



**College of Liberal Arts and  
Sciences**

Division of Performing Arts  
Department of Dance

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**MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN DANCE**

**STUDENT AND ADVISOR  
HANDBOOK**

*November 2022*

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## Objectives

The Master of Fine Arts degree in Dance was established at the University of Iowa in 1988, revised in 1991, and continues to evolve to respond to changes in the field, and in the Department. The MFA degree in Dance is designed to prepare and encourage dance artists and educators. Academic and artistic experiences are linked to promote a high standard of excellence with equal insight into the history and vitality of the artist in society and the world.

The objectives of the MFA program are:

1. To provide knowledge, practice, and resources to educate and prepare dance artists for significant roles in the field of dance.
2. To foster intellectual, artistic, and professional growth.
3. To develop the creative individual as a prodigious maker who can experiment, take risks, and surmount challenges in a rapidly changing field.
4. To value, prompt, and lend support toward skilled communication in aesthetic and academic forms, including movement, performance, diverse modes of creative production, writing, and verbal communication.
5. To challenge the artist to see, interpret, analyze and evaluate works of dance and movement-based art from various times, theoretical perspectives, and points of view.
6. To foster a coherent aesthetic point of view and to provide opportunity to hone and articulate that aesthetic in both scholarly and artistic ways.
7. To nurture the whole individual, body, mind and spirit, toward a holistic foundation for a purposeful life and career in the field.
8. To provide the inspiration and the means by which we, individually and collectively, participate to further the development of dance as an art form in the academy, the field, and the world.
9. To cultivate the idea of the movement artist as citizen, one who contributes to local, national, and global communities in a spirit of service.

## Expectations

The MFA program is an educational experience whose scope is more than the sum total of course work. Taking cues from the professional dance world and dance in academia, every aspect of the program is intended to prepare students for significant contribution in the field. Necessary to this endeavor is a robust professionalism, one that joins in a common spirit of productivity, shared responsibility, and nurturance of our common morale as we meet attendant challenges and celebrate the worthiness of our work together.

**Individual Success:** The overall health and productivity of the program depends on each individual's success in the pursuit of the degree. First and foremost is the expectation of making progress toward the degree by (1) maintaining a full- time status (9 s.h. minimum), (2) achieving the required minimum 3.0 GPA, (3) scheduling and attending meetings with the Graduate Academic Advisor, (4)

successfully completing the MFA plan of study.

**Professional Standards of Participation and Service:** Departmental expectations for MFA students go beyond the necessary degree requirements, or even one's academic achievement therein. In keeping with the mission of the program, MFA students are expected to fulfill professional standards of participation and service, seen most visibly but not exclusively in the following: by contributing to official departmental events such as adjudications, concerts, construction sites and end of semester events; by attending required meetings such as production meetings, TA meetings, and other meetings scheduled to discuss the program's ongoing maintenance and improvement; by volunteering to work for the good of the department, such as on ad hoc committees, conferences, presentations, special showings, productions, etc. As mentioned above, these contributions are among those that demonstrate commitment to a common spirit of productivity, a sense of shared responsibility, and nurturance of our common morale as we meet attendant challenges and celebrate the worthiness of our work together.

**Professional Communication:** At the University of Iowa, email communication is recognized as a formal mode of communication, and we must handle it as such. As a state institution, all email communication at the University of Iowa is subject to Iowa Open Records Laws (<https://transparency.uiowa.edu/>) and may be requested and revealed according to the guidelines set forth. To comply with university expectations, and with the respectful culture of our department, graduate students should address all email communications in a formal and professional manner. Formal address and sign-off (*i.e. greeting with full name and/or title*) are customary in our department, and in the academic environment; doing so demonstrates the professional attitude required of our community members. Best practices require that, whenever possible, difficult or complicated matters be addressed in person rather than left to email communication, which can often be misinterpreted. Response times in our busy community necessarily vary, and it is best to expect a minimum of one business day before receiving a response. You may consider adding a note to this effect ("*please allow a minimum of one business day...*") on your own email signature line. Always be mindful of appropriate timing, tone, confidentiality rules, and protocols concerning those who should be copied, or contacted first, last, or not at all.

Professional and respectful email communication is required at all times, and with all members of the community, including peers, the undergraduate students in your classes and rehearsals, staff members, professors and administrators. More helpful hints about proper email practices may be found here: <https://uiowa.edu/conflictmanagement/sites/uiowa.edu.conflictmanagement/files/Email%20and%20Conflict.pdf>

The above expectations are held in order to promote the mutual excellence of both the MFA student and also the Department, to advance the individual student in achieving professional and artistic goals, and to ensure the outstanding reputation and contribution of the Department of Dance to the University, to academia, and to the professional field.

### **Failure to Meet Professional Standards**

Failure to meet professional standards as outlined above, and also with respect to Academic and Artistic Integrity as outlined below, can be cause for dismissal from the MFA Program. When such problems become clear, the student will receive a written notice detailing how the student's participation is not in keeping with the Department's expectations. If the student cannot rectify these problems in substantial and meaningful ways within one semester's time following the issuance of the first notice, the student will be dismissed from the program.

## Academic and Artistic Integrity

As a university student, you are required to become familiar with and adhere to rules and policies surrounding matters of academic and artistic integrity.

Most issues of academic integrity are related to honesty in class work and behavior, such as plagiarism, cheating on assignments and exams, falsification/fabrication, and other issues. You should familiarize yourself immediately with the University of Iowa College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (UI/CLAS) Code of Academic Honesty. These are the basic parameters by which all students and faculty in UI/CLAS must abide: <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code>

As stewards of the Code of Academic Honesty, we must all work to uphold its rules and principles as students, scholars, artists, and teachers.

Additionally, issues of integrity and honesty in relation to creative and artistic processes within Department of Dance and related curricula are considered. Such issues may include but not be limited to:

- The Department of Dance takes seriously any instance of plagiarism, falsification of materials or misrepresentation of authorship, or other forms of cheating and dishonesty. All possible cases will be investigated by faculty and/or staff.
- Especially as graduate students, you are fully expected, when asked, to generate your own “original” artistic material regardless of the form it takes, including but not limited to ideas, choreography, movement, images, sounds, and text. This standard applies to all class work, including performance, writing, or other creative assignments, exams, research and note taking in class.
- In the age of widely available digital tools, sampling, remixing, appropriation, quotation, and other forms of referencing being prevalent throughout all forms of artistic practice and digital and social media, it is extremely important to develop and maintain your understanding and personal code of conduct in relation to academic and artistic integrity so as to minimize the possibility of confusion or conflict as a student or professional.
- With appropriation of form and content widely practiced throughout Western contemporary dance, we believe it is that much more important that you deeply comprehend issues of academic and artistic integrity as you develop your learning and further your career as a dance educator.

In addition to the above, here are some general guidelines to consider:

- It is your responsibility to understand these policies and reflect on how your work as a student may fall within or outside of academically acceptable forms of integrity and honesty. If you are ever unsure if your work or the work of others violates UI policy or standard norms of academic integrity, it is your responsibility to seek help through clarification from your instructor, MFA academic advisor, DEO, or relevant departmental or UI resources or staff in the CLAS Office of Academic Programs & Student

Development: <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students>.

- Ignorance of UI/CLAS policies surrounding academic integrity does not qualify as an excuse for violating these policies. If a situation arises in which your integrity may be called into question by faculty, staff or another student, you will be required to follow through with an inquiry process in good faith, even if you had no intention or knowledge of your actions possibly constituting a violation of policy.
- For those of you active in or aspiring to careers as educators, you are well advised to reflect on these issues throughout your degree progress so as to prepare yourself for a future position of authority as a faculty member assessing and administering such policies in other learning institutions.

### *Useful References:*

As a point of comparison with fundamentally similar issues in the visual arts, here is a detailed set of guidelines for visual arts students at University of East London (downloadable pdf):

[https://www.academia.edu/7086289/Maintaining\\_Academic\\_Integrity\\_and\\_Avoiding\\_Visual\\_Pla%20giamism\\_in\\_Assessment\\_in\\_the\\_Visual\\_Arts](https://www.academia.edu/7086289/Maintaining_Academic_Integrity_and_Avoiding_Visual_Pla%20giamism_in_Assessment_in_the_Visual_Arts)

For University of East London's very useful and elaborate description of examples of "academic dishonesty" in general – search "University of East London Academic Dishonesty" and you will see a downloadable pdf.

"How college classes encourage cheating," an essay by noted scholar James Lang on factors that contribute to academic dishonesty in contemporary higher education – specifically how course design could motivate the desire to learn and reduce the impulse to cheat:

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2013/08/03/how-college-classes-encourage-cheating/3Q34x5ysYcplWNA3yO2eLK/story.html#:~:text=Students%20driven%20purely%20by%20extrinsic,corers%20to%20get%20that%20reward.>

An example of straightforward language describing academic /artistic integrity in higher education programs: California College of the Arts – <https://portal.cca.edu/thriving/student-handbook/academic-policies/academic-integrity-code/>

Formal admission to the Graduate College is required for entry to the MFA Program in Dance. Applicants must complete all application forms required for admission prior to the graduate auditions. Admissions Office staff will review the transcripts to determine whether the applicant has a valid bachelor's degree or professional equivalence and has attained the minimum grade point average (3.0 for regular admission).

In lieu of an undergraduate degree, candidates may apply for graduate level equivalence through verifying a minimum of ten years as a professional dancer or choreographer. If chosen by the Department of Dance, applicants will then have their materials submitted in a petition to the Graduate College for an admission waiver. Those applications most likely to be accepted by the Graduate College show evidence of a ten-year minimum national and/or international participation in the field.

The Dance Department admissions requirements, materials, and deadlines can be found here: <https://dance.uiowa.edu/graduate-program>

International graduates must achieve a minimum TOEFL iBT score of 81, score a 7.0 with no subscore less than 6.0 on the IELTS, or a 105+ on the DuoLingo (DET) in order to be admitted into the Graduate College. Follow the link below for more information on English proficiency requirements: <https://grad.admissions.uiowa.edu/english-proficiency-requirements>

## PROBATIONARY STATUS

**All graduate students enter the program on probationary status for the first year (fall and spring).** At the end of the first year, faculty evaluate each student's work to determine their eligibility to continue in the program. The academic status decision takes into account the sum total of work in the student's first year of study; students qualify to remain in the program through satisfactory progress in all academic and artistic requirements, by meeting professional expectations in the program, and by demonstrating potential to successfully complete the advanced capstone project for the degree, the MFA Thesis. All students must register for the Graduate Independent Project course (see plan of study) in both the first and second semesters; *this course factors significantly in the evaluation of academic status.*

Near the end of the first semester, the full faculty evaluate first-year candidates in order to gauge their progress and provide feedback. The assessment includes performance in course work, all aspects of the Independent Choreography or Performance project, and participation in, and contribution to, the Department's overall mission (including performance as a TA, if applicable). All first-year graduate students receive a letter from the Director of Graduate Studies that summarizes faculty feedback; the letter may include recognition of achievement, recommendations for improvement, and suggestions for building on early work in the second semester. This process repeats at the end of the spring semester. If the evaluation of graduate standing, including the GPA (3.0 minimum), Graduate Independent Projects, and overall contribution to the program, merits qualification for regular status, the student is released from probationary status and proceeds to the second year of study on regular status. If the assessment does not result in qualification for regular status, the student's letter will summarize reasons for the negative decision. At the end of the first year assessment, students proceed to the second year of the program on regular status, or they are removed from the program. Students must achieve regular status by the end of the second semester to remain in the MFA Program.

Evaluation is an ongoing process and students must continue to produce work of distinction in their assignments and maintain a grade point average of 3.0 or better. If a student's grade point average falls below 3.0, it must be raised to that level by the end of the following semester. Failure to do so will be grounds for dismissal. A student, except one on probationary status, shall be placed on probation if, after completing 8 semester hours of graduate work, the student's cumulative grade-point average on graduate work done at the University of Iowa falls below 3.0. If, after completing 8 additional semester hours of graduate work at this university, the student's grade-point average remains below 3.0, the student shall be denied permission to reregister; otherwise, the student shall be restored to good standing.

Students who are admitted to and enroll in the Graduate College but who then fail to register for a period of three consecutive academic sessions (fall, spring, and summer, starting with any academic session) must reapply for admission.

## Program of Study

The MFA curriculum in Dance requires **60** total minimum semester hours. The MFA program in Dance

at the University of Iowa is comprised of five components: 1) the dance core and technique; 2) the dance emphasis track; 3) selected electives; 4) the Thesis and 5) the thesis filing and oral defense.

The MFA course of study is designed for two to three years of study at the University of Iowa. Students may complete the 60-semester hour program in two years by carrying a full graduate course load of 15 semester hours for the four semesters. For the majority of students, funding scenarios are often simple and consistent over the course of their studies. Changes in funding level and sources can and do occur; students must discuss funding options with the DEO, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Academic Advisor, and must recognize how academic and other choices may impact their funding. For example, if a student enters on a .50 TA, such an appointment prohibits carrying over 12 semester hours of course work, and therefore, that student would need at least 5 semesters in the program to complete the 60 hours required. For each student in good standing, the Department of Dance makes every effort to provide the highest level of funding possible for up to three years. Due to available funding scenarios and sources, which can change from year to year, students should expect that the means of funding, and the requirements that attend to that support, will change over the span of their tenure in the program.

**Area of Emphasis:** The MFA candidate must identify the chosen track emphasis, either choreography or performance, when applying to the program. Once a student matriculates, this chosen emphasis may only change with approval of or recommendation by the dance faculty. The deadline for this request is the last day of the Fall semester of the first year of study (the final Friday of Exam Week).

**In this case, the candidate must:**

- Submit a letter explaining the rationale for the change and providing evidence of potential in the new track.
- Successfully conduct a new Graduate Independent Project in the new track of emphasis in the following semester.
- Meet program requirements and achieve a positive recommendation for regular status in the new track of emphasis.

*Please note that any change of emphasis may have an impact on the candidate's Plan of Study, along with levels of funding and funding scenarios.*

## **Degree Requirements**

For current MFA degree requirements please consult The University of Iowa General Catalog: <http://catalog.registrar.uiowa.edu/liberal-arts-sciences/dance/dance-mfa/#requirementstext>.

## **Performance Credits**

All MFA candidates are required to participate in departmental performances. Students earn 1 s.h. for each work that they perform on stage. The MFA plan of study requires 2 s.h. of performance credit for students taking a choreography emphasis, and 7 s.h. for students taking a performance emphasis. Once cast in a work, you will register for the course number associated with the concert in which the work appears (see link below).

To see the courses that count as performance credit, go to the General Catalog at the link below: <https://catalog.registrar.uiowa.edu/liberal-arts-sciences/dance/dance-mfa/#requirementstext>



**Planning and Timing:** Some works will audition and cast in the semester prior to performance, making it easy to plan ahead, and to accommodate performance credit within your maximum semester hours the following semester; graduate students with a .50% TA or RA appointment, are limited to 12 s.h. total per semester, and those holding lesser TA/RA appointments (.33, .25), or holding Iowa Arts Fellowships, are limited to 15 s.h. total per semester. Work with the academic advisor to assure that all of your required courses (many of which *cannot* be taken later, or out of sequence) will fit within your maximum semester hours each term, and that performance credits can also be included.

**Flexibility:** A student who is already registered for the maximum credits in a given semester may still audition, be cast, and perform in that same semester; in this case, you may work with the academic advisor to register for DANC:6889 Graduate Performance Credit in the *following* semester to receive credit for this performance (aka; “carry over” the credit from fall to spring, or from spring to next fall). Credits can only be carried over *one semester*; you *may not* carry over a credit for performance that happened more than one semester ago. Credits *are never retroactively added* to a semester.

**“Double-Dipping”:** If you are already receiving credit for choreographing a piece, (*in grad independent projects, choreography classes, or other courses in which you are enrolled for credit*), you *may not* also receive credit for performing in that piece. For example, if you create a self-choreographed solo for Choreography IV class (DANC:6450) and you perform it in the MFA Event (DANC:4887/6887), you will not receive performance credit for the MFA Event because you are already receiving credit for that work in Choreography IV. Receiving credit for the same work twice is equivalent to turning in an identical paper for two different classes (see [Code of Academic Honesty](#)). *You may* receive performance credit for performing in your own work *if that work is not associated with earning credit in any other course*. This typically occurs in the context of creating and performing in special events (e.g., “Hancher Illuminated”) or collaborations with other departments.

## Advisor and Mentors

**Graduate Academic Advisor:** Graduate students design their Plan of Study in consultation with the Graduate Academic Advisor, often the same faculty as the Director of the Graduate Studies. The academic advisor oversees academic planning and tracks progress through the program.

**Teaching Assistant Mentorship and Feedback:** Hosted by the Director of Graduate Studies and/or the DEO, all TAs attend annual mentoring meetings each fall semester to help orient, organize, and acclimate to teaching in the Department of Dance. TA Meeting attendance is required. Topics include administrative requirements and policies, reporting and supervision, teaching practices and methods, and assessment and planning.

In addition, TAs are assigned faculty mentors who observe the student’s teaching at least one time during each semester. Observation and evaluation are conducted primarily in the spirit of mentoring the student toward improvement. TAs and mentors should initiate a meeting within the first five weeks of the semester to discuss the TAs goals and establish a frame through which their teaching will be viewed. The mentor will observe the TAs class(es) within the first five to seven weeks of the semester and meet again for a post- class discussion. In the event that curricular issues or problems arise in TA taught courses, usually regarding undergraduate student participation and/or attendance, they should be directed to the DEO. Additional observations and/or discussions may be initiated by the TA throughout the semester. Additionally, the faculty mentor and Dance DEO reserve the option of making subsequent visits and conversations with a TA if it is determined that these are warranted. The Dance DEO oversees this entire process.

TA performance is informally discussed among the faculty during the first and second semester evaluation (as part of the assessment of the student's qualifying process), during the TA appointment process, and/or in decisions about placing a student on probation. Feedback is provided in letters from the DGS, in meetings with the TA mentor, and/or by the DEO.

**Graduate Independent Project Mentoring:** Under the auspices of the Graduate Independent Choreography Course (DANC 6990), students will be mentored by a faculty instructor and, as part of the course requirements, will also seek out additional faculty mentors who provide perspectives on the student's project. A log of feedback will be kept with the various mentors' contributions, so that transparency, and the project process to date, can be accessed by all involved. This archive of the feedback will also track the ability of the student to contend with faculty feedback throughout the process. Questions such as, "how have you used the feedback provided by faculty?" and "Did your mentor's feedback become a catalyst for you to change your project in any way? If so, then how?" will be guiding questions in the final evaluation.

**Thesis Committee:** MFA candidates secure a Thesis Chair by identifying a faculty member who agrees to serve in this capacity; this is the faculty member who will oversee and facilitate the student's research process and will advise on all artistic and pragmatic aspects of the research. Students will select their thesis chair as early as the end of the first year of study. The thesis chair can assist in the selection of the additional thesis committee members (a minimum of two). Performance Track candidates must select committee members not choreographing for their thesis. Students are also encouraged to seek one thesis committee member from another department or performing arts area when appropriate to the creative project and research. If this person is not on a tenure-track at UI, candidates must be aware that an additional procedure may be required to include this faculty on the committee (please consult with the Chair of the Committee).

## **Graduate Independent Projects**

**A Graduate Independent Project (Choreography or Performance) must be undertaken in the first and second semester of graduate study. Students must be enrolled in Graduate Independent Project (DANC:6990) for both semesters.** Students enrolled gather weekly as a full cohort to receive direction and support from a faculty member who administers and organizes the process, establishes a feedback process, sets a calendar of showings, mentors the written components of the project, and assigns a grade.

**Description and Rationale:** This independent project course serves as a small-scale model of the Thesis project. The purpose of the project is to develop each graduate student's knowledge and artistry, and to demonstrate capacity to successfully complete a thesis project. The choreographer's goal is to conceive, articulate and execute a choreographic project that, through a research process, moves from questions and creative visions to devised and materialized outcomes. Choreographers must conduct and give evidence of a rigorous creative process, must apply choreographic knowledge to the specific needs of the project, and show ability to use creative reasoning and problem-solving toward the production of a fully realized work. The performer's goal is to demonstrate technical, artistic, interpretive and/or collaborative skills befitting the mature dance performer. In the process, performers must demonstrate a clear ability to define modes of performative research, discover points of entry into a specific role, and give an account of these goals and artistic choices in writing. *This course factors significantly into the evaluation of the student in the Qualifying Process*; in addition to assessing the products of the work, faculty consider each student's ability to improve in all areas of creative research, and to participate productively in the rehearsal process to be vital.

Each Graduate Independent Project includes two aspects: The first is the in-studio rehearsal and performance of an artistic outcome; the second aspect of the project is a research process that uses

writing to focus the project, to provoke creative steps, to develop coherence between ideas, process, and outcomes, and to account for the resulting research. Both the creative/artistic and reflective/analytical aspects are integral to the success of the project and are guided by the faculty instructor assigned to the course. As part of the Graduate Independent Project course, students will receive mentoring and feedback from the faculty member who administers the course, from peers, and from additional faculty who are invited by the graduate student to observe and discuss their works in progress.

*For first-year graduate students on probationary status: All dance faculty observe the final performance of the project, whether the project is shown in a theater or studio, in an outdoor site-specific showing, or on a virtual platform. Students on probationary status who receive a minimum grade of B may be considered for a change to regular status. Two unsuccessful attempts to complete a Graduate Independent Project with a minimum grade of B signifies that the student is not qualified to proceed to the Thesis. Students on probationary status must achieve regular status within two sessions of registration (fall and spring) or be dismissed.*

### **Studio Component:**

1. Dance-makers attend departmental auditions, select cast members, (or provide rationale for a self-choreographed solo), establish rehearsal schedules, and engage in creative inquiry toward devising and completing an original work. Performers audition and secure roles, may learn existing choreography, or collaborate and co-create with their directors and present the outcome of their work in a performance. *\*Performance emphasis students in their first semester on probationary status must secure roles in work directed by faculty.* All casting and scheduling will be shared with the faculty instructor for the course DANC 6990. See [Rehearsal and Casting guidelines](#) for further details.
2. All candidates will participate in weekly class meetings and showings throughout the semester to organize their projects, and to give and receive feedback during the creative process; the calendar of showings will occur during the scheduled class meetings and will be organized by the faculty instructor for the course DANC 6990. Alternative showing opportunities may be organized in the case of dancer conflicts, joining the performance emphasis candidates at their evening rehearsals, or addressing special requirements for the project. *\*Choreography emphasis students in their first year on probationary status are required to show their independent projects in the departmental "Construction Site" (see course syllabus for dates).*
3. All candidates will seek feedback from additional faculty members according to requirements outlined in the course syllabus for DANC 6990. A centralized log of feedback will be kept and may be accessed by the candidate, the instructor, and any invited observers and mentors. See syllabus for details.
4. All candidates will present their final research outcomes either in a departmental production (ie; *Dance Gala, Graduate/Undergraduate Concert, Faculty/Graduate Concert, Grad Event*), or will show their work in the *End of Semester Event* that takes place on the last day of the semester (see departmental calendar). All faculty must observe the final project outcomes. Therefore, if the final project outcome does not appear in a formal concert or cannot be shown at the End of Semester Event, candidates must gain approval for an alternative showing that may be accessed by all faculty (ie; digital platforms or outdoor sites).

### **Written Component:**

1. **Abstract** (150 words): For choreography projects, this includes a description of the

concept, content, and format of the proposed project. For performance projects, this includes both a description of the performer's role and its function in the context of this choreographer's work, and specific objectives for performance as research. Abstracts are due no later than the end of the third week of the semester.

2. **Proposal** (1 to 2 pages): This includes a statement of the artistic objectives in terms of the student's personal goals, a discussion of the research procedures, and speculation on possible outcomes. This is due within two weeks after submission of the Abstract.
3. **Process/Progress Archive:** Logged parallel to the creative process, this ongoing assessment includes articulation of feedback received, reflection and analysis, discussion of decisions and new experiments resulting from the showings and conversations about the work. The contents of the log may form important starting points for the student's self-evaluation and analysis in the final paper. See syllabus for details.
4. **Paper:** A paper submitted in draft form by week 12, and in final form by week 14 of the semester. *(For first-year grads on probationary status, the papers are read by the entire faculty during week 15, and will be considered in the qualifying process discussions, typically held during the exam week.)*

**Evaluation: The following describes the process for evaluation of the Independent Project:**

A Graduate Independent Project is evaluated on the artistic product, the creative and scholarly process, level of sophistication in responding to feedback and how the feedback process impacted the result of the project, and on the critical thinking that was evidenced in the studio process and product, and in the written components of the project.

A Graduate Independent Project that meets minimum standards for a grade of B or above shows:

1. **Project Outcome:** Successful pursuit of graduate candidate's project goals as outlined in the qualifying project abstract and proposal, or successful divergence from the initial concept in ways that are described and defended in the final paper.
2. **Creative Research Process:** Graduate candidate's ability to engage in methods and processes that supported the successful outcomes in the project, and that contributed to the candidate's artistic growth.
3. **Handling/Applying Feedback:** Graduate candidate's demonstrated capacity to critically and thoughtfully engage in the feedback process toward the successful outcome of the project, evidenced both in the produced work, and in the reflective and analytical writing associated with the project.
4. **Advanced Potential:** Graduate candidate's demonstrated potential for advanced work in production, both in scope and content, such that the artistic demands of the MFA Thesis could be met.

*For students on probationary status in Fall: the Graduate Academic Advisor and/or Director will include project feedback in a formal letter that includes faculty recommendations for successful completion of a new Graduate Independent Project in spring, and/or any other requirements for achieving regular status. The candidate should also schedule a follow-up meeting with faculty advisors*

*related to the project. The process repeats for Spring semester, followed by a letter that includes the academic status decision.*

### **Construction Site Information and Guidelines**

Construction Site showings provide students an opportunity to show choreographic works-in-progress in an informal setting each semester. These showings are required for first-year graduate students enrolled in Graduate Independent Projects (DANC: 6990). For schedule, please consult the *Department of Dance Audition, Performance and Event Dates* ([See Appendix](#))

- 1) Construction Site Showings will be organized each semester and will be presented in the Large Gym or Space Place, unless otherwise announced.
- 2) These showings will allow participating choreographers (and performers) to receive constructive criticism on the works presented.
- 3) Hosting and videotaping responsibilities for the showings will be coordinated by current MFA students. Students supply their own videotape for the recording of their own dance. Departmental videography services are not available for Construction Site. Students wishing to record their works must arrange their own videographer(s). Cameras are available for checkout in the main office (E114).
- 4) One week prior to the Construction Site showing, the Dance Department Staff will send a call to sign-up.
- 5) Initially, each choreographer may sign up for only one showing slot. However, one day prior to the Construction Site, a choreographer may add a second work if open slots are available.
- 6) Time limits for the showing are as follows: one dance may not exceed 12 minutes, and two dances if shown at the same Construction Site, may not exceed 16 minutes in total length. (Students are welcome to schedule individual choreographic showings for dances that exceed these time limits.)

### **Thesis**

Whether in choreography or performance, the thesis project is considered to be the comprehensive outgrowth of the student's graduate studies at The University of Iowa. An extensive period of research and rehearsal leads to the final draft of the artistic outcome, along with the written thesis defense, a document that articulates central aspects of the research, accounts for decisions made in the creative process, and reflects on the value and success of the project through self-evaluation. The Thesis Chair acts as the primary advisor to the graduate candidate and must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty in the Dance Department. Two other faculty members, one, who may be outside of the Dance Department, are selected to complete the candidate's thesis committee. Candidates may include a visiting or instructional track faculty on the committee, but non-tenured or tenure-track faculty must first be approved by the Graduate College. (Please consult with the Chair of the Committee).

For information, procedures and deadlines for the academic thesis timetable including scheduling,

thesis abstract, thesis proposal, final written summary, oral defense and graduate thesis deposit, please refer to the thesis timetable in the appendix.

For information, procedures and deadlines for the production timetable and guidelines, please refer to: <https://virtualdance.studio.uiowa.edu/dance-production-guidelines>

### **Studio Component:**

#### **A. Choreography Track**

The choreography thesis project requires a minimum of 20 minutes of new choreography created by the candidate.

#### **B. Performance Track**

The performance thesis project requires a minimum of 20 minutes of performance by the candidate in a featured role or roles.

### **Written Component (for due dates, refer to the Thesis Timetable):**

1. **Abstract** (150 words): A synthesis of the conceptual framework, research questions and proposed format of the project. The abstract articulates the main aspects of the project.
2. **Proposal** (five pages maximum): A description of the impetus and rationale for the project, the questions that will fuel the research, possible methods and resources that will guide and inform the process, and how the project might serve professional and artistic goals.
  - A. The choreography thesis proposal should address the following aspects:
    - tentative or "working" title
    - the subjects, concepts, theories, and questions that will inform the project
    - rationale that situates the project relative to one's overall growth and artistic development
    - the proposed methods and creative processes befitting the research
    - the rationale for proposed design aspects (scenic, lighting, costume, video)
    - approach to music/sound design for the project
    - cast list and rationale for that selection
    - performance dates and a complete rehearsal schedule
    - preliminary production/marketing budget
  - B. The performance thesis proposal should address the following aspects:
    - description of roles to be learned, developed, or co-created
    - rationale for the curated role or roles and their artistic challenges
    - the subjects, concepts, theories, and questions that will inform the research
    - the methodologies and/or processes that will be engaged in creating and performing the role or roles
    - rationale that situates the project relative to the candidate's overall growth, artistic development, and professional goals
    - complete rehearsal timeline
    - preliminary production/marketing budget
3. **Written Defense** (20 pages maximum, double-spaced) Refer to the [UI Graduate College webpage](#) for guidelines for thesis formatting. It is due to the committee prior to the oral defense date.

The written portion of the thesis should give an account of the theories and creative processes that

determined the final outcome of the work. As a “defense,” the thesis paper should address all aspects of the project by:

- Tracing the theories or ideas that led to the project's definition and explaining the artistic territory under investigation.
- Articulating a critical framework for the creative research, its role in decisions made during the development of the work, and in retrospect, how it provides a lens through which to analyze the artistic choices.
- Contextualizing one's emerging ideas in a greater field of discourse, locating one's research with regard to other scholarly and artistic work in the dance field, but also across the disciplines whenever appropriate, citing those authors and artists whose work lent direction and support to the genesis of your own ideas and artistic production.
- Assessing the outcome of the project in the terms set forth in the proposal at the outset, utilizing also any additional knowledge gained in the process of completing the thesis project, and addressing the choreography and/or performance, as well as the design and production elements that were integral to the work.

### **Thesis Evaluation**

The Thesis Project is evaluated as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. The thesis committee members consult the full dance faculty before making determination of the thesis project evaluation. The studio and written components, as well as all aspects involved in the final performances, provide a context for a discussion of the following: the creative process, conceptualization, execution, artistic merit, and final production.

### **Oral Thesis Defense**

An oral thesis defense (with all members in attendance) should be arranged with the Thesis Chair and members of the committee and must take place **before** the deadline for submitting the Final Exam Report.

After confirming the date, time, and location of the defense, referred to as “Final Exam” by the Graduate College, the candidate will contact the department’s Graduate Coordinator for submission of a Request for Final Exam with the Graduate College. Submissions to the Graduate Coordinator should include the following information:

- Date, time, and location of oral defense
- Committee members names with chair indicated
- Thesis title
- Non-Doctoral Plan of Study Summary Form ([found here](#))
- Grade Report (only needed if you have completed more than 60 s.h. and need to remove courses not counting for the degree)

The candidates will meet with the Graduate Academic Advisor for guidance on the Plan of Study and Grade Report.

On the day of the defense, thesis committee members will receive a Final Exam Report through DocuSign, which they will use to record their vote on the defense. This document is routed to Graduate College for addition to the candidate’s official record.

The Thesis Chair will notify the candidate with their decision on the defense. It is at the Committee’s



discretion to request the candidate to revise or rewrite portions of the thesis paper.

### Graduate College Thesis Deposit

Directions for the formal preparation of the thesis can be found in the Thesis Manual on the Graduate College website. <https://grad.uiowa.edu/academics/thesis-and-dissertation>

For instructions concerning the Thesis Deposit, please follow this link. <https://grad.uiowa.edu/academics/thesis-and-dissertation/submitting-your-thesis>. ***Always confer with the Graduate College website to check for updates.*** Please follow instructions carefully as you are preparing your Thesis Deposit.

It is the MFA candidate's responsibility to meet all requirements of the Thesis Deposit and associated deadlines. It is the candidate's responsibility to study the information regarding the Deposit on the Graduate College website very carefully ***as deadlines are never waived***, fees are assessed when materials are turned in late, and ***missed deadlines will likely result in a delayed graduation.*** For all deadlines consult this information: <https://www.grad.uiowa.edu/deadlines>.

Materials included in the Thesis Deposit to the Graduate College are kept in the Main Library repository, as is a copy of the archival video of your thesis. The thesis paper used for the purposes of your Oral Defense is not kept in the library. Once your thesis paper has been revised and approved by your Thesis Chair following your Oral Defense, please provide the final version of your paper to the Department for the MFA library. *The Department bears no responsibility for keeping the final version of your thesis paper safe.* Please make every effort to keep copies of this paper yourself so it is available if you need it for any reason following your graduation from the program.

### The MFA Degree Application

The Degree Application is on MyUI. The MFA candidate **MUST** take responsibility for meeting these deadlines, or their graduation will be delayed until a subsequent session. Use this [Graduation Checklist](#) from the Graduate College to make sure you have completed all of the steps for graduation and commencement during the semester in which you plan to graduate.

### Other Production Opportunities

The Dance Department offers opportunities for choreography and performance projects to be fully produced in a concert. Independent Choreography projects and works created through Choreography courses may be presented for adjudication for program consideration in the following two Space Place venues: the Graduate/Undergraduate Concert and the Faculty/Graduate Concert.

Works created through the Collaborative Performance Course also culminate in a fully produced concert in Space Place. Also, on occasion, choreography by graduate students may be selected to become part of the repertory of UI Dance Company, the Dance Department's touring repertory dance ensemble. Graduate choreography has also been featured on Dance Gala programs, the Dance Department's annual premiere event. The final production opportunity of the academic year is the MFA Event, organized and produced by the graduate student cohort, and typically held at the end of April.



## Graduate/Undergraduate Concert & Faculty/Graduate Concert Guidelines

1. Dances performed in Space Place Theater are selected through an adjudication panel of at most three faculty members approximately two weeks prior to the scheduled concert date.
2. The following are the Adjudication Guidelines for the Faculty/Graduate Concert
  - Graduate students are welcome to present any number of completed works for adjudication.
  - All dances adjudicated for the Faculty/Graduate Concert are limited to 12 minutes in length.
  - Only **completed** choreographic works (i.e. music, props, exact # of dancers, etc.) will be considered for the concert.
  - No more than two dances per choreographer will be chosen.
  - All Graduate choreographers submitting works for the Faculty/Graduate Concert must complete the Adjudication Form. This form should be sent to the Chair of the Adjudication Committee no later than two days the Adjudication date (s). (Choreographers may not adjudicate if this form is not completed in full).
  - Choreographers may also be asked to complete the form electronically and send to (1) the Space Place Production Manager, (2) the Stage Manager for the concert and (3) the Marketing RA responsible for the Concert.
  - Choreographers must select an adjudication time slot. When signing in for a slot, choreographers have to make sure that all dancers will be present for the designed adjudication time.
3. The following are the Adjudication Guidelines for the Graduate/Undergraduate Concert
  - Graduate and Undergraduate students are welcome to present *two completed works* for adjudication.
  - All dances adjudicated for the Graduate/Undergraduate Concert are limited to 12 minutes in length.
  - Only **completed** choreographic works (i.e. music, props, exact # of dancers, etc.) will be considered for the concert.
  - No more than two dances per choreographer will be chosen.
  - All choreographers submitting works for the Graduate Undergraduate Concert must complete the Adjudication Form. This form should be sent to the Chair of the Adjudication Committee no later than two days before the Adjudication date (s). (Choreographers may not adjudicate if this form is not completed in full).
  - Choreographers may also be asked to complete the form electronically and send to (1) the Space Place Production Manager, (2) the Stage Manager for the concert and (3) the Marketing RA responsible for the Concert.
  - Choreographers must select an adjudication time slot. When signing in for a slot, choreographers have to make sure that all dancers will be present for the designed adjudication time.

## Additional Graduate Student Policies and Information

1. Graduate students receiving graduate fellowship or assistantship support must be enrolled for a minimum of 9 semester hours in a given semester to maintain continued support.
2. For the sake of consistency and building embodied knowledge over time, MFA students are encouraged to take majors movement practices courses as many days a week, or as often as possible. MFA

candidates in Performance are strongly advised to enroll 5 days per week in majors movement practices courses. Exceptions are made for Teaching Assistants with direct conflicts due to their teaching assignments.”.

3. Graduate students must schedule an appointment with the Graduate Adviser each semester to prepare the next semester’s plan of study.
4. All TA assignments are made at the discretion of the Dance DEO with attention to departmental needs. While graduate students’ preferences are considered, the ultimate assignment authority rests with the DEO. Assignments are final except in the case of a direct conflict with a required MFA course.
5. Each Graduate Student will be assigned an office located in Halsey Hall. Students may be required to share an office with another Graduate Student(s) as available space allows, and are expected to maintain office spaces, studios and all dance facilities and equipment in a responsible and professional manner. **All offices need to be vacated and cleaned by June 1<sup>st</sup>, after the close of the spring semester.** Requests for office mates should be emailed to Academic Coordinator no later than August 1 of the next academic year. The Department of Dance reserves the right to assign offices as space allows. All Teaching Assistants are required to hold three office hours per week. Schedule of office hours, courses and email address must also be posted outside of their offices.
6. Any concerns regarding education, procedures and policies should be directed first to the Faculty member most closely involved, secondly to the Director of Graduate Studies, and finally, if necessary, to the Dance Department Chair.
7. A studio reservation system is prioritized each semester and coordinated by a staff member of the Department. Graduate students will be given an opportunity to reserve individual studio rehearsal space during an arranged time at the beginning of each semester. Please use the Dance Studio Request Form for all reservations: <https://dance.uiowa.edu/resources/studio-scheduling>.
8. Maintaining studio cleanliness is a responsibility of all users of Halsey Hall’s facilities. Please restore studios to proper conditions after use. Please refrain from wearing outdoor shoes in the studios or using rosin, powder, or other conditioning agents on the floors. Food and drink, aside from water in closed containers, are prohibited in studio spaces. All Graduate Students serving as TAs or rehearsal directors are responsible for the conditions of the studio after each class or rehearsal. Please check that there are no spills or debris on the floors before exiting the studios. Push brooms, paper towels, and Clorox wipes are available in all studios to deal with minor incidents. Please report major damages to floors, walls, mirrors, air conditioning, electronic equipment, or any other furniture or equipment in the studio to the Academic Coordinator as soon as possible. **Students must follow any new studio policies that are announced during the year (ie; new public health policies or other rules established to respond to emerging circumstances).**
9. Departmental keys will be issued to all Graduate Students by the department academic coordinator. Each Graduate Student will be assigned a Halsey Hall entrance key and a key to their office. Students will be required to sign a key checkout contract agreeing to pay the cost to replace the key and possibly re-key the area in the event keys are lost or stolen. The minimum charge to replace a lost key is \$100; however, the cost could be as high as \$400 to re-key depending on the room(s).
10. Graduate Students will be assigned a mailbox in Halsey Hall located in E114A. Although the

majority of departmental communication occurs via email, please check your mailbox weekly for important information and notices. **It is not the Academic Coordinator's responsibility to inform you when you receive mail.**

11. All Graduate Students must obtain a University of Iowa student ID card before classes resume. Student ID cards may be obtained in room 2700 University Capitol Centre. Each Graduate Student must also obtain a University of Iowa e-mail address before the start of classes. Please follow [the instructions from Information Technology Services](#) to access your email. Please check e-mail daily as most University of Iowa and Department of Dance notices are generated through e- mail.
12. All Teaching Assistants may use the departmental copying machine for printing or copying materials for classes they are teaching. The machine may not be used for personal printing. See the department Academic Coordinator for a pass code.
13. A series of meetings for all Departmental Teaching Assistants is held in the fall under the supervision of faculty members. Attendance of all TAs is **required**.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Audition Dates AY 2022/2023**

FALL AUDITION SURVEY Link Opens:  
MFA Independent Projects Monday, August 29, 2022

FALL AUDITION DAY (held during Ballet and Modern technique classes):  
MFA Independent Projects Friday, September 2, 2022.

Cast lists should be announced by Choreographer:  
By Thursday, September 8, 2022

SPRING AUDITION SURVEY Link Opens:  
MFA Independent Projects January 23, 2023

SPRING AUDITION DAY (held during Ballet and Modern technique classes):  
MFA Independent Projects, January 27, 2023

Cast Lists Should be Announced by Choreographer:  
By Thursday, February 2, 2023

### **MFA Academic Thesis Timetable**

(Deadlines may be satisfied earlier than indicated.)

1. Selection of Performance Dates (semester and year)	First semester of graduate study
2. Selection of Thesis Chair; Chair and candidate conference on selection of additional	By the end of the first year of graduate

committee members.	study
3. Abstract finalized with Thesis Chair	Midterm (8th week) of semester <b>prior</b> to the thesis. Should the thesis happen in the Fall semester, these deadlines would be in the previous Spring semester.
4. Proposal submitted in final form to adviser, committee and technical director. This must include rehearsal and showing schedule, budget, production and publicity meetings, final exam defense date, and cast list (if possible).	12 <sup>th</sup> week of semester prior to thesis.
5. Thesis committee meets to discuss proposal.	14 <sup>th</sup> week of semester prior to thesis.
6. Final version of proposal due.	Last day of classes of the semester prior to thesis.
7. First showing of thesis to committee and Technical Director (Don Schneider, don-schneider@uiowa.edu)	8 weeks prior to thesis
8. All publicity design and copy completed	4 weeks prior to thesis
9. Second showing of thesis to committee and technical director. (A Third showing can be arranged upon request of the candidate or a committee member depending on approval of all members).	4 weeks prior to thesis
10. Production Week	Week prior to thesis except with special approval
11. Thesis Concert'	As scheduled
12. All scenery, props, costumes, and shop supplies must be returned unless special arrangements are made with the TD in advance.	Monday after last performance
13. Final written summary to committee	Within 2 weeks after concert
14. Oral defense	Within 3 weeks after concert
15. Revised final written summary to Thesis Chair (if applicable)	Within 1 week after the Oral Defense
16. Graduate Thesis Deposit	Refer to UI Registrar Calendar or Grad College Deadline Calendar

### Important Thesis Dates in 2022-23

Grad Thesis Concerts FALL AUDITION SURVEY Link Opens:  
Monday, August 29, 2022

Grad Thesis Concerts FALL AUDITION DAY (held during Ballet and Modern technique classes):

Friday, September 2, 2022

Grad Thesis Concerts Tuesday, September 6  
Casting Session

### **Digital Dance and Opera Production Calendar on Prepared**

ALL: <https://app.prepared.com/p/filters/32786/Wk6lJJTyYcgQsv9gFTZCc1w0eyW0TLVyewZKCjWGGI8>

#### Prepared Notes:

- The links will remain the same and live update with changes
- The links can be embedded in your calendars, if you'd like
- The links can be used and calendars viewed on your mobile devices
- You can print these calendars (PC: ctrl + P or Mac: command + P)
- Project Categories:
  - Each Production is listed by Show title (Dance purple, Music aqua, Theatre green)
  - ALL Auditions are listed in yellow
  - ALL Production deadlines are listed in tan
  - University Dates, Production Unit Days Off, & Holidays are Listed in Grey
  - Theatre Gallery Productions (lime green) and Space Place Productions (light purple) are included
- You can filter your view with each of the drop down menus at the top of the calendar
  - All Projects – lists all projects you can view individually (or in groups)
  - All Statuses – if an event has a ?, it is to be confirmed
  - All Locations – locations have been added to the majority of projects. This will allow you to filter by theatre location
  - All Departments – lists all departments and you can filter the view for one (or multiple) areas. Always select Production in addition to individual departments when filtering your view
  - All Categories – lists how the projects have been categorized

### **Thesis Formatting and Templates**

For the latest instructions on formatting your thesis paper, please visit the Graduate College website:  
<https://grad.uiowa.edu/academics/thesis-and-dissertation/preparing-formatting>

Please contact Erin Kaufman ([erin-kaufman@uiowa.edu](mailto:erin-kaufman@uiowa.edu)) with any questions about formatting.

## MFA Thesis Concert Budget Agreement

- 1) The MFA Thesis Concert shall be presented in the Space Place Theater as a part of the University of Iowa Department of Dance Space Place Concert series. This MFA Thesis Concert shall be shared between two or more Graduate Candidates.
- 2) Each MFA Candidate will be allocated \$ **700.00** to assist with the MFA Thesis Concert expenses and **\$100** to assist with music rights expenses. Expenses that exceed the departmental allocation will be incurred by the MFA Candidate.
- 3) All expenses utilizing departmental funds shall follow University of Iowa purchasing standards and procedures. MFA Candidates shall use the production unit credit card for all purchases from vendors outside the University of Iowa with the approval and under the supervision of the Technical Director.
- 4) All materials purchased using Department of Dance funds become the property of the Department of Dance. MFA Candidates may purchase these materials at cost after fulfilling the MFA Thesis Post-Production Agreements attached.
- 5) MFA Candidates are responsible for all borrowed materials. Departmental funds **shall not** be used to reimburse lenders of borrowed materials if lost, stolen or damaged and will be paid by the MFA Candidate.
- 6) The Division of Performing Arts Marketing Office provides basic publicity and programs at no cost. The MFA Candidate is responsible for providing all publicity and program information according to the time line established by the Division of Performing Arts Marketing Coordinator. If the MFA Candidates choose to design and execute their own publicity posters and/or concert programs, funds from the department allocation may be used for this purpose. The Director of Marketing must approve all publicity and program materials before printing and public release. Materials must be submitted 30 days in advance of printing and/or release.
- 7) The Department of Dance will provide archival, media documentation for all performances. All other costs for special media requests, other than documentation, must be included in the budget outline. Documentation copies of the MFA Thesis Concert may be obtained from the Department of Dance. Documentation will be provided in the form of digital files.
- 8) The Technical Director and the MFA Thesis Chair must approve all expenses listed on the Budget Outline attached.

\_\_\_\_\_  
MFA Graduate Candidate

Date\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Space Place Theater Technical Director

Date\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, MFA Thesis Committee

Date\_\_\_\_\_

## **Thesis Budget Statement**

**(Right click table and select Worksheet Object to open  
in Excel and fill in amounts)**

<b>Expenses</b>	
<b>Personnel</b>	
Guest Artists (Choreographers, Performers, Composers, Designers, Musicians, etc.)	
<b>Total Personnel</b>	\$ -
<b>Production</b>	
Production Labor for Space Place	
Lighting Director/Designer (Flat Rate)	
Audio Engineer/Designer	
House Manager	
Videographer (Flat Rate)	
Photographer (Flat Rate)	
Costumes and Costumes Assistant	
Scenery & Props (Materials, Labor, Purchase, rentals, etc.)	
<b>Total Production</b>	\$ -
<b>Marketing</b>	
Electronic mailing	
Press Release	
Underwriting	
Printing of programs/flyers	
Area calendar listings	
<b>Total Marketing</b>	\$ -
<b>Total Expenses (Personnel + Production + Marketing)</b>	\$ -
<b>Funding</b>	
Department of Dance (\$800 max)	
Thesis Budget (700 max)	
Music Rights Budget (100 max)	
<b>Total Funding from Department of Dance</b>	\$ -
Grants	
Other Funding	
<b>Total Funding</b>	\$ -

## **Production Guidelines**

For updated production guidelines please see: <https://virtualdance.studio.uiowa.edu/dance-production-guidelines>.

## **Selection for ACDA**

The University of Iowa Dance Department participates in the ACDA (American College Dance Association) annual regional festivals each year. The department selects both faculty and/or student works to represent the University. The Dance Department can send no more than three works each year (two for the adjudicated concert and one for the informal concert). The selection of these works by faculty vote is based on the following criteria:

- 1) The choreographic work may not exceed 12 minutes.
- 2) Only complete choreographic works will be considered for nomination.
- 3) Starting in December of the prior year, the faculty will discuss and nominate works to be considered for ACDA selection.
- 4) In October, the faculty votes on the nominated works for final selection.
- 5) Students who participate in dances being considered for ACDA should be in good standing with the Dance Department and University (currently registered, consistent attendance, etc.).

*Choreographers have the option to accept or deny the faculty nomination of their pieces before the final faculty vote. The faculty reserves the option to make adjustments and changes to these guidelines according to special circumstances.*