

2005-2006 UNCG DANCE DEPARTMENT MASTER OF FINE ARTS STUDENT HANDBOOK

Welcome to UNCG and the graduate programs in dance. In this document, we include electronic links to major university publications such as the Student Handbook, Graduate School Bulletin, and Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook, as well as departmental policies, information, and forms. The valuable information collected here will help you come to a fuller understanding of what is expected of you as a graduate student, and what you should expect as a graduate student and member of the UNCG community. Most importantly, perhaps, we hope to help you avoid unexpected surprises as you complete your degree.

You should familiarize yourself with the information in the Student Handbook, Graduate School Bulletin, and, if appropriate, Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook. Be sure to keep a copy of the Graduate School Bulletin for the year you begin graduate study at UNCG. While graduate students can follow policies and procedures for degree completion adopted after they begin study, the policies and procedures in place as you begin your degree will likely be those you follow throughout your program

Student Handbook: <http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/policy/>

Graduate School Bulletin: <http://www.uncg.edu/grs/bulletin/bulletin.htm>

The requirements for graduate degrees in dance are found at:
<http://www.uncg.edu/grs/bulletin/dance.html>

Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook:
http://www.uncg.edu/grs/current%20students/teaching_assistant_handbook.html

Good Practice in Graduate Education
From the Graduate School Website:
http://www.uncg.edu/grs/bulletin/Good_Practice_in_Graduate_Ed.html

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2004-2005 UNCG DANCE DEPARTMENT MASTER OF FINE ARTS STUDENT
HANDBOOK

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DEPARTMENT OF DANCE: MISSION, PHILOSOPHY, AND GOALS

DEPARTMENTAL MISSION

Within the context of UNCG's comprehensive liberal arts curriculum, the Department of Dance offers bachelors and masters degrees that provide professional preparation for a variety of careers in dance. The Department's primary goal is to teach students the imaginative, critical, formal, and technical skills essential to the creative process and to scholarly inquiry, and to provide them with knowledge of the dance discipline necessary for professional engagement in the field. The Department prepares students for further study and for the task of creating successful and productive lives as artists, educators, scholars, and/or related professionals, whether at a state, regional, or national level.

DEPARTMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

It is our strong conviction that dance thrives through the integrated efforts of many different kinds of professionals with diverse strengths and perspectives. To enter and remain successful within this field, students need to learn to play such distinct roles as crew member, stage manager, teacher, performer, choreographer, informed audience member, researcher, scholar, and critic. We recognize the fact that each student possesses unique capacities and inclinations and, through our focused instruction and guidance both inside and outside of the classroom, provide each student with the means to create a lifetime of successful involvement with dance.

We facilitate students' journeys through degree programs and extra-curricular activities that have as their center the lived experience of dancing, by which we mean dancing with full engagement, awareness, and presence – an experience that is meaningful and powerful. We recognize body-based knowledges as vital forms of knowing, not just for dancers but for all people.

We strive to inspire students toward both excellence and balance. Students need to expand their interests and possibilities, and cultivate a vision of what might be achieved through a life in dance. At the same time, it is important to remember that there are components of a productive life besides dance. Students need other life experiences to develop their voices as artists, scholars, and teachers; they need to make connections between dance, other artistic and intellectual practices, and social and cultural spheres, so that they may develop a view of the world that includes political, social, and moral perspectives. With these ideas in mind, we help students to identify domains outside of dance and beyond the immediacy of the Department in which their strengths, passions, and values may flourish and benefit not only themselves but also others.

DEPARTMENTAL GOALS

1. To maintain a high standard of teaching within a curriculum that integrates teaching, scholarship, and artistry, and affirms the centrality of body knowledge and the experiential basis for learning;

2. To maintain a student-centered program that facilitates diverse outcomes;
3. To sustain a community that values individual and cultural differences;
4. To offer nationally recognized graduate programs;
5. To encourage faculty development in teaching, scholarly and artistic work, and leadership within the profession; and
6. To engage in outreach to the community through public performances and other educational and artistic activities when possible and when it supports our mission.

GOALS FOR THE MFA DEGREE

The MFA degree program in Choreography (theory, practice, and pedagogy) has as its goal the preparation of dance artists and scholars who possess the capacity to make clear connections among theories and contexts of dance both as an art form and as a social/cultural phenomenon. Integrating the study of the aesthetic, cultural, critical, historical, and kinesthetic/somatic dimensions of dance, the program of study provides a comprehensive approach to dance/choreography teaching and learning which merges studio work with research outside the studio. The general objectives of the MFA degree are:

- To give students the knowledge and ability to succeed as choreographers in academic and non-academic environments and to contribute significantly to their preparation for college and university faculty positions and leadership in the dance field.

Upon graduation every student will be able to demonstrate:

- The creative thinking and problem-solving skills necessary for the conception, creation, performance, and documentation of imaginative and artistically strong dance works;
- Proficiency in communicating artistic and creative intentions both orally and in writing; and
- Proficiency in describing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating their own and others' dance works and choreographic practices as artistic, social, and cultural processes and products.

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THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION SUPPLEMENTS INFORMATION ABOUT THE GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE IN THE GRADUATE BULLETIN (<http://www.uncg.edu/grs/bulletin/dance.html#degree>).

PLAN OF STUDY FORMS

With the advisor's help, all graduate students are responsible for keeping plan of study forms up to date. A completed copy must be turned in to the Graduate School before the midpoint in your graduate studies (before the end of 3 semesters for MFA students). An updated version of the same form must be sent to the Graduate School with the application for graduation. Plan of Study Forms follow.

MFA IN CHOREOGRAPHY

MFA IN DESIGN

REVIEW CALENDAR

1. All MFA students are reviewed by the dance faculty in Spring semester of their first year. Faculty assess student progress and promise in their degree program, and make recommendations for improvement. Students receive a letter from the Graduate Coordinator reporting faculty recommendations **on or before APRIL 15**.
2. MFA students submit a portfolio of their work to the Graduate Coordinator on **DECEMBER 1 of their second year**. The materials that must be submitted for portfolio review are listed in the Bulletin. Questions that must be answered as part of the review are included in the Graduate Handbook.

The Graduate Committee may decide to pass a student into MFA candidacy, or decide that the student should complete study with a MA degree, concentrating in choreography. Students will be notified of this decision in writing on or before **DECEMBER 15**. Students completing with a MA should form a committee and finalize a project no later than JANUARY 30.

MFA students passing into candidacy will form a project committee **no later than MARCH 15** of their second year. Each student will invite three members of the UNCG Graduate Dance Faculty to serve as members of his/her committee, designating one as chair. Project proposal requirements are included in the Graduate Handbook.

The student will prepare a signature sheet, to be signed by each committee member as a record of faculty commitment. This sheet must also provide the student's name, a note as to each Committee member's role (chair or member), a statement of intent for the project, and the date of the Review meeting. A copy of this document must be turned in to the Graduate Coordinator. The Committee will assist the student in developing a final project proposal of size and scope appropriate for six hours of graduate credit. Committee heads must report approval of the final project in writing, with copies distributed to the student, and Graduate Coordinator. The project is completed in Fall or Spring of the third year of study.

3. MFA students will schedule a formal defense of their project, in the weeks following its completion. The defense must be carefully scheduled to allow time for faculty to read writings, and for revisions of written documents before graduation. Defenses may be open to interested members of the department for observation, at the discretion of the student.

MFA choreography students must submit two videotaped copies the project to the Graduate Coordinator, each with a copy of the program. This must be done

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prior to graduation. One will stay in the department and the other will go to the University Library.

PORTFOLIO REVIEW QUESTIONS

In addition to materials listed in the Graduate Bulletin, students must prepare written answers to the following questions as part of the Portfolio Review. Each question should be answered in a 3-5 page, carefully prepared, reflective essay.

MFA in Choreography or Design

(Design majors should adapt these questions to their own work)

1. How have your choreographic processes and dance works changed during the course of your study here? Include subject matter, strategies and tactics, and goals. How have curricular and extracurricular experiences at UNCG influenced these changes?
2. How would you assess your progress and current level of achievement as an artist? In your assessment, include the variety of artistic practices in which you have engaged during your work at UNCG: choreographer, performer, writer, speaker, thinker, digital designer, teacher, etc. What goals do you have for your artistic process and work? For your life after graduation?
3. Discuss the various ways artists can contribute to the larger culture and to sub-cultures in your community. What specific contributions do you feel prepared to make?

PROJECT PROPOSALS: DCE 697 MASTER PRODUCTION OR DCE 698 MASTER PROJECT

MFA MASTER PRODUCTION (DCE 697)

The MFA Choreography Master Production Concert Process consists of the following:

1. Proposal. A written proposal for an evening-length concert must be presented to each committee member ten days before the committee meets. The merits of the proposal will be negotiated with the committee. The proposal must include descriptions of all work to be performed, program order, names of lighting designers (if applicable) and/or spaces being used, and a timetable/plan for publicity. At least half of the concert must be new work, for which you have not already received credit. The rest must be work created since you enrolled in the MFA program at UNCG.
2. Production Journal. A production journal, including thoughts, plans, and ideas concerning artistic, educational, and practical issues should be kept throughout the development of your concert. This is due to your chair with reflective paper.
3. Reflective Paper. This paper is due first to your committee chair who, after

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reading it, will ask you to amplify certain areas, make corrections, or give you permission to distribute it to the rest of the committee. It is due to each committee member ten days before the oral examination. In addition, two videotapes of your event with programs must be submitted (one for the library and one for inclusion in department's vault; the videos must be filed before clearance for graduation will be granted. Based on your production journal, subsequent reflection on your concert and attendant activities, and any impressions gathered from others, please discuss your Masters Production in two ways. First, address the PRACTICAL aspects of your Masters Production process and concert by answering ALL the following questions. Your answers should be concise yet specific.

- a. Whether or not goals for each piece were met, in terms of mood/style, pacing, expression, dynamics, general performance level, etc. How well lighting and costumes contributed to the overall effect and/or environment.
- b. Relationships with dancers, analyzing any specific problems which came up, citing ways in which you were successful in working with dancers; Evaluate the methods you employed to stimulate them to work to full capacity. Be specific. Discuss ideas for handling similar situations in the future.
- c. Relationships with designers (and composers if appropriate), including any problems with communication, collaboration, or timing. Be specific. If applicable, discuss the process of finding a suitable space for performance and negotiations for the site. Discuss ideas for handling any similar situations in the future.
- d. Audience response, pointing out evidence of impact, generally and specifically; evaluate actual response to each dance and to overall concert, comparing the reaction you got to that for which you aimed.
- e. Any thoughts about publicity, including its effectiveness, the efficacy of your timetable, etc.; discuss ideas for handling similar situations in the future.
- f. Conclude with personal observations, which will serve to tie together the foregoing coverage, in addition to your overall evaluation of the concert, recommendations for future students setting out on their projects, and your plans for future work.

Second, address your Masters Production process and concert CRITICALLY and SELF-REFLEXIVELY. Feel free to enlarge your discussion by including ideas gained through course work or other experiences. Address ONE of the following questions in a carefully prepared three to five page essay:

- g. Discuss the political nature of your choreographic process and product. What social messages are conveyed in your interactions with dancers, designers, and musicians? What social messages do you hope audience members read in your work?
- h. Discuss your choreographic process and product as an autobiographic act. Discuss the ways in which your personal history and social and political

interests shape your choreography AND how the acts of creating and presenting choreography and participating in an MFA program shape who you are.

- i. If your work has some special source, population, or accoutrements—that is, is site-specific, community-based, uses technology or is derived from ritual, discuss the use of these elements in your process and the final product.
 - j. Discuss the aesthetic issues which you find guiding your choreographic choices, how they link your dances into a body of work, what the influences have been, and the thought processes that have led to the choices.
4. Two copies of videotape of the full concert must be given to the Graduate Coordinator, each with a copy of the evening's program. This must be done prior to graduation. One will stay in the department and the other will go to the University Library.

MASTER PRODUCTION PROJECT IN DESIGN

1. Scope. Usually, a Design Master Production Project includes executing the lighting design for two full concerts of dance works. Other projects which are equivalent in scope may be proposed.
2. Proposal. A written proposal for the Project as a whole must be presented to each committee member ten days before the Portfolio Review for approval:
 - a. A list of dances to be included on the concert(s) that you will be designing, including for each piece: title, number of dancers, choreographer, music or sound (composers and sources), props and/or sets, a brief description and length. (It is understood that some dances may be in the process of creation. In such cases working ideas, working titles and estimated lengths should be listed.)
 - b. A complete working technical schedule, including all performance dates and times (these include hand and focus as well as design times), and pre-technical rehearsal times for observation of choreography and dialogue with the choreographers.
 - c. A brief, but complete, description of your design responsibilities for the concerts. (For example you may be lighting all the dances and designing scenery for one, and costumes or props for another. One dance may include projections, which you need to create or facilitate.) It is important to know the extent of your design assignments with clarity. If you are collaborating on some aspects of design with other designers, or with the choreographer, that should be noted.

3. Design Portfolio. As a formal record of your work, for each concert you will provide: a light plot (plan view and sectional), a magic sheet (including all color assignments), a soft patch schedule, an instrument schedule, a color change sheet for each dance, a stage manager's cue sheet for each dance, and a brief written description of the "look" for each cue. For costumes, props, and sets you will provide: preliminary sketches, working drawings and renderings developed during the design process and color slides of completed designs.
4. Video Record. For each concert you will provide a video record of the production taken during performance.
5. Reflective Paper. This is due to your committee, along with your journal, your design portfolio, and your video record, ten days before you oral examination. In addition, a clean copy must be submitted for inclusion in your permanent file; the paper must be filed before clearance for graduation. The paper will include the following:
 - a. Whether or not your design goals for each dance were met in terms of mood, pacing, and technical execution. A self-evaluation!
 - b. Relationships with choreographers, dancers, and crewmembers, analyzing any specific problems which arose during the working process and citing particularly successful moments. Evaluate methods you employed to stimulate a good working environment and discuss ideas you have that may contribute to the better handling of difficult situations in the future.
 - c. Audience response, pointing out any evidence of the impact of your work. Which designs seemed most successful (from the audience or choreographer's point of view)? Why do you think that was so? Do you agree? Which were least successful? Why?
 - d. Include personal observations with your overall self-evaluation; tie the foregoing coverage to recommendations for future students undertaking similar projects and your plans for the future

MFA PROJECTS IN CHOREOGRAPHY (DCE 698):

The scholarship of choreographic theory, practice, and pedagogy may adopt a variety of forms any one or a synthesis of which may be appropriate for an individual student in designing his or her culminating project. Students nearing completion of their work in the DCE 651 Studio Problems in Choreography curriculum are encouraged to review and reflect both upon the body of work they have created there and elsewhere on and off campus and the insights they have gained through these and other curricular and professional experiences, and from their reflections locate and define the central issue, problem or question on the basis of which their culminating project will be framed. While some students may find it most appropriate and desirable to