

Dance MFA Assessment Plan Summary

Dance MFA

Develop Professional Level Of Expertise In Dance

Goal Description:

MFA in Dance candidates will demonstrate knowledge base and skills commensurate with professional careers in dance. RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Breadth Of Knowledge In The Field

Learning Objective Description:

MFA graduates will have a solid understanding of dance technique, choreography, production, and history, and will be able to write and speak from that informed perspective.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Comprehensive Exam

Indicator Description:

Students will be given a choice of topics to research relevant to all aspects of study that the student has experienced in the program. A passing grade on the comprehensive examination will serve as an indicator that a Dance MFA candidate has acquired a breadth of knowledge in the field of dance. Additionally, the students' ability to express themselves critically and at a standard commensurate to the profession will be demonstrated.

Criterion Description:

As demonstration that the Dance graduate program is successful in preparing students for the written comprehensive examination, at least 90% of students will pass the exam at the first sitting or upon retaking it. We observed last year that students were not as comfortable expressing themselves orally as they are with dance. Thus, we believe this exercise is beneficial to develop and extend oral expression.

Findings Description:

Comprehensive exams were all oral in 2016-17.

All MFA candidates passed the oral exams, with none being required to repeat the exercise. Students continue to demonstrate the need for more opportunities to speak in formal, academic settings.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Identify more public venues for oral presentations

Action Description:

Additional oral presentations will be scheduled

--American College Dace Association conference: any grad student attending ACDA will propose a talk or will volunteer to participate on a panel discussion

-- Majors Meetings: the department reserves every Wednesday from 1-2 for meetings, showings of works in progress, production meetings, etc. Attendance is required by all undergraduate and graduate students. There are unscheduled dates that could be used for graduate presentations. This year, we will schedule a minimum of one hour each semester for grads to give brief talks for the dance community.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Demonstrate Choreographic Skill

Learning Objective Description:

Students will demonstrate excellence in creating extended choreographic works, employing effective tools of composition to create well-crafted original statements in movement.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Evaluation Of Required Choreographic Work

Indicator Description:

Required Choreographic Work is evaluated on common standards of choreographic effectiveness as shown in attached rubric. These choreographic evaluations take place within the three required MFA choreography courses in (DNC 5676,5378, and 5380). Instructors judge student work as Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory or Excellent. Extensive, qualitative, face-to-face feedback is also given.

Criterion Description:

100% of students will be judged to have at least Satisfactory proficiency in choreography, indicated by a final grade of B for a course. 75% will be judged to have Excellent proficiency.

Findings Description:

14 students were assessed in choreography courses in the fall and spring. Data is not available to differentiate those whose work was "excellent" versus "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory." 13 of the 14 earned at least a B in the courses. One student did not complete the course in the spring due to health issues.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Continue to schedule showings and presentations through the creative process

Action Description:

The high quality of thesis works presented in 2016-17 demonstrates the effectiveness of having more faculty and committee oversight throughout the creative process. Similarly, the oral presentation that summarized the thesis process proved to be an excellent component for the graduate students, both those presenting, and those in the audience who have not yet begun thesis.

Schedule a minimum of 3 showings of work in progress. Follow up with discussion and feedback within the showing time when possible.

Chair of thesis and/or committee member schedule time to rehearse the oral presentation portion.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Presentation & Evaluation Of Thesis Concert

Indicator Description:

As the culmination of the creative thesis, students develop and present an extended original choreographic work. The process, from proposal through performance, is mentored by members of the thesis committee. The thesis presentation will be assessed on the following points: the choreography is informed by student's research; the choreography stands on its own as a work of art; the performance reflects effective directing by the student.

Criterion Description:

100% of MFA Thesis projects will be assessed by Thesis Committee to meet standards for choreographic effectiveness. (In addition, Students who meet the standard for acceptable choreographic production will receive a passing score for that portion of DANC 6099, Thesis II.)

Findings Description:

The MFA concerts presented in 2016-2017 were well done, fulfilled works. Of the five MFA projects completed, four were exceptional. The fifth required significantly more hands-on mentorship, but was ultimately approved for performance. Students demonstrated high levels of mastery of choreographic tools, use of resources, and innovation. Faculty identify links between scheduled showings of works in progress as well as the public lecture that followed the performance as strong elements in reinforcing professional standards .

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Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):

Actions to Guide AY17

- 1. Bridge competency in choreography classes to higher level of achievement in thesis concert.

Before the fall semester began, the faculty agreed to use our 1:00-2:00 Wednesday time period to schedule periodic showings for each thesis project. The Wednesday hour is always set aside, every semester, for periodic majors meetings, production meetings, and other events that require attendance by students and faculty as a whole. It is the only time we know we can gather a "quorum." Faculty attended, watched, and gave feedback immediately following the showings. We were impressed by the outcome of the projects this year. Possibly due to more faculty oversight, and more faculty interest perceived by the cast and choreographers, the works were in general more original, more developed, and better fulfilled in all aspects. Although it was time consuming, everyone knew from late August what the time commitments would be. We will continue with this model.

2. Increase opportunities for oral expression.

In 2015, we changed the structure of our thesis process to include giving an oral presentation to a public audience. This required some rehearsal guided by a mentor. We were correct to identify oral expression as a general weakness for dance students, a source of terror for others. By spring of 2017, the process and expectations have been clarified.

Within already scheduled end of semester oral reviews with the MFA candidates, faculty committed to setting a professional standard. This practice better prepared the students and the faculty for the final oral examination. Because it is primarily the faculty who set the culture, we are now more conscious of our roles in the formal academic review setting.

3. Academic writing

Considering the recommendation from external reviewers of the MFA program conducted in spring 2016 that we increase requirements for academic writing, the faculty will continue to assess the MFA curriculum. Our current perspective is that the degree is largely creative; thus, creative exploration and production should be the primary focus throughout the curriculum. "Mini thesis" proposals are now embedded in choreography courses. Recent course additions of a graduate pedagogy course and professional issues course have added significant, focused writing assignments appropriate to the fields which our graduate students are likely to follow.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

1. Increased mentorship through scheduled showings will continue for all thesis projects. Three showings are scheduled for each of the four thesis candidates for the 2017-18 academic year.

2. Increased opportunities for oral expression. Faculty realize that additional requirements --such as presentations at a conference--are not realistic as a means to ensure all students receive the same opportunities. The second suggestion, of using our Wednesday hour for lectures by MFA students, will not serve, either, as that time is now filled with majors meetings, thesis showings, production meetings, etc. Rather than look for new means in which students can develop verbal skill, we will look for other means to mentor students in this area.

3. Academic writing is embedded throughout coursework.

The department is starting a self-study for accreditation by National Association of Schools of Dance. Within this self-study, and the report of reviewers, more suggestions for guiding the development of academic writing may be presented.

Plan for 2017-18

Closing Summary:

Based on our review of areas needing support, we will offer a writing course for first year MFAs. This course will be initially offered as a special topics course. It will focus on writing skills needed for both graduate work and for the profession. Areas to be covered would potentially include grant writing; critical writing in the field; and shorter research projects.

A new tenure track position supporting dance and technology has been approved. This position is envisioned as being a significant factor in the development of the MFA curriculum. Depending on the outcome of this search, we anticipate that graduate students will have more direct mentorship in the production and technology aspects of their creative work. Another faculty voice, with an additional perspective, will also inform the directions in which our students' choreography can be manifested. With more media--and more contemporary concepts-- to draw from, we anticipate broader range of creative output.