

Programme Specification Northern School of Contemporary Dance	
Programme Title:	BA (Hons) Professional Dance Teaching and Education (Level 6 Top up degree programme)
Teaching Institution:	Imperial Society for Teachers of Dance Academy (ISTD)
Final Award:	BA (Hons) Professional Dance Teaching
Alternative Exit Awards:	No exit awards as this is a level 6 Top up degree
Credit Level:	Level 6
Credits/ECTS value:	120 / 60 ECTS
Modes of Delivery:	One year Full-Time Two years Part time
QAA Benchmarks:	QAA Subject Benchmark Statements for Dance, Drama and Performance (April 2024) and Framework for Qualifications in Higher Education (2024)
Validation Date:	July 2026
Programme Start Date:	September 2027
Review Date:	July 2031

Programme Overview:

The BA (Hons) Professional Dance Teaching and Education is a Level 6 top-up degree designed for dance teachers and practitioners who wish to consolidate and extend their professional practice into an honours-level qualification. Delivered by the ISTD Academy, the programme integrates advanced pedagogical theory, applied teaching practice and professional development to prepare graduates for sustainable careers within the dance education sector.

Students deepen their understanding of how people learn in dance contexts and apply this knowledge through reflective, research-informed teaching. The curriculum emphasises inclusive, safe and developmentally appropriate practice, supporting teachers to plan, deliver

and evaluate progressive learning experiences across a range of dance education settings. Through mentored advanced teaching practice, students develop autonomy, leadership and professional judgement aligned with recognised teaching standards.

The programme also recognises the realities of professional dance teaching and includes focused study in business, entrepreneurship and professional sustainability. Graduates leave equipped not only as critically reflective educators, but also as confident professionals able to operate successfully within freelance, studio-based, community and educational environments.

The BA (Hons) Professional Dance Teaching and Education provides a rigorous and practice-focused route to honours-level qualification for dance teachers seeking to advance their expertise, credibility and career progression.

Programme Structure
This is a top up BA Honours degree programme at Level 6 (120 credits at level 6)

Programme Learning Outcomes	
Level 6 - Stage 3 On completion of this stage students will be able to:	
PLO-1	Critically evaluate and apply pedagogical, developmental, and learning theory to the planning, delivery, and adaptation of dance teaching in a range of professional contexts.
PLO-2	Design, deliver, and justify inclusive, safe, and developmentally appropriate dance teaching programmes that demonstrate progression, differentiation, and responsiveness to diverse learner needs.
PLO-3	Demonstrate autonomy, leadership, and professional judgement in specialist dance teaching practice , aligning own work with relevant professional teaching standards, ethical responsibilities, and sector expectations.
PLO-4	Critically reflect on, analyse, and refine individual teaching practice through evaluation, feedback, observation, and reflective decision-making in order to support continuous professional development.
PLO-5	Develop and communicate sustainable strategic approaches to professional dance teaching practice , including business planning, legal and regulatory awareness, marketing, and entrepreneurial thinking appropriate to dance education settings.

Programme Structure

The BA (Hons) Professional Dance Teaching and Education is structured as a Level 6 top-up degree, designed for students who have already completed prior higher education or equivalent professional training in dance teaching and who wish to extend this into an honours-level qualification. The programme provides a focused final stage of study that enables students to consolidate existing practical experience, deepen their critical understanding of

dance pedagogy, and advance towards autonomous, reflective and professionally informed teaching practice. Across the top-up year, students engage with honours-level study through a curriculum that integrates pedagogical theory, applied teaching practice, specialist professional development, and entrepreneurial preparation for employment in the dance teaching sector.

The programme is organised around 120 credits at Level 6, delivered through four 30-credit modules. These modules are designed to build progressively across the year. The first module establishes the intellectual and pedagogical foundations of the award by developing advanced understanding of dance teaching and learning, including learning theory, developmental considerations, inclusive practice, curriculum design and assessment. This provides the theoretical framework that underpins subsequent study and supports students in working at honours level as critically informed practitioners.

Building on this foundation, the second module moves students from theory into applied practice. Students plan, deliver and evaluate teaching in real or simulated contexts, strengthening their ability to translate pedagogical ideas into effective teaching strategies. Emphasis is placed on lesson planning, communication, behaviour management, differentiation, creativity, use of technology, and reflective evaluation. This staged development allows students to evidence increasing independence and confidence in their practical teaching while demonstrating how theory informs professional decision-making.

The third module extends this work into advanced teaching practice and enables students to develop high-level professional expertise within a chosen context. Students may work within either a syllabus-based or non-syllabus pathway, supported by specialist mentoring, research, and critical reflection. The module is structured to promote autonomy, contextual responsiveness, and sustained professional practice, requiring students to demonstrate progression, safe practice, differentiation, and alignment with recognised professional teaching standards. In this way, the programme structure supports students not only to teach effectively, but to position themselves as reflective specialists capable of adapting to the demands of different dance education environments.

The final module, Business for Dance Teachers, complements the pedagogical and practical focus of the programme by preparing students for sustainable professional practice. It introduces advanced knowledge of finance, marketing, strategic planning, legal and regulatory responsibilities, leadership, and entrepreneurship within dance teaching and arts education contexts. This ensures that the programme structure supports graduates to progress into employment, freelance practice, studio leadership, community work, or the development of their own dance education enterprises.

Taken together, the programme structure offers a coherent and professionally relevant top-up year in which theoretical understanding, applied teaching, specialist practice, and business awareness are deliberately integrated. The design of the award enables students to enter with prior experience and leave with an honours-level qualification that evidences criticality, independence, professional competence, and readiness for the complex demands of dance teaching practice.

Module Structure				
Year 1 (Level 6) 120 credits				
Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Core or Option	Pass Compulsory
IS6DTLa	Dance Teaching and Learning	30	Core	No
IS6TIPa	Theory into Practice	30	Core	No
IS6ATPa	Advanced Teaching Practice	30	Core	No
IS6BDTa	Business for Dance Teachers	30	Core	Yes
Awards BA (Hons) Professional Dance Teaching and Education Stage 3 – 100% Exit Awards There are no exit awards available for this programme. Award of credit will be issued to students who complete individual modules but do not complete the programme.				

Programme Learning Outcomes Mapping

Programme Learning Outcomes Module Mapping					
Level 6 (Stage 3)					
	<i>PLO1</i>	<i>PLO2</i>	<i>PLO3</i>	<i>PLO4</i>	<i>PLO5</i>
IS6DTL1a	X	X			
IS6TIP1a	X	X	X		
IS6ATP1a		X	X	X	
IS6BDT1a				X	X

Approach to Teaching

ISTD's approach to educating dance teachers through this Level 6 programme is rooted in the principle that excellent teaching emerges from the close integration of theory, practice, reflection, and professional readiness. The programme is structured so that students first develop a sophisticated understanding of how people learn in dance contexts, then apply this understanding in increasingly complex teaching situations, before extending it into advanced specialist practice and sustainable professional planning. In this way, ISTD frames dance teaching not simply as the transmission of technique, but as an intellectually informed, ethically grounded and professionally accountable practice.

A defining feature of the programme is its emphasis on pedagogical literacy. ISTD positions the dance teacher as a reflective practitioner who must understand major learning theories, developmental frameworks and models of curriculum and assessment design in order to teach effectively. This gives the programme a clear educational foundation and ensures that teaching decisions are informed by critical understanding rather than routine habit or inherited custom. The teacher is therefore prepared to justify their pedagogical choices, adapt them to context, and respond intelligently to the differing needs of learners across childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

ISTD's approach is also strongly shaped by a commitment to inclusive, developmentally informed practice. Across the modules, students are encouraged to recognise that dance learners do not develop in uniform ways and that effective teaching depends on sensitivity to physical, emotional, psychological and social factors. The programme foregrounds issues such as child development, motivation, self-care, safeguarding, professional boundaries, differentiated planning, progression, stretch and challenge, and the creation of supportive learning environments. This reflects an approach to teacher education in which inclusion is not treated as an add-on, but as central to planning, communication, curriculum design and assessment. Dance teachers are therefore trained to see learner diversity as a normal and necessary condition of practice, requiring adaptability, care and responsiveness.

The programme further demonstrates ISTD's view that dance teachers learn most effectively when theory is tested through practice. After establishing core pedagogical principles, students move into the practical application of these ideas through lesson planning, observed teaching, filmed lessons and structured evaluation. Here, attention is given to communication, behaviour management, use of demonstration, technology-enhanced teaching, creativity, community engagement and the shaping of safe, supportive learning climates. This means that the programme does not separate educational knowledge from studio practice; rather, it insists that strong teaching arises when teachers can translate conceptual understanding into clear, purposeful and adaptable teaching actions. Students are supported in embedding new approaches into their dance classes by challenging their own existing assumptions and exploring new ideas and strategies, empowering them to develop a broader range of teaching skills and to maximise their potential as a dance teacher.

At Level 6, ISTD's model of teacher education places particular value on professional autonomy and specialist judgement. In the advanced teaching practice module, students work within a chosen context, either syllabus-based or non-syllabus, and are supported by specialist mentoring as they research, plan, deliver and critically evaluate extended teaching. This reflects a mature conception of teacher formation in which students are expected not only to demonstrate competence, but to exercise judgement, align their work with professional standards, and respond to feedback through iterative improvement. The inclusion of mentor-

supported practice, viva voce evaluation, video analysis and professional teaching standards highlights ISTD's commitment to preparing teachers who can operate with independence, confidence and integrity in a range of professional environments.

Reflection is embedded throughout the programme as a core professional habit rather than a discrete academic exercise. ISTD's approach assumes that dance teachers develop through ongoing self-evaluation, observation, dialogue and research-informed adjustment. Across the modules, students are asked to analyse their own lessons, review feedback from peers and mentors, evaluate their use of teaching strategies, and document their developing understanding of effective practice. In this respect, the programme frames reflective practice as essential to professional growth, helping future teachers move beyond instinctive teaching and towards more critically reasoned, evidence-informed and ethically aware decision-making.

Another significant dimension of ISTD's approach is its recognition that dance teachers require more than pedagogical expertise alone. The inclusion of the business module signals that ISTD understands dance teaching as a profession situated within wider organisational, regulatory and entrepreneurial contexts. Students are therefore prepared to engage with finance, pricing, strategic planning, legal compliance, safeguarding, branding, digital marketing, leadership and innovation. This broadens the conception of the dance teacher from classroom practitioner to professional operator, capable of sustaining teaching practice within studios, freelance portfolios, community settings and small creative enterprises. Such an approach is particularly relevant to the realities of the dance sector, where many teachers must combine artistic, educational and entrepreneurial roles.

Taken as a whole, the programme presents ISTD's approach to dance teacher education as one that is holistic, profession-facing and future-oriented. It values rigorous pedagogical understanding, learner-centred and inclusive practice, research-informed teaching, critical reflection, specialist mentoring, and strategic professional awareness. The result is a model of teacher preparation that supports students to become not only capable dance teachers, but thoughtful educators and sustainable practitioners who can lead learning responsibly within an evolving dance education landscape.

Assessment Strategy

Assessment on the BA (Hons) Professional Dance Teaching and Education is designed to support and evidence the progressive development of students as critically informed, reflective and professionally capable dance teachers. The strategy is aligned to the structure of the Level 6 top-up year and enables students to demonstrate achievement through a range of complementary assessment forms that test theoretical understanding, pedagogical application, practical teaching competence, reflective evaluation and professional planning.

Across the programme, assessment is used not only to measure performance, but also to deepen learning, encourage professional self-awareness and prepare students for the expectations of current dance teaching practice.

The assessment strategy is built on the principle that effective dance teacher education requires students to demonstrate both knowledge and application. In the early part of the programme, assessment focuses on students' ability to critically engage with learning theory, developmental understanding, curriculum design and inclusive pedagogical frameworks. This is reflected in Dance Teaching and Learning through a presentation on dance psychology to dance classes, and a written Programme of Learning for a six-week course of study, applying

theory into class planning. These assessment tasks require students to connect theory to practice, articulate a rationale for pedagogical decision-making, and design coherent, differentiated and developmentally appropriate learning sequences.

As students' progress through the programme, assessment increasingly emphasises applied teaching practice. Theory into Practice requires students to produce detailed lesson plans and evaluations alongside filmed teaching, enabling them to demonstrate how pedagogical theory is translated into structured and effective teaching. These assessments test progression, adaptation for different ages and abilities, use of communication strategies, management of behaviour and learning environments, and the capacity to evaluate and refine practice over time. The use of filmed lessons is particularly significant within the programme's strategy, as it allows for direct observation of teaching practice and supports structured reflection, self-evaluation and feedback.

At the advanced stage of the programme, assessment is designed to evidence professional autonomy, specialist judgement and honours-level reflective capacity. In Advanced Teaching Practice, students are assessed through either a non-syllabus pathway, consisting of a filmed extended lesson, detailed lesson planning and a live viva voce, or through a syllabus pathway culminating in the Licentiate examination. In both cases, the assessment model requires students to demonstrate high-level teaching practice, research-informed decision-making, progression, differentiation, safe practice and alignment with recognised Professional Teaching Standards. The inclusion of viva and examination-based elements ensures that students are able not only to perform teaching at an advanced level, but also to critically articulate and defend the pedagogical choices underpinning their practice.

The assessment strategy also recognises that graduates require the ability to operate within the wider professional and entrepreneurial landscape of dance education. Business for Dance Teachers therefore assesses students through a substantial Business Plan Presentation and an Employers Handbook. These tasks enable students to demonstrate strategic planning, financial awareness, legal and regulatory understanding, market analysis, marketing and communication skills, and entrepreneurial thinking in relation to dance teaching and training contexts. This ensures that assessment across the programme extends beyond studio pedagogy and reflects the realities of sustainable professional practice in the sector.

A key feature of the programme's assessment strategy is the integration of reflective and developmental assessment practices. Across modules, students are asked to evaluate their own work, respond to feedback, analyse teaching through observation and video, and refine their practice in relation to professional standards. Reflection is therefore embedded throughout the programme as a method of assessment and as a mode of professional development. This supports the formation of graduates who can engage in continuous professional learning and to adapt their teaching practice thoughtfully and responsibly over time.

Assessment methods across the programme are intentionally varied to provide students with opportunities to demonstrate achievement through different modes of communication and performance. These include presentations, written planning documents, filmed practical teaching, live professional discussion, examination, evaluative writing and strategic business documentation. This variety reflects the multidimensional nature of dance teaching as a profession and allows students to evidence different aspects of the programme learning outcomes in authentic and professionally relevant ways. It also supports inclusivity by ensuring that assessment is not reliant on a single mode of demonstration.

Work-Based Learning and Placements

Work-based learning within this module is embedded through the practical planning, delivery and evaluation of dance teaching in authentic or professionally relevant settings. Rather than treating placement activity as separate from academic study, Modules 2 and 3 integrate real teaching experience into the learning process so that students can apply pedagogical theory directly to practice. Through taught lessons, observed teaching, filmed delivery and structured evaluation, students can develop confidence, professional judgement and a clearer understanding of how teaching strategies operate in live contexts.

Placement-related activity is supported by lesson planning, observation, feedback and reflective evaluation, ensuring that experiential learning is critically framed and aligned with the module's learning outcomes. Where appropriate, students may undertake teaching activity in studio, school, community or other dance education environments that allow them to engage with learners of different ages, stages and abilities. Work-based learning is therefore used to strengthen the relationship between theory and practice and to support the development of professional behaviours, reflective skills and contextual awareness.

Student Support

ISTD's approach to student support is embedded within the academic, practical and professional structure of the programme. It is designed to support students in developing as reflective, knowledgeable and professionally responsible dance teachers, while managing the demands of honours-level study and applied teaching practice. Support is therefore integrated into teaching, assessment and feedback processes, rather than positioned as separate from the curriculum.

Students are supported through a staged developmental model that builds confidence, critical understanding and professional judgement across the year. Academic support is provided through clear guidance on module expectations, learning outcomes, assessment requirements and reflective practice, alongside lectures, seminars, discussion and guided independent study. This helps students to connect theory, research and pedagogical understanding to their own developing practice.

Practical and professional support are central to the programme. Students engage in workshops, observed teaching, video review, tutorials and mentor-supported practice, enabling them to test ideas, receive individually targeted feedback and refine their teaching over time. In advanced practice, specialist mentoring further supports students in shaping their work in relation to professional standards and the expectations of dance teaching contexts.

The programme also promotes student wellbeing, safe practice and professional responsibility. Through engagement with safeguarding, learner development, inclusion, professional boundaries and supportive learning environments, students are encouraged to develop sustainable working practices and an awareness of their responsibilities both to themselves and to those they teach.

Feedback is a key mechanism of support across the programme. Observation, tutorials and reflective evaluation enable students to identify strengths, address areas for development and take increasing ownership of their progress. Careers and progression support are also

embedded, particularly through preparation for freelance, studio-based and entrepreneurial careers in dance teaching.

Overall, ISTD's approach to student support is developmental, practice-based and professionally focused, enabling students to work autonomously and progress successfully through the programme and prepare for sustainable employment in dance education.

Student Support Framework

The programme adopts a holistic approach to student support, recognising that learners may require academic, personal, wellbeing, accessibility, technical, financial and professional support throughout their studies. A comprehensive range of support services, resources and guidance is available via the Virtual Learning Environment (Totara) and the programme team.

An integrated support framework enables students to access the academic, personal, financial, technical and wellbeing support required to participate fully and succeed throughout their studies.

Academic and Learning Support

Students receive support from application through to graduation, including:

- Pre-course meetings to identify support requirements and develop Individual Learning Plans (ILP's) where appropriate.
- Induction covering study skills, academic writing and effective use of Totara.
- Ongoing support from the Academy Programme team and Totara Manager throughout the programme.
- Regular assessment check-ins, verbal and written feedback and one-to-one mentoring.
- Recorded live lectures to support flexible engagement with learning materials.

Inclusive Learning and Student Wellbeing

The programme is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment that supports students' academic progress, wellbeing and personal circumstances.

Support may include:

- Opportunities to discuss access requirements during recruitment, interview and enrolment, with ongoing monitoring to identify additional support needs that may emerge during study.
- Individual Learning Plans, learner profiles and reasonable adjustments, including alternative assessment arrangements, where relevant.
- Language support arrangements for teaching practice activities, where appropriate.
- Pastoral support, welfare checks and safeguarding protocols.
- Guidance for students experiencing illness, injury, pregnancy or other circumstances affecting study, including consideration of extensions, deferrals and study adjustments.
- Signposting to external wellbeing, mental health, healthcare and specialist support services.
- Clear codes of conduct and guidance for online learning environments.

Financial and Technical Support

Students have access to guidance and resources to support participation in online study, including:

- Information regarding Student Finance funding opportunities and ISTD bursaries.
- Flexible payment plans for self-funding students.
- Training in the use of Totara and programme technologies.
- Guidance on software requirements, filming, digital submission and online learning practices.
- Technical support from ISTD staff.
- Access to recorded learning materials where technical or connectivity issues affect attendance.

Student Voice and Community

The programme promotes student engagement, belonging and representation through:

- Online community-building and networking opportunities.
- Student Representatives acting as a liaison between students and the programme team.
- Programme and module evaluations.
- Cross-programme focus groups and student consultation activities to gather a diverse range of student perspectives.

Entry Profile:

The minimum age to study this programme is 18 years old by 30 September in the year the course begins. There is no upper age limit.

Specific Entry Requirements:

Applicants will need to complete the course application form in which they must provide evidence of Level 4 and 5 learning to enter the programme. Evidence of relevant qualifications must be provided in the form of copies of original certificates and transcripts.

Level 4 learning can be evidenced through any one of the following:

- ISTD Diploma in Dance Education (DDE)
- ISTD Diploma in Teaching Community Dance (DTCD)
- ISTD Associate and Associate Diploma
- A Level 4 dance teaching qualification from a non-ISTD awarding organisation (e.g RAD, BBO, IDTA etc)
- Year 1 of a dance degree or vocational training pathway
- Relevant dance teaching experience

Level 5 learning can be evidenced through any one of the following:

- A Level 5 dance teaching qualification from a dance awarding organisation
- Year 2 of a dance degree or vocational training
- Level 5 Trinity Diploma
- Relevant dance teaching experience

Essential

It is essential that all applicants have some dance teaching experience prior to application.

Applicants who have not completed either the DDE or DTCD through the ISTD must provide evidence of having undertaken a Safeguarding course prior to entry. This needs to be completed through a recognised Safeguarding training provider in the UK or through ISTD.

Course Requirement:

Licentiate assessment option

Applicants choosing the Licentiate assessment option will need to hold their ISTD (or equivalent) Advanced 1 certificate in the relevant genre (or have been granted APEL by the ISTD for Advanced 1)

Applicants must also hold either ISTD Associate Diploma or ISTD Diploma in Dance Education (DDE) or have been granted APEL by ISTD for one of these qualifications.

Information about the ISTD's Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) process can be found on the ISTD website [Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning \(APEL\) - Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing](#)).

Applicants will also need to be familiar with ISTD graded and vocational work and submit evidence of their ability to teach syllabus work, prior to being accepted to study the Licentiate option. Further information about the Licentiate examination can be found on the ISTD website.

Teaching placement

Applicants must have secured a teaching placement setting prior to starting the course and they must provide evidence of this placement from an employer/service provider.

Interview

Applicants will apply to the ISTD Academy, where they will be assessed against the above entry requirements and through interview. Interviews will be used to assess each applicant's teaching experience, career ambitions and suitability for the course.

Personal Profile:

On entry the student will be able to demonstrate:

- Sound knowledge of dance teaching
- Drive and ambition to develop teaching practice and skills
- An attitude of personal responsibility
- An openness to new ideas and ways of working
- A desire to teach and work inclusively

All of which will be assessed during the admissions process of being of a standard suitable for entry at undergraduate degree level.

English Language Requirements:

Applicants for whom English is not their native language will need to demonstrate a proficiency in written and spoken English relevant to the demands of the course of study.

IELTS: with an overall band of 5.5 with no less than 5.0 in each component skill.

Language Cert International: ESOL SELT with 33 – 38 score per skill.'

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):

Students may be admitted to the course with advanced standing in line with NSCD's (our validating body) standard RPL requirements. **Applicants using relevant dance teaching as evidence of Level 4 or 5 learning must complete the ISTD Academy's RPL mapping form.**