supporters do the same in the audience.



HOW TO MAKE THE EXPERIENCE COUNT!

Prepare your dancers so they can make the most of whole event. Here are some ideas:

- Explain the timetable, audience etiquette, backstage expectations and what to do if they feel overwhelmed.
- Build in a group check-in: 'How are we feeling? What do we need?' Give young people ownership over warm-up, focus and pre-show rituals where appropriate.
- Watch other groups. Encourage dancers to notice different styles, ideas, music choices and performance approaches - U.Dance Regional Platforms are about connection and learning as well as showcasing.
- Use workshops/talks as career and creative inspiration. Encourage dancers to ask questions, meet other young people, and make the most of the knowledge on offer from guest professionals.
- Celebrate the performance whatever the selection outcome. U.Dance Regional Platforms are non-competitive experiences; if the group is shortlisted, frame it as an exciting next step rather than a 'win'.
- Create a group memory: a team photo where permissions allow, a shared reflection, a programme note, or a short 'what I learned' circle on the journey home.



All the best with your application!