Frequently Asked Questions

*Dance Division* of the *School of Music and Dance* at *San Diego State University*

**Q:** How many dancers will you accept into the program?

**A:** We aim to have between 10 and 15 majors per class, and so we typically accept around 25 dancers for each incoming freshman class, and approximately 5 junior-level transfer students. Some students leave college, others change their major, and some are permitted to switch to a Minor in Dance. This brings that number down by their sophomore year, and then transfer students are typically added to each class during their junior year. Transfer students accepted through the audition must be determined significantly more advanced than incoming freshmen. We typically have 50-75 Dance Majors and Minors at any given time.

**Q:** What is the difference between a BFA and a BA in Dance?

**A:** SDSU is one of three schools in the California State University system to offer a BFA in Dance. It is a 132-unit professional degree for those seeking careers in dance, and a greater percentage of classes within the degree program occurs in the Dance Division. The BA is a 120-unit liberal arts degree with a dance emphasis. The first semester of classes is the same for both degrees. At the end of the first semester, the faculty invites a limited number of freshmen to continue with the BFA.

**Q:** What if I want to double major?

**A:** We support students who double major, and work to help them create a schedule that will allow them to graduate in 4 years. Many double majors choose the BA degree.

**Q:** How do I Minor in Dance?

**A:** Since dance is a practice-based art form, students’ eligibility for the Minor in Dance is determined at the end of their first semester of study. Minors must be able to keep up with the majors, who are practicing much more frequently, otherwise the overall level of program is compromised.

**To audition for Dance Minor as a current SDSU student,** you must take Dance Division courses so we (and you!) can assess whether or not the Dance Minor is right for you. To audition, please register for 1 course from each of these categories (for a total of 3 courses):

1. Yoga (DANCE 100d) or Contact Improvisation (DANCE 156/356) or Somatic Practice (DANCE 190/390)
2. Ballet for Non-Majors (221) or Beginning Modern Dance (D100i)
3. Introduction to Dance (DANCE 181) or Dance in World Cultures (DANCE 382)*
*Each of these courses fulfills GE requirements in Fine Arts and Humanities. Please check the catalog for details.

Your performance in these three courses will serve as your audition. The dance faculty will assess if you are qualified before the registration deadlines for the following semester. If you are accepted, these classes will count toward the Dance Minor.

You will then need to meet with Joseph Alter, Dance Advisor, to make an appropriate curricular plan.

Q: What styles of dance do you offer?
A: In the description of the four major pillars of dance study in our Division, we share that, “Technique is not an approach as one ‘style,’ but as a practice to explore, create, develop, enrich and expand our movement potentials. In “Technique(s)” we practice learning and knowing through dancing. Technique(s) explore the differences and overlaps of function, expression, and style.”

A core technique class in our curriculum is called Dance Technique(s). Depending on the semester, this course could contain influences from a number of styles. Typically, it is a mix of modern, postmodern, and released-based forms. Ballet and a partnering form called contact improvisation are also part of the curriculum. Student-driven initiatives that bring guest artists specializing in specific forms are supported. The dance program regularly hosts guest artists to expose students to a variety of styles, techniques, and approaches to dancing and dancemaking.

Q: What kind of performance opportunities do students have?
A: Freshmen perform at the end of their very first semester as part of DANCE 210: Performance Forum. Seniors completing the BFA program have a concert at the end of nearly every semester and students are encouraged to perform in those works as early as the Spring of their freshman year. The University Dance Company (UDC) concert includes work choreographed by faculty in collaboration with students and majors can audition for UDC as early as their sophomore year.

Q: What does the curriculum look like?
A: Maps of the courses required in every degree program at SDSU can be found online. The map for dance majors who entered in the Fall of 2019 will be almost identical to the map for those entering in the Fall of 2018. Descriptions of each of these courses can be found in the SDSU General Catalog under “Dance”.
Q: SDSU recommends that freshmen take no more than 15 units their first semester, and the Dance Division requires 18. Is this too much?
A: For students in other majors, 15 units represents about 40 hours per week and is a typical unit load. However, in order for students to fully experience and become familiar with our unique program, we have designed a curriculum with 18 units knowing several of the dance classes have very minimal homework and all are important foundational courses for the major.

Q: Are there scholarships available?
A: While there are currently no dance specific scholarships there are many scholarships available to SDSU students.

Q: What is the difference between the Dance Division/Dance Major at SDSU and the SDSU Dance Team? Can students participate in both?
A: The dance team is a student organization not connected to the Degree Programs in the School of Music and Dance. The Dance Division is an academic program offering BA and BFA degrees. Given the time commitments required by both the Dance Division and the SDSU Dance Team, we have learned that it is logistically impossible to fulfill both obligations simultaneously. We do not recommend candidates in the SDSU Dance Division degree programs participate in the SDSU Dance Team. If dance majors do choose to attempt both, the obligations of the academic program must be given priority in the event of schedule conflicts.

Q: What is the commitment if I am accepted and choose to enter SDSU as a Dance Major?
A: Students will sign an agreement for one semester that commits them to complete the first semester’s coursework in dance according to the map. This assures that all students have the foundational information to continue in the program or to be able to work with professors to adjust to the appropriate degree program.

An academic approach to dance may be unfamiliar to those who have participated in dance as an extracurricular activity, commercial, or competitive form. With this in mind, we have created an integrated set of courses designed to introduce our approach to the study of dance as an art form and a rigorous academic discipline. These courses are most effective in the map’s specific combination and sequence. Year one provides a necessary introduction to the program and an opportunity for both you and the dance faculty to determine whether or not the dance major at SDSU is right for you.