

Department of Theatre and Dance

MFA, Dance
Handbook & Curriculum Guide
2024-2025

Revised Summer 2020

Curriculum Focus

The M.F.A. in Dance is an elite, individualized two-year program of study (including one summer of study) that furthers emerging and returning professionals' unique interests in the creation and teaching of dance with a focus on the interdependence of artistry, pedagogy and critical dance studies as platforms for critical civic engagement and social justice.

Inherently interdisciplinary in nature, the program draws on practice and scholarship from many fields such as choreography/dance performance, feminist studies, whiteness studies, performance studies, education and critical pedagogy, critical race theory and cultural studies. Students and faculty in our program demonstrate a strong commitment to innovation, leadership, community, equity and social justice. This commitment informs the curriculum.

Faculty defines "leadership, community, equity and social justice" as activities that include:

- Creating and/or producing performance
- Working as an academic (a professor who melds theory and practice in their teaching, scholarship, production and service)
- Working as a dance dramaturg and outreach director
- Arts administration
- Working in public programming with foundations and non-profit organizations
- Establishing public policy
- Writing grants
- Using critically-engaged choreographic methods and theories
- Teaching in universities, colleges, high schools and community centers
- Using performance as a tool for understanding communities and difference
- Theorizing performance as a site of civic engagement and often dissent
- Redefining and recontextualizing the role of performance in culture
- Promoting arts-based civic dialogue
- Case-making and agenda-setting for public culture

The M.F.A. in Dance is a terminal degree that qualifies you to work in a variety of academic, artistic and professional settings, including teaching at a university-level or in community settings, directing a performance company, managing an arts organization, working as a performance curator or festival director, or devising performance work. The degree does not lead to public school teacher certification; however, students interested in teacher certification may take additional classes to achieve this goal.

The program offers students a broad spectrum of approaches, methods and disciplines. It prepares graduates to:

- Make clear and cogent arguments
- Manage and complete complex projects
- Integrate performance history, theory and practice
- Address a range of audiences from scholarly to popular

- Research performance histories, theories, practices, criticisms and literature
- Forge connections among performance, communications, media, television and film studies, anthropology, cultural studies, popular culture, literary guides, gender and queer studies, and other fields and subfields
- Analyze written texts and live performance
- Work as a choreographer and dance educator, collaborating with playwrights, directors, production teams and audiences
- Teach courses ranging from large introductory lectures to specialized courses at the community college level and in community settings
- Create and implement outreach strategies and expand the meanings of dance as a platform for civic engagement and social justice to various audiences
- Develop research and teaching specialties within the field, such as: African-American performance, applied theatre practices, community-based dance, contemporary performance, cultural policy, dance studies, feminist theories and performance, queer theatre and performance, text into performance, and theories of pedagogy

The University of Texas is an accredited institutional member of the National Association of Schools of Dance.

Organization of Graduate Studies in the Department of Theatre and Dance

The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), consisting of the tenure-track and tenured faculty in the department, establishes the policies and requirements for all graduate programs offered by the department. They have delegated to the Graduate Studies Executive Committee (XCOM) the administration of those policies. Graduate students in Dance will primarily communicate with Dance faculty and their academic (and later thesis) advisor when they need guidance. Students will also work with the Department Graduate Advisor, who signs off on student paperwork, and the Graduate Dance Coordinator, who can answer questions about enrollment status and registration, and can provide students with the Program of Study form.

Advising

Each student is assigned an academic advisor from among the faculty who teach in Dance area. With this advisor, the student plans courses each semester, prepares the Program of Study that guides coursework, and fulfills other requirements for the degree. The academic advisor helps the student decide how to meet the core course requirements, plan production practicums, and select electives that support the major field of study. At the end of the student's first spring semester, they propose two to three faculty who would be appropriate to supervise their thesis project. The Dance area faculty consult and select one of these faculty members as their thesis supervisor. Thesis supervisors must be members of the Graduate Studies Committee. The academic advisor can help with this transition.

Coursework

The MFA Degree is completed within two years and one summer of study, including course work, thesis preparation, and defense.

Program of Study

By the first week of November during their first semester in residence, students must complete a Program of Study (POS). The Program of Study should be completed on the form provided by the Graduate Dance Coordinator and discussed with the student's faculty advisor. (*See attached POS and Degree Profile.*)

The MFA Program requires successful completion of 60 hours of coursework and thesis preparation:

1. Required Courses (36 credits)
2. Electives (12 credits, at least 6 of those outside the department)
3. Applied Practice Courses (6 credits)
4. Thesis Course Hours (at least 6 credits)

The Office of Graduate Studies allows M.F.A. students to include up to nine hours of upper-division undergraduate courses on their Programs of Study. Such courses should only be taken after consultation with a faculty advisor.

1. Required Courses:

Core courses offer the student grounding in a range of critical theoretical, methodological, historical, analytical, studio, and performance practices.

2. Electives:

Some electives are offered regularly, while others only occasionally. They vary in content, methodology, and approach. Some examples within the program include Choreographing Gender/Dancing Desire, Feminist Theory and Performance, Staging Black Feminism, etc.

For courses outside the department, students should carefully consider the professor, content, and methodology. Many M.F.A. Dance students find relevant courses in departments and programs such as African and African Diasporic Studies, American Studies, Asian American Studies, Mexican American and Latino/a Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, etc.

3. Applied Practice and Summer Courses:

During the summer in between their first and second year, students will register for Performance Studio (6 credits) during Summer Session 1 and for 6 credit hours TBD during

Summer Session 2. Applied Practice may be practical work of any kind (engaging in a regular solo or devising practice, performing, dramaturgy, directing, choreography, outreach, working with a non-profit organization, doing a community-based project, social justice work, internships, etc.). The practicum requires permission from a faculty advisor and will be handled via contract.

4. Thesis Writing and Research Hours:

Candidates for the MFA degree must complete a thesis project as the major requirement for the degree. The process for designing the project consists of several steps.

- The student will write a thesis proposal which identifies a research question and subsidiary questions, provides a narrative description of the performance or practice-based work in which the project will culminate, and discusses the student's goals in conducting this research.
- The thesis project has two components:
 1. A practical component which may be the creation of an original performance, performance installation, or approved alternative form of presentation. In addition, the practical component should include both a community based aspect and a portion designed for dancers in higher education programs.
 2. A written component (35-50 pages) that should include a description of the project, the core questions guiding the research, methodologies being applied, a contextualization of the history, tradition, or practices in which the work is situated and an evaluation of the project's outcome (if appropriate).

During the writing and research process, the faculty thesis supervisor will work most closely with the student, although other committee members might be approached for additional guidance. The final draft of the thesis will be presented to the committee by the specified deadline each spring, and an oral defense of the project will be scheduled. After successfully passing the oral defense and receiving approval of the project by the committee, the student will submit the final document in accordance with the guidelines of the Office of Graduate Studies.

Continuing in the MFA Program

Each semester, the Dance Area faculty and the Graduate Studies Executive Committee (XCOM) evaluate student progress. Continuing in the Program depends on satisfactory progress, as

determined by the Graduate School policies in the most current bulletin. The Dance Area faculty expects a consistent grade point average of at least 3.0 (though preferably a GPA higher than 3.8), no record of lingering incompletes, positive participation in and a clear commitment to the Program, and satisfactory and timely progress toward academic requirements and the degree. Unsatisfactory commitment and progress could result in rescinded financial aid awards and cancelled teaching assistant opportunities, as well as a letter from the Director of Graduate Studies detailing a period of required probation. If the Program does not see satisfactory progress following a period of probation, the student could be dismissed from the Program. See the university's probation and dismissal policies for more information.

Accommodations and Leaves

Accommodations:

Students who require accommodations should contact and register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). It is important to discuss approved accommodations with your advisor and professors.

Leaves of Absence:

Leaves of Absence are highly discouraged and should only be considered if necessary. Graduate students may apply for a leave of absence of no more than two semesters. A student on leave may not use any university facilities nor is the student entitled to receive advice from any member of the faculty. A leave of absence does not alter the time limits for degrees or course work. For information on requesting a Leave of Absence or Readmission refer to the Graduate School: <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/leaves-of-absence>