



## CLASSICAL ACADEMY OF ARMS INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXAMINERS

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### **The Purpose of the Examination**

The purpose of the oral and practical examinations of the Academy is to evaluate and validate the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the candidate as they meet the criteria for promotion, assess his or her ability to maintain the standards of the Academy, and provide a learning opportunity for candidate growth.

Candidates are expected to meet the standards set out on the examination forms, in the published metrics for the oral and practical examinations for the particular rank. Performance at the various ranks is expected to be:

- Classical Fencing Demonstrator – that of an entry level trainer able to assist in teaching and training duties in the Salle.
- Classical Fencing Instructor – that of a junior journeyman trainer able to manage group classes and provide simpler individual lessons to beginner and intermediate students.
- Classical Fencing Provost – that of a senior journeyman trainer working toward candidacy for Master able to teach all standard types of individual lessons taught in the classical period to a reasonable level of competence.

- Classical Fencing Master – that of a master practitioner capable of teaching all types of individual lessons taught in the classical period to a full professional level of competence.

The rank of Classical Fencing Master does not represent an end state of absolute mastery at a level unachievable by any except the most gifted trainers. It is a working professional level that represents a full understanding of the requirements for teaching and training classical fencers along with the potential for continued growth and contribution to knowledge as a professional. It is not, and should not be, easy to achieve, but it should be achievable by diligent practice teaching and in-depth study by those willing to make the effort.

### **Assignment of Examiners**

Candidate Testing For:	Desired Panel:	Minimum Panel:
Classical Fencing Master	(1) Classical Fencing Master (2) Classical Fencing Master (3) Classical Fencing Provost or Instructor	(1) Classical Fencing Master Trainer (2) Classical Fencing Provost
Classical Fencing Provost	(1) Classical Fencing Master (2) Classical Fencing Provost (3) Classical Fencing Instructor	(1) Classical Fencing Master Trainer (2) Classical Fencing Provost
Classical Fencing Instructor	(1) Classical Fencing Provost (2) Classical Fencing Instructor	(1) Classical Fencing Provost (2) Classical Fencing Demonstrator
Classical Fencing Demonstrator	(1) Classical Fencing Instructor (2) Classical Fencing Demonstrator	(1) Classical Fencing Provost

One examiner must be of a rank higher than that of the candidate, and one examiner should be of the same or a lower rank. The focus of the higher ranked

examiner should be upon the teaching technique and technical accuracy of the presentation. The focus of the same or lower ranked examiner should be on the success of the lesson on communicating with and teaching the student, viewed from a student perspective. The desired and minimum assignments of examiners for each rank are in the table above.

## **Attitude**

The candidate is a potential professional peer of the examiners, and should be treated with consideration and respect throughout the examination. Examiners should not:

- Belittle or insult the candidate or suggest that he or she lacks the intelligence to practice at a professional level.
- Make faces or gestures that demean the candidate or his or her performance.
- Speak in a way that clearly is dismissive of the candidate.
- In any way demonstrate prejudice based on race, ethnicity, gender identity or preference, religious faith or lack thereof, personal attractiveness or lack thereof, disability, economic status, political party, national origin, educational level, or fencing accomplishments or affiliations.
- Treat the examination as a rite of passage.

The examination process is, by its nature as a wide ranging assessment of the candidate's adequacy as a trainer, stressful. Examiners should:

- Follow the Academy's standard procedures and metrics.
- Endeavor to put the candidate and his or her student at ease to the extent appropriate for a formal examination.
- Maintain appropriate professional conduct and demeanor.
- Evaluate from a presumption of the candidate's readiness for the rank being tested until the candidate demonstrates otherwise.
- Make the examination a learning experience that the candidate will remember as having contributed positively to his or her development as a trainer.

## Specific Guidance for the Practical Examination

The *Metrics for Evaluation of Candidate Performance* provides detailed instructions on the points to be addressed in grading examination performance. The following discussion highlights areas that we believe require diligent attention to detail in the assessment of candidate performance.

**Teaching the Lesson** – In general the examiners should allow the candidate to teach his or her lesson uninterrupted by questions or other interventions. The purpose of the lesson is for the student to demonstrate competence in teaching the technique of his or her selected school in a coherent lesson of the candidate's design. The candidate cannot do that if there are constant interruptions or if the examiners constantly provide direction as to what they wish to see next.

**Fidelity to School** – National and regional schools of fencing were one of the features that made classical fencing distinct and are part of the attraction of teaching and learning classical technique. The candidate should adhere to the theory and technique of his or her selected school. The candidate should be able to clearly relate the lesson to the teachings of the school in the discussion section of the practical examination.

**Clarity of the Lesson** – Lessons taught should show a clear progression from the start to the end that is easily understood by the student and the examiners. Lessons which appear to be a jumble of elements without a clear tactical application or internal logic are not good learning environments for the students. An excellent lesson should unfold in a logical manner that is readily apparent.

**Students** – Candidates may use their own students for the examination. A successful lesson results from a shared understanding of fencing doctrine, technique, prior learning, and the format of the lesson between trainer and student. Using an unknown student may result in a superior lesson, or equally it may produce an unfair disaster for the candidate.

**Speed of Execution** – The expectation is that individual and group lessons in the practical examination should not be endurance or sprint events. However, the candidate should take the time necessary to teach the lesson based on the level of

the student, the type of lesson, and the difficulty of the technique being taught. The highly proficient candidate will be able to teach the core of the lessons in the examination in approximately 10 minutes or less and to adapt the content and methods used to meet that goal.

**Selection of Technique to be Taught** – Candidates may propose the technique to be taught in each lesson, within the general range of techniques candidates for a rank are expected to be proficient. The examiners may modify or substitute a different technique. If a student teaches the proposed technique the examiners may reasonably assume that the lesson has been practiced and expect a higher standard of performance by the candidate and his or her student.

**Number of Repetitions** – Generally the candidate should have the student perform a sufficient number of repetitions to demonstrate the candidate's ability to elicit the correct performance. The last repetition should always be a correct one. When the student achieves the appropriate level of performance, the strong candidate will recognize that it is time to move on to the next step and do so. If necessary, the examiner may tell the candidate that they may move on to the next element of the lesson. Repeated instances of the candidate not knowing that it is time to move to the next element is not a positive sign, especially for Classical Fencing Provost and Classical Fencing Master candidates.

**Distance** – Someone should be responsible for opening, closing, or maintaining distance in the lesson. Depending on the lesson, technique, and the candidate's rank this may be either the candidate or the student. Failures to use distance appropriately as part of teaching is not a positive sign – properly done, the distance for the action is always correct, improperly done execution of the action will seem to be anywhere but where it should be.

**Release of Control to Student** – Even in lessons at ranks where this is not required, the excellent candidate will allow the student as much freedom to make choices as possible. If the situation is not favorable the student should not attack – this decision making would be a good thing to see trained in the lesson. Similarly, the excellent trainer will react to the student's step forward rather than stepping back to draw the student forward when training the advance and lunge in higher rank examinations.

**Learning to Recognize Actions** – An important learning point in any lesson is the student learning to recognize the incoming action of the opponent. Similarly students who are executing cues in drills should be taught to do these as invitations rather than just a mechanical part of the drill. The excellent lesson will specifically address these points.

**Candidate Blade Actions** – All blade actions by the candidate must be realistic. Presentations of the blade should represent a threat to the student that must be avoided or dealt with. Similarly the candidate should demand that student blade actions be actual attempts to hit or to set up a further action. The candidate should not use the practice of shoving the student's blade up and off the teaching plastron or jacket. This introduces an unrealistic movement sequence – the cue to recover from the hit is the hit itself.

**Terminology** – In the classical period there was considerable variation in the names and descriptions of fencing actions. Not only were the same actions often named differently, but also different actions were sometimes given the same name. Candidates should be encouraged to use the correct terminology for their school either in the original language or in a commonly accepted English translation. In the absence of other authoritative guidance, terms and description of actions in the current editions of the *Classical Fencing Actions Project* catalog or the *Classical Academy of Arms Glossary* will always be acceptable.

**Candidate Errors** – Under the pressure of the examination, even the best candidate will make errors. If these are isolated cases, and the candidate recognizes an error, lets the student know there was an error, and then corrects it in subsequent performance, there should be no penalty. However, a continuing cycle of constant errors, explanations, errors, etc. represent a larger problem in teaching ability that should be appropriately reflected in the grade.

**Student Errors** – Students will make errors, perform even simple techniques in odd and inefficient ways, and otherwise pose unexpected problems in their performance of the lesson. The candidate should identify the error, take appropriate corrective action, and return to the content of the lesson. If the student continues to exhibit the performance error without self-correction, the candidate is

not required to continue to fix it. If there are multiple errors of different types, the candidate should correct only the errors that are central to successful performance of the particular technique. A focus by the candidate on multiple attempts to fix errors means that the actual lesson will not be taught in the allotted time – an outcome that should be appropriately reflected in the grade.

**Questions** – In general, the examiners may ask one or more questions during the lesson under the following conditions:

- If it appears that the candidate who would otherwise pass the examination is omitting a key element, is losing his or her place in the flow of the lesson, or is stuck on a point, an examiner may ask a question during the lesson designed to refocus the candidate without considering this to be a significant issue in determining the grade. However, repetition of the need for further guidance is not a positive condition, and examiners should not lead the student through the examination form.
- If a candidate appears to have an interpretation of a school that is significantly different than that of the examiners, an examiner may ask the candidate to explain what he or she is teaching the student and the applicable source so that the examiners can understand what the candidate is doing and why.

In general, the lesson should not be an interrogation of the student demanding explanation or defense of every step.

If the student has done an instructional task in a superior way, demonstrated an unusual level of understanding, or has applied creativity in approaching a problem, these should be addressed in the debriefing.

## **Specific Guidance for the Oral Examination**

**Number and Selection of Questions** – The oral examination grading form provides the standard number and distribution of questions to be asked. These questions should be selected randomly from the oral examination question bank by the examiners.

**Content of Answers** – Answers to the oral examination questions should at least address the material provided in the oral examination question bank. The superior candidate clearly will have done additional research and adapted their answers to address the specific practice of their school.

**Questioning** – Examiners will ask questions in rotation with each examiner asking one question in rotation until all questions have been asked. Once the question has been asked, the examiners are encouraged to ask follow-up questions and engage in a dialog with the candidate to explore the extent of the candidate’s knowledge. The emphasis should not be on tricking the candidate or of interrogation to expose weakness, but rather on identifying areas of excellent knowledge and areas in which the candidate should be encouraged to increase his or her knowledge.

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## **Grading**

On completion of the examination, the members of the panel will excuse the candidate for a period sufficient to consider the performance and assign a numerical score for each item and for the entire examination. Scores for items will be assigned based on the Metrics for Evaluation of Candidate Performance.

Scores for items should not be adjusted up or down to allow for a predetermined outcome agreeable to the examiners – the scores should speak for themselves. Scores will be arrived at either by averaging the scores assigned for each item by the examiners or by consensus of the examiners. One examination form will be used to record the final grades for submission to the Academy for the record, and



the examination sheets of the individual examiners may be destroyed in any manner that will preserve the privacy of the examiners and the candidate.

## **Debriefing**

After completion of the scoring of the examination, the candidate will be debriefed by the examiners. The debriefing shall include:

1. The score assigned to the examination results, along with congratulations in the case of a pass, or a short, dispassionate statement in the case of a failure, thanking the candidate for attempting the examination and indicating the major apparent reason for the failure in neutral terms.
2. Identification of areas, and specific elements, which the candidate should work to improve. In the case of failure, where possible, the examiners should indicate a course of action that has a reasonable chance of making the improvements needed to successfully complete the element in the future. In the case of a success, the examiners should indicate a course of action that will improve the candidate's capability to provide excellent instruction to students.
3. Identification of areas, and specific elements, in which the candidate's performance was excellent, along with suggestions as to how to internalize these as personal best practices.
4. An opportunity for the candidate to ask any questions he or she might have. The examiners should answer these questions candidly and to the best of their ability. If the examiners are not aware of an answer to a question, they should
5. Providing the candidate with Certificate of Examination Performance.
6. Reminding the candidate that completion of the written component, oral test, and practical evaluation does not bestow the rank. The portfolio must be completed and submitted as the final step.