

Dance, MFA

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Mentored Experience Implementation Plan

As part of their degree requirements, Dance MFA students must complete a program-defined Mentored Experience Requirement (MER) as per these guidelines. The Mentored Experience Implementation Plan (MEIP) is the written articulation of a program-defined degree requirement for Dance MFA students to engage in mentored teaching activities and/or mentored professional activities, collectively referred to as *MERs*.

Mentored Experience Requirements (MERs)

Philosophy of Teaching

Our philosophy is that teaching experience is essential for success in the field of dance. The dance artist remains closely tied to teaching throughout their career, whether they pursue a faculty position in higher education, a career as an independent choreographer, or the establishment of their own dance company. As director of their own company, the dance artist may also be the main, if only, teacher for the company dancers. Often dance artists are required to include a “teaching” residency within any grant or fellowship proposal. In addition, the ability to teach remains a main component in applying, achieving, and retaining a dance faculty position in higher education. Some job postings want a dance faculty member who can specialize in a particular genre and teach many levels of ability within that genre. Given that many dance departments have a small number of full-time faculty, however, many job postings require faculty who can teach in multiple genres of dance technique, as well as dance history, anatomy/kinesiology, composition, and other areas. Very few dance faculty positions are research-oriented; almost all are teaching track and emphasize mentoring young dancers.

At the same time, our program is quite intensive: 60 credits in two years. We work with our students' independent career trajectories and goals to determine the best MTE plan: whether to deepen their abilities in a particular genre (i.e., ballet) to promote their expertise in that subfield, or whether they should gain experience in multiple areas. Some students enter our program after a long career in teaching at the K-12 level or open classes to adult professionals; others have not taught much before.

Given this range of backgrounds, our MTE is flexible. In order to graduate, a student must complete 10 to 20 units of an MTE. That could be fulfilled with completing one Assistant in Instruction (AI) at 10 units or one Mentored Independent Teaching (MIT) at 20 units. Any teaching beyond 10 to 20 units would put students on an optional Teaching Intensive Pathway (TIP).

Preparatory Engagement

Preparatory Engagement activities are those that represent an introduction to the foundational skills associated with teaching or communication. Pedagogical preparation engagement activities are normally completed before students are permitted to engage in assisting or teaching in a classroom.

The Dance MFA requires two Preparatory Engagement activities:

- Center for Teaching and Learning Orientation, fall semester of first year
- Pedagogy component of the introduction to graduate studies course

In the first semester of the program, students are required to take our 3-credit introduction to graduate studies course, Dance 5200 Research Methods Colloquium. The course is divided into four three-week units, with the additional weeks of the semester being introduction, projects, and so on:

1. How to be a graduate student
2. How to be a scholar
3. How to be an artist
4. How to be a teacher

This last three-week unit consists of sessions on pedagogy and then requires an outside-of-class practicum, during which students teach their own 80-minute classes in a dance faculty member's course and receive feedback from that faculty member.

Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTEs)

Assistant in Instruction (AI)

An Assistant in Instruction (AI) is a student who is directly engaged in the organization, instruction, and/or support of a semester-long course *primarily taught by a faculty member*. An AI receives mentorship from a faculty member related to best practices in classroom engagement, instruction in the field, interpersonal engagement, and other relevant skills. Students and mentors complete a mentorship plan prior to the start of each AI experience. To complete each AI assignment and to ensure that it applies toward their degree requirements, students must register for the appropriate course number for each semester of engagement. Refer to the “Required Pathways for Completion” section below for course numbers and details.

A student can be an AI in any studio technique course or seminar course at the 1000, 2000, or 3000 level. If a student requests, it is possible, with faculty permission, to be an AI for a Composition course (2030 or 3030). AI engagements are 10 MER units.

- 10 units = tracking attendance, participation, and discussion board posts; leading warmup in a studio course or doing grading in a seminar course; guest teaching one class during the semester

Mentored Independent Teaching (MIT)

MIT is a semester-long experience for students who engage as the primary instructor or co-instructor of a course *under the mentorship of a faculty member* as part of the MER. Students and mentors complete a mentorship plan prior to the start of each MIT experience. To complete each MIT assignment and to ensure that it applies toward their degree requirements, students must register for the appropriate course number (ASGS 8020) for each semester of engagement. Refer to the "Required Pathways for Completion" section below for more details.

A student with significant prior teaching experience may elect not to do an AI and instead complete an MIT for 20 units in the spring semester of year one or the fall or spring semester of year two.

Required Pathways for Completion

Students work with their faculty mentor and their Director of Graduate Studies to plan how and when they will complete their MERs. Students register during the normal registration period for courses in accordance with one of these approved pathways.

The Dance MFA requires 10 to 20 units of MTE, dependent upon number of AI and MIT engagements.

There are two pathways to completing the MER requirement.

1. A student may complete one AI for 10 units in the spring semester of year one or in the fall or spring semester of year two.
2. A student with significant prior teaching experience may elect not to do an AI and instead complete an MIT for 20 units in the spring semester of year one or the fall or spring semester of year two.

Pathway #1

ASGS 8010	Take one time
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Pathway #2

ASGS 8020	Take one time
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Optional Activity: Teaching Intensive Pathway (TIP)

The TIP is an optional pathway for those students whose career interests lie in academia or another field that would benefit from extended teaching experiences. This immersive experience allows students to further explore the breadth and depth of teaching best practices and pedagogy related to their respective field. Students who

are interested in participating in this elective experience must formally request to participate, which is subject to program approval. Due to this experience being an elective, unpaid experience, students who participate in the TIP will not receive compensation.

Dance MFA students may opt to take up to 20 to 40 MER units after one of above required MTE pathways is completed in order to complete a TIP.

Optional Pathway A (20 units; only possible if MTE completed by fall semester of second year)

ASGS 8020	Take one time
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Optional Pathway B (30 units; only possible if MTE completed in spring semester of first year)

ASGS 8010	Take one time
ASGS 8020	Take one time

Optional Pathway C (40 units; only possible if MTE completed in spring semester of first year)

ASGS 8020	Take two times
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