

Information

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF DANCE

Introduction

The major activities of the National Association of Schools of Dance are the accreditation of educational programs in dance and the establishment of curricular standards and guidelines. NASD is recognized by the United States Department of Education as the accrediting agency for the field of dance. The Association has approximately 84 member institutions, including public and private colleges and universities, and independent professional training institutions. All NASD member institutions meet accreditation standards and uphold the code of ethics of the Association as stated in the *NASD Handbook*.

In addition to the accreditation function of the Association, NASD publishes a variety of resources for the dance and education communities, holds an annual meeting, and provides information to the general public about educational programs in dance.

A Brief History of the Association

In 1981, representatives of educational dance programs met in Washington, D.C. to consider the establishment of a specialized accreditation association for education and training programs in dance. At that meeting, the National Association of Schools of Dance was formed, and the constitution, bylaws, code of ethics, rules of practice and procedure, and standards/guidelines for accreditation were approved. Institutions were given the opportunity to become charter members of NASD until June of 1982. Forty-eight institutions became charter members, including ten professional studio schools previously accredited by the Joint Commission on Dance and Theatre Accreditation, and thirty-eight colleges and universities.

The Joint Commission on Dance and Theatre Accreditation was a joint project of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) and the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), organized to make accreditation available to independent, professional training institutions in dance and theatre to whom accreditation was not otherwise available. NASM and NASAD established the JCDTA on an interim basis until the fields of dance and theatre had comprehensive accrediting agencies; thus, the recognition of NASD by the U.S. Department of Education caused dissolution of the Joint Commission. Between 1982 and 1985, all charter members of NASD, including the schools previously accredited by the Joint Commission on Dance and Theatre Accreditation, underwent review by the Association.

The Objectives of the Association

The National Association of Schools of Dance was established to develop a closer relationship among schools and programs of dance for the purpose of examining and improving practices and professional standards in dance education and training. The specific objectives of the Association are as follows:

1. To establish a national forum to stimulate the understanding and acceptance of the educational disciplines inherent in the creative arts in higher education in the United States.
2. To establish reasonable standards centered on the knowledge and skills necessary to develop academic and professional competence at various program levels.
3. To foster the development of instruction of the highest quality while simultaneously encouraging varied and experimental approaches to the teaching of dance.
4. To evaluate, through the processes of voluntary accreditation, schools of dance and programs of dance instruction in terms of their quality and the results they achieve, as judged by experienced examiners.
5. To assure students and parents/guardians that accredited dance programs provide competent teachers, adequate facilities and equipment, and sound curricula, and are capable of attaining their stated objectives.

6. To counsel and assist institutions in developing their programs and to encourage self-evaluation and continuing studies toward improvement.
7. To invite and encourage the cooperation of professional dance groups and individuals of reputation in the field of dance in the formulation of appropriate curricula and standards.
8. To maintain a national voice to be heard in matters pertaining to dance, particularly as they would affect member institutions and their stated objectives.

The Association's Role as a Specialized, Professional Accrediting Agency

NASD recognizes the need to find ways of clarifying and maintaining standards in dance through responsible education in dance. By means of accreditation, it can encourage those institutions that consistently give students a sound basis for significant future accomplishments in dance. Accreditation also imposes on those institutions the responsibility for continual effort to strengthen dance education in general—in both accredited and not-yet-accredited schools. In addition, it provides a basis for public recognition of an institution's quality.

The development of NASD as the accrediting agency for dance education has placed upon the Association the following responsibilities: to maintain high educational standards; to safeguard the profession against inadequately prepared educators and practitioners; to disseminate information on accreditation to institutions, counselors, teachers, parents, and students; to guard against improper non-educational pressures on individuals and institutions; and to consider other important educational problems and issues. The Association recognizes and accepts these responsibilities.

Procedures for NASD Membership

The two basic procedures for Membership in NASD are institutional self-study and peer evaluation. The self-study is designed to produce a comprehensive effort on the part of the institution to evaluate its own programs while considering its objectives.

Peer evaluation provides professional, objective judgment from outside the institution, and is accomplished through an on-site visitation, a formal Visitors' Report, and Commission review.

NASD publishes procedural documents. Institutions seeking Membership should visit the NASD [website](#), or [contact the National Office](#) for appropriate materials.

Consultative Visits

During preparation for application for Membership, an institution may wish to request a [consultative visit](#). From a slate provided by NASD, the institution may select a consultant experienced in the accreditation process in dance to visit the campus for one or more days to assist in developing or revising degree programs, to determine the readiness of the institution to apply for Membership in NASD, or to provide other appropriate services. The consultant is hired by and works for the institution. Since the consultant may not act as an NASD evaluator for the institution when application for Membership is made, his or her recommendations are purely advisory in nature, and do not affect later accreditation decisions.

Individual Membership

NASD maintains an [individual membership](#) category open to interested individuals. It is a useful, optional service provided by NASD. Individual members are informed about, but have no vote in, the activities of the Association.

Individual Membership is designed especially for dance executives and faculty members of institutions preparing for NASD accredited institutional Membership. The dance executive is encouraged to become an individual member during the application phase of the process.

Accredited Institutional Membership

Institutions meeting Association standards for accreditation shall be accorded Membership following review under applicable NASD procedures.

It is the policy of the Association to reexamine accredited institutional members on a regular cycle, the period of which shall not exceed ten years. However, the Commission on Accreditation has the authority to require reexamination at any time upon prior notification to the institution.

Institutions eligible to apply for Membership include independent dance schools, colleges, universities, two-year institutions, and institutions offering graduate work only. Institutions may be degree-granting and/or non-degree-granting.

A. Associate Membership. Institutions applying for the first time that meet all curricular standards and all other applicable standards of the Association, and which are developing in areas related to purposes or operations, may be accredited as Associate Members and listed as such in NASD publications. Associate Membership is valid for up to five years. At the end of this period, such institutions will be required to demonstrate substantial progress in areas under development and to satisfy all criteria for Membership.

B. Membership. Membership is granted to institutions meeting all of the standards of the Association. Institutions approved for Membership are granted five-year periods of accreditation. At the end of five years, the institutions are expected to apply for renewal of Membership.

C. Renewal of Membership. Institutions approved for renewal of Membership are granted ten-year periods of accreditation.

The standards for institutional Membership are published annually in the NASD [Handbook](#). When applicable, new or amended standards that have been ratified by the NASD Membership and/or the Board of Directors are available as addenda to the *Handbook*.

The Development of Standards and Guidelines for Accreditation

In presenting its standards and guidelines for member institutions, NASD reaffirms its special commitment to those principles of voluntary accreditation that encourage differences among institutions and respect for operational integrity within institutions.

The standards and guidelines are presented, not as a set of rules and regulations to be enforced through rigid procedures, but as a synthesis of current thought about professional training in dance to be used as part of the peer review process of accreditation.

In this process, standards and guidelines provide a point of departure for (a) the dialogue occurring within the institution as part of the self-study process, (b) the institution's discussions with the visiting team, and (c) the exchange of views between the institution and the Commission on Accreditation.

Therefore, the standards and guidelines are also intended to provide the public at large with a comprehensive document outlining the attributes of professional training programs in dance. These attributes are presented as the parts of a framework within which each institution develops the specifics of its unique program. *In no case should "standards and guidelines" imply standardization.*

Basic Criteria for Membership for Non-Degree-Granting Institutions

The National Association of Schools of Dance recognizes two distinct types of programs in schools of dance that do not lead to a degree: (1) Community Education Programs and (2) Postsecondary Professional Education and Training Programs.

Community education refers to non-degree-granting programs of study for children, youth, and adults in the institution's local community. These range from private lessons to large institutionalized programs with specialized professional faculty and administration. *Community Dance School, Magnet School, Preparatory Program, and Community Division* are among the many titles used to designate such programs.

Postsecondary professional education and training refers to non-degree-granting programs of study in a particular field or fields of dance at the collegiate or graduate level. Such programs may or may not lead to a professional certificate or diploma, but all provide the student with a written record of completion.

Professional studio schools or programs at the secondary or postsecondary level, regardless of institutional type, must operate at least one sequence of dance training that develops the technical skills and artistry requisite for a career as a professional dancer.

All non-degree-granting programs must produce results consistent with their purposes and provide the best possible environment for dance education and training. Such an environment should foster an understanding of the arts and an attitude of respect for their potential contribution to society.

In addition to the offerings of independent, strictly non-degree-granting schools, non-degree-granting dance programs may be found in independent, degree-granting schools of dance and in multipurpose colleges or universities offering degree and non-degree programs in dance.

Unless specified otherwise below, regardless of institutional type, the composite institution offering non-degree-granting programs must meet the following Basic Criteria for Membership:

1. A primary purpose must be to offer dance study in an institutional context.
2. The institution shall have a statement of purposes and one or more comprehensive programs consistent with these purposes.
3. The institution offering postsecondary professional education and training of programs must offer at least one non-degree curricular program at the undergraduate level requiring at least 30 semester hours or the equivalent, or one non-degree curricular program at the graduate level requiring at least 15 semester hours or the equivalent. Such institutions shall offer at least one curricular program that meets all appropriate standards that (a) has been completed by students, (b) has an enrollment of at least three students, and (c) is progressing students toward completion.
4. The institution shall maintain an enrollment sufficient to support its programs and to maintain a sense of community.
5. An independent institution shall have been in operation for at least three consecutive years.
6. The institution shall maintain its programs on a regular academic-year or year-round basis and shall provide a continuous sequence of classes at defined levels of skill within a time span and of an intensity appropriate to the teaching and learning objectives.
7. Printed materials must accurately reflect the programs and policies of the institution.
8. The institution's legal authority shall be stated clearly in its published materials as identified by its charter, authority to offer curricular programs, structure of control, profit or non-profit status, and affiliation, if any, with a parent or sibling organization.
9. All policies regarding the admission and retention of students, those pertaining to the school's evaluation of progress through its educational program, and those pertaining to financial support, financial aid, and scholarships shall be clearly defined in literature published by the institution.
10. All tuition, fees, and other charges, all policies pertaining thereto, as well as all financial aid policies, shall be clearly described in the institution's published literature.
11. Faculty members shall be qualified by educational background and/or professional experience for their specific teaching assignments. The institution shall list its faculty in its published literature.
12. The institution shall have facilities and equipment adequate to the needs of its educational program.
13. The institution shall either have library space and holdings adequate for its educational programs, or shall have made arrangements for its students and faculty to have access to appropriate library facilities in the immediate area.

14. The institution shall be licensed or chartered to operate as required by local and state legal codes. The institution shall meet all legal requirements to operate wherever it conducts its activities. Multipurpose postsecondary institutions offering programs in dance and in other disciplines shall be accredited by the appropriate regional or institutional accrediting agency, unless such accreditation is not available.
15. A postsecondary non-degree-granting institution shall provide (or, in the case of foreign studies programs, be responsible for) all coursework or educational services to support its educational programs at the professional, postsecondary level, or demonstrate that any cooperative or contracted coursework or educational services at the professional, postsecondary level are provided by an outside institution or organization having accreditation as an entity by a nationally recognized accrediting agency.
16. The institution demonstrates commitment to a program of continuous self-evaluation.

Basic Criteria for Membership for Degree-Granting Institutions

The National Association of Schools of Dance recognizes many types of programs in degree-granting institutions. The primary purpose for all institutions, regardless of the type of programs they offer, should be to provide the best possible environment for training in dance. Such an environment should foster an understanding of the arts and an attitude of respect for their potential contribution to society.

Applicants for accreditation as degree-granting institutions are two-year, four-year, or five-year undergraduate or graduate level institutions. Accredited degree-granting institutions shall meet the following Basic Criteria for Membership:

1. The institution shall maintain a curricular program of education and training in dance.
2. The institution shall offer at least one complete degree program, e.g., Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Arts with major in Dance, et al., or shall provide the dance component of a degree program offered in conjunction with an accredited degree-granting institution.
3. The institution shall have graduated at least one class of students who have been through the institution's own program from beginning to final year, and another class shall be in its final year of study.
4. Institutions offering one or more graduate programs as their only degree programs shall have graduated at least two students from at least one graduate program that meets all applicable standards, and shows evidence of continuing enrollment. If institutions offer undergraduate and graduate programs, graduate programs must have graduate students matriculated or in residence, or have received Plan Approval from the Commission on Accreditation.
5. The institution's legal authority shall be stated clearly in its published materials as identified by its charter, authority to grant degrees, structure of control, profit or non-profit status, and affiliation, if any, with a parent or sibling organization.
6. All policies regarding admission and retention of students, as well as those pertaining to the school's evaluation of progress, shall be clearly defined in literature published by the institution.
7. All tuition, fees, and other charges, as well as all policies pertaining thereto, shall be clearly described in the institution's published literature.
8. There shall be in residence at each senior college or graduate school a sufficient number of candidates for the curriculum or composite curricula for which the school is applying for Membership to ensure a viable training program in dance consistent with the overall objectives of the institution.
9. Faculty members shall be qualified by educational backgrounds and/or professional experience for their specific teaching assignments. The institution shall list its faculty in its published literature.
10. The institution shall have facilities and equipment commensurate with the needs of its educational program.

11. The institution shall have library space and resources commensurate with the needs of its educational program.
12. The institution shall be licensed or chartered to operate as required by local and state legal codes. The institution shall meet all legal requirements to operate wherever it conducts its activities. Multipurpose institutions offering degrees in dance and in other disciplines shall be accredited by the appropriate regional or institutional accrediting agency.
13. The institution shall provide (or, in the case of foreign studies programs, be responsible for) all coursework or educational services to support its educational programs, or demonstrate that any cooperative or contracted coursework or educational services are provided by an outside institution or organization having accreditation as an entity by a nationally recognized accrediting agency.
14. The institution demonstrates commitment to a program of continuous self-evaluation.

Standards and Guidelines of the Association

The complete standards and guidelines for NASD, published in the *Handbook* of the Association, provide a basic framework for the accreditation process, thus allowing objective analysis of curricula.

They are meant to be the basis for dialogue (a) within an institution as the self-study is being developed, (b) between an institution and the Association (the visiting evaluators and the Commission on Accreditation), and (c) between the Association and the public as a whole.

The Association does not attempt to develop detailed formulas, plans of course work, or other inflexible specifications that might impinge on the freedom of institutions to develop individual programs. Instead, NASD has developed standards and guidelines that are specific enough to ensure a certain level of educational quality, but are not so restrictive as to stifle experimentation, innovation, and individuality of program content.

In addition to the Basic Criteria for Membership noted above, the *Handbook* contains standards and guidelines for programs in dance in the following areas:

- Standards for Purposes and Operations such as Purposes of the Institution and Dance Unit; Size and Scope; Finances; Governance and Administration; Faculty and Staff; Facilities, Equipment, Technology, Health, and Safety; Library and Learning Resources; and so forth
- Dance Program Components such as Credit and Time Requirements; Time on Task, Curricular Proportions, and Competencies; Forms of Instruction, Requirements, and Electives; Independent Study; Distance Learning; and so forth
- Requirements for Admission
- Undergraduate Programs in Dance
- Admission to Undergraduate Study
- Two-Year Degree-Granting Programs
- The Liberal Arts Degree with a Major in Dance
- All Professional Baccalaureate Degrees in Dance
- Specific Professional Baccalaureate Degrees in Dance
- Baccalaureate Degrees with P–12 Teacher Preparation Programs
- Baccalaureate Degree in Preparation for Advanced Professional Study: Dance Therapy
- Graduate Programs in Dance
- Admission to Graduate Study
- Specific Initial Graduate Degrees
- Specific Terminal Degrees
- Non-Degree-Granting Programs in Dance
- Admission to Professional Postsecondary Non-Degree-Granting Programs in Dance
- Specific Professional Postsecondary Non-Degree-Granting Programs

- Specific Operational Standards for Free-Standing Dance Institutions of Higher Education
- Specific Operational Standards for Proprietary Schools

Code of Ethics

NASD member institutions have agreed to abide by the Code of Ethics of the Association. It contains statements on ethical concerns in areas such as faculty appointments, financial aid, advertising, and the school's responsibility to the student. The Association has formal procedures for reviewing complaints directed against member institutions. All formal complaints are reviewed by the Commission on Accreditation or the Committee on Ethics, composed of representatives elected by the membership.

The Governance of the Association

The officers of the Association are the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, all of whom are elected by the membership; and the Executive Director, *ex officio*, who is appointed by the Board. The officers, four directors elected by the membership, two representatives of the general public, the Chair of the Commission on Accreditation, and the Immediate Past President constitute the Board of Directors of NASD.

NASD maintains a Commission on Accreditation to review membership applications. The Commission consists of a Chair, one public member, and seven representatives elected by the membership.

The Association also maintains a Committee on Ethics and a Committee on Nominations.

Other Services of the Association

Website. NASD maintains extensive information and current materials on its website.

National Office. NASD maintains a professional staff of 15 at its National Office in Reston, Virginia. The staff provides technical services, information, and assistance to members of the Association and interested individuals in areas related to dance training, education, and the arts. Staff members also carry out the administrative functions of the Association, including accreditation coordination, accounting, correspondence, and policy analysis. The Association offers a comprehensive list of publications on its website. It also collects and makes available comprehensive data regarding dance programs and institutions.

Directory. The Association publishes a searchable, online directory list that provides the names of all member institutions, their addresses, telephone numbers, dance executives, and degree programs. The *Directory* is the official accreditation listing for NASD member institutions. The Association also makes [mailing labels](#) available for purchase through its website.

Handbook. The *Handbook*, published annually in electronic form, includes NASD Standards for educational programs in dance as well as the Association's Constitution, Bylaws, Code of Ethics, and Rules of Practice and Procedure. When applicable, new or amended standards that have been ratified by the NASD Membership and/or the Board of Directors are available as addenda to the *Handbook*.

Statistical Services. NASD participates annually in the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) Project, a joint effort of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), and the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) designed to provide comprehensive data pertaining to the arts in higher education. The HEADS Project, officially established in 1982, is a statistics system that collects, compiles, and reports data from member and non-member arts institutions. Participation in the Project is mandatory for accredited institutional members of NASM, NASAD, NAST, and NASD. Data collected through the annual HEADS Data Survey is accessible in the form of Navigable Dashboards, which are provided by participating discipline to accredited institutional members of NASM, NASAD, NAST, and NASD as a service. Non-member participants, non-member non-participants, and the general public may [purchase access to Navigable Dashboards](#) in the HEADS Data System for a fee.

Notices. During the academic year, NASD publishes various items of information, annual meeting content and registration, reports of Commission actions, drafts of proposed changes to the *Handbook*, descriptions of activities of interest to dance executives, discussions of national arts policy issues, and so forth. Such notices can be found under [About NASD](#) on the NASD website.

Annual Meeting. NASD holds an Annual Meeting in September. Sessions at the Annual Meeting are designed to include topics of interest to individuals involved in dance training. Included are meetings by type of institution, interest group sessions, and workshops. Papers presented at the meeting, when available, are published in the [Past Annual Meetings](#) section of the NASD website.

A Summary of Benefits of Institutional Membership

NASD offers many services to member institutions:

- Constructive evaluation of programs through the accreditation process.
- Advice and counsel concerning new curricula.
- Periodic research studies of topics pertinent to education in dance.
- Information concerning developments in dance, the arts, education, and related matters.
- Data compiled from the annual reports of member institutions filing a comprehensive picture of dance in higher education.
- Publications containing information and basic standards for the education of dance professionals.
- National forums for discussion of issues, concerns, and opportunities.

For further information, please contact:

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<http://nasd.arts-accredit.org>