



CAT Contemporary Dance Student Handbook

2023 – 2024



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Introduction

We are delighted to welcome you to the Dance City Centre for Advanced Training (CAT). This handbook contains important information for CAT students who are enrolled on the Centre for Advanced Training Programme in contemporary dance, and their parents or carers.

The Dance City CAT is one of nine centres across England, whose aim is to provide high quality, pre-vocational dance training to young people who show exceptional potential for dance. All of the Dance CATs across England are financially supported by the government's Department for Education.

The CAT offers a supportive environment to help young people nurture their dance talent and equip them with the tools to progress, at a later stage, on to further dance training and be part of the next generation of professional dancers, teachers and choreographers.

The contemporary CAT is an inspiring dance training programme, which allows students to develop as individuals under the guidance of our expert teachers and choreographers. While training on the CAT, students will work with staff to become part of a dedicated and creative team. This experience should be an exciting and enjoyable one which will enable you to harness and develop your passion for contemporary dance.

CAT students at Dance City can expect training and support far in excess of the Department for Education requirement and this booklet details everything the CAT programme at Dance City offers.



CAT students in performance at the Dance City Theatre

CAT Classes



CAT students in contemporary technique class

Dance City CAT teachers are all professionals currently working in dance and are experienced experts in technique and choreography. CAT teachers are all dedicated to inspiring young talent, and each have a unique skill set which gives them the ability to help each student reach their full potential. CAT teachers are there to support you through your training, and you should approach them for help with any aspects of the programme you feel they can assist you with.

A typical CAT timetable will include the following classes:

Ballet

Ballet is a vital element in a young dancers training as it creates an important knowledge base of flexibility, strength and accuracy. Ballet also provides an excellent support base for contemporary technique, creative and performance skills.

Contemporary Technique

The contemporary techniques which are taught on the CAT encompass a broad range of styles and teaching methods which include Graham, Cunningham and Release. This grounding of diverse contemporary styles provides the students with a good understanding of technique and enables them to be a versatile dancer and performer.

Contemporary / Creative

Weekend creative sessions involve a contemporary technique class followed by a choreography workshop, where the content is developed by the teachers and students together. Students will attend on either a Saturday or Sunday and, within these weekend sessions, create and rehearse dance material for the CAT end of term shows at Dance City.

Extra Classes

Extra classes are timetabled to allow opportunities for students to increase the amount of classes they attend each week, as they progress through the CAT. Students will be invited to attend these extra sessions by CAT teachers if, and when, they feel that the student is ready and the extra classes would be beneficial to the student's training.

Extra sessions could include:

- Extra Ballet (including Pointe Work)
- Body Conditioning

Darlington CAT Classes

For any students living in the County Durham, Darlington or Teesside areas; there is the option to attend evening week-night classes at Hummersknott Academy in Darlington. Students are still required to attend their weekend creative and contemporary classes at Dance City in Newcastle.

Classes in Darlington take place in the Gym and Dance Studio at Hummersknott Academy's Active Centre, which Dance City has equipped with ballet barres and mirrors. Students should wait at the main reception area on the night of their first class at Hummersknott Academy, so that the CAT teacher can meet them and show them the location of changing facilities and the dance studio.

The address of Hummersknott Academy is:

Hummersknott Academy
Edinburgh Drive
Darlington
DL3 8AR



CAT students in contemporary class at Hummersknott Academy in Darlington

CAT Uniform

All CAT students should come dressed appropriately for dance classes and full details of uniform requirements for each class are given below.

You may purchase dance wear from any shop or supplier, and we don't specify what colours or brands should be worn.

Please Note: The Dance City CAT will provide a maximum of two pairs of ballet shoes per student, per year.

Ballet

- Leotard or Biketard
- Tights
- Vest
- Shorts
- Leggings
- Ballet shoes provided by the CAT

Contemporary Technique

- Leotard or Biketard
- Footless Tights
- Vest
- Shorts
- Leggings
- Bare feet

Creative Weekend Classes

- Vest
- Shorts
- Leggings
- Bare feet
- Warm tracksuit bottoms and top
- Bare feet

Additional Items

- Supportive sports bra where necessary
- Dance belt support as necessary

Students can select the most appropriate items of clothing from the list above that they feel comfortable wearing in the sessions.

Please note: No crop tops

Please note: Due to health and safety reasons we ask that students refrain from wearing false nails and piercings during CAT classes. Students may be asked to remove any nails or piercings which the teacher deems dangerous.

Knee pads are also useful for students to bring with them to weekend sessions each week and they can then be used when floor work is being developed.

Hooded sweatshirts with the Centre for Advanced Training Programme logo are also available to purchase from the Dance City Ticket Office. Hooded sweatshirts are not a compulsory item of uniform and have been produced upon request from past students.

Reminder: Please clearly label student's dancewear and hoodies – items are often left in studios and changing rooms. It makes for a much happier life if they can be returned to their owner.

CAT Intensives

Intensives

Intensives happen every year and are a great opportunity for students to work with visiting choreographers and to gain an insight into the realities of working as a dance professional. The dates of the CAT intensives will be given at the beginning of each academic year along with term dates for regular classes and each student's individual timetable.

Compulsory Intensives

A compulsory intensive will take place during either the February half-term or the Easter holidays, depending on the student's weekend group. Please see your CAT term dates sheet for further information.

During compulsory intensives, dance pieces are made with different choreographers that will be performed at the CAT End of Year Show in July. We would request that parents avoid booking holidays during these compulsory intensives.



CAT students working with their teacher in an intensive.

It is important that all students attend, as any student who does not attend their compulsory intensive may not be able to perform in the show or be able to fully participate in weekend rehearsal sessions over the summer term.

IMPORTANT: On the last day of a compulsory intensive the students show the work they have made to the other intensive groups. Unfortunately, it is not possible for us to invite parents and carers to these sharings.

Optional Intensives

If possible, CAT students are also invited to attend their summer intensive workshops, which take place at the start of the school summer holidays. These workshops are a great chance for students to work closely with a few choreographers and really explore their creativity without the pressure of working towards a performance.

The summer workshops are compulsory for any student who missed the Half Term/Easter Intensive, for any reason.

Sign up for the summer intensive workshops will take place at the beginning of May. It is important for us to know of any students who can't attend to make sure that we have the right number of choreographers to cater for all of the students who will be taking part.

IMPORTANT: All students must attend at least one intensive per year in order to be eligible to continue on the CAT for another year's training.

CAT Performances

Students perform twice each year in the Dance City Theatre. Some CAT shows will be a private sharing of recent work and others will be public, polished performances. During performances and rehearsals students are expected to behave professionally and to take responsibility for achieving a high standard. Whilst every endeavour is made to include all students in the end of term shows, it is important to understand that poor attendance, or absence from compulsory intensives, may mean that students are not able to take part in performances.

Occasionally, students may be asked to attend extra rehearsals, if staff feel there is a genuine need for more work prior to performance. We will give parents as much notice of extra rehearsal sessions as possible.

Important: Students will be entitled to complimentary tickets for each of the CAT performances at Dance City. Letters will be sent to parents well in advance of each performance, to inform them that complimentary tickets are available for booking.

If you do not claim your complimentary tickets by the date mentioned in your letter, then we cannot guarantee you will get any tickets at all. The CAT shows always sell-out, and any unclaimed complimentary tickets will be released after the specified date for parents to claim on a first come, first served basis.



CAT students perform in the Easter Show.

CAT Theatre Visits

Throughout the academic year, students will be invited to attend at least three live dance performances which are organised and paid for by the Dance City CAT. These theatre visits are a key aspect of dance training as they provide students with the opportunity to gain an appreciation and understanding of all types of dance and performance.

The dates for these theatre visits will be given as early as possible and parents will be asked to consent to attendance in advance.

CAT Theatre Visit Policy: If a student has a Theatre Visit ticket booked which they do not attend, and they haven't let us know at least 48 hours in advance of the performance, then they will not be offered a free ticket for the next CAT Theatre Visit.



*Image: Lo-Giudice Dance company's 'Roma' performed at Dance City in December 2022.
CAT students attend a minimum of three live dance performances each academic year*

Discounts at Dance City's Theatre

Dance City has a discounted rate for all student tickets and if any further offers for specific shows become available, we will notify parents/guardians in advance.



CAT students in the Dance City Theatre

CAT Student Health and Wellbeing

Students enrolled on the CAT are training as they would in the professional dance industry, and we aim to support them in all aspects of their training.

With this in mind, the CAT runs a Student Health and Wellbeing programme focusing on student's physical and mental wellbeing.

Good communication is central to student wellbeing, and we ask that parents and students let us know of any health conditions, injuries or concerns they have in order for us to offer the student appropriate support.

CAT students are allocated a mentor each year and this mentor should be your first point of contact if any issues arise that you need to discuss. Attendance, school/dance balance, nutrition and personal development are examples of the kinds of issues that are often discussed with mentors. Mid-year tutorial sessions happen every January where students will have the opportunity to speak with their mentor on a one-to-one basis about their progress or any concerns they may have. Parents are also welcome to attend the mid-year tutorials if they wish.

The CAT also has a student guidance counsellor who provides pastoral care to all students. Appointments can be requested with the CAT Counsellor by emailing cat@dancecity.co.uk.

Parents / Carers will receive a written progress report about their child as part of their ITP at the end of the first and third terms. All parents, carers and students are also invited to attend the CAT Parents Day in the second term where appointments can be made with the student's core weekday teachers.

We regard each child as an individual and understand that students may sometimes have issues outside of their CAT training that can affect their focus in the studio. Parents should feel free to contact their child's mentor with any concerns or information they feel CAT staff should be aware of.

As a general rule, students should always bring a bottle of water with them to every session, as well as some warm clothes to put on after class. Eating healthily is an essential part of being a dancer and diet plays an important part in getting the best out of your body in the studio. Information on nutrition is given to students at induction week and is available to other students upon request.

Injuries

Maintaining a healthy dance body is a key part of every student's training and there are many things that students can do to help prevent injury.

Students are less likely to sustain an injury if they arrive 15 minutes before class, to allow enough time for a thorough warm up. We would also encourage students to get into the routine of stretching after class, as this will improve their flexibility and reduce the chance of injury.

As part of the CAT Health and Wellbeing programme we have a physiotherapist who works individually with students throughout the year to help them prevent and manage their dance injuries.

CAT students practice floorwork.



Appointments can be requested with the CAT Physiotherapist by emailing cat@dancecity.co.uk.

Please Note: The CAT are unable to prioritise treatment for injuries sustained in activities outside of CAT classes. Any injuries or health concerns which are not related to your training on the CAT should be referred to your local GP.

For ongoing cases of injury, students are advised to visit their local GP in the first instance. Often this is the quickest way to have the injury examined and further treatments, such as physiotherapy, are often available free of charge on the NHS

It is important that students take responsibility for their own bodies, and they should keep CAT teachers informed of injuries, aches and pains at the start of each class. Students may also find it useful to use the following items for the prevention of injuries:

- Tennis Ball / Massage Ball / Foam Roller – for self-massage and reduction of tension in the thighs, calves and back.
- Theraband / elastic tubing (not clingy) – for strengthening the legs, ankles and feet.

The above are available to borrow from the CAT during class time.

If possible, students should still attend CAT classes when injured and if they are unable to participate, class time can still be used to do physiotherapy exercises, stretching and strengthening work. Watching can also be a very

good way of learning as well as staying up to date and involved in the classes and choreography.

Attendance



CAT students rehearse in the Theatre.

Having good attendance is vital for your training so that you can gain the most from your CAT classes and continue to progress and improve, with the support of your teachers. CAT staff strive to ensure the lowest injury rate possible and the most important factor in reducing the likelihood of injury is regular attendance at CAT classes. Regular attendance will also help students to increase their strength and flexibility over a period of time, enabling them to produce more complex movements in a safe way.

Weekend attendance is particularly important in the run up to a show in order that teachers can prepare the choreography properly for the performance. It is not possible for a group to fully rehearse their performance piece if every member of the group does not attend. CAT staff may decide that students with low attendance, who miss substantial amounts of rehearsal time, cannot be part of the show. Such a decision would be made, for professional reasons only, in the best interest of the group.

As attendance is so important, we monitor it very closely and every student needs to have gained 80% attendance at the end of each academic year in order to be invited back for a further years training as stipulated by the Department for Education. We will calculate your attendance for each technique (ballet, contemporary and creative) and these attendance figures will be shown on your reports.

If you have a prior commitment that clashes with a scheduled CAT class, or if you are ill and unable to attend, please let the CAT Coordinator know as soon as possible so we can mark the absence as being notified and let the relevant teaching staff know. When calculating student absence rates for each term all absences are counted, whether notified or not.

Student Expectations

CAT students are expected to:

- Understand that they are training as artistic athletes. The CAT is designed for young people with identified talent and should be considered as an elite training programme.
- Achieve a minimum of 80% attendance each academic year. Attendance will be calculated from all timetabled core classes, rehearsals and performances.
- Maintain a mature and focussed approach to CAT classes and rehearsals. CAT students will be treated as dance professionals and are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner.
- Commit to working hard in all classes, even if injured. This time can still be used productively.
- Inform their teachers of any pain or injury before or during class. Teachers on the CAT are experienced professionals and will be able to advise of the best course of action.
- Be appropriately dressed for all CAT classes and rehearsals. Teachers need to be able to see the body working. If students are inappropriately dressed, they may be unable to participate in class.
- Take responsibility to warm up before CAT classes and to carry out any extra individual work/programmes outside of class time. A good warm up is essential. Students will be taught at induction how to warm up, and this should be done 15 minutes before every class in order to avoid injury and to get the most out of the session.

- Be self-motivated and take responsibility for their own progress in dance. Any advice given by staff should be used as it will benefit student's progress.
- Treat all teachers and fellow classmates with respect at all times. Disrespectful or disruptive behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle in order to maximise the opportunities that the CAT has to offer. The demands that students place on their bodies while training will mean that they need to look after themselves carefully. Students should make sure they get enough sleep, eat well and bring a bottle of water to every class.
- Ask questions and to let us know of any problems. CAT staff are here to help you get the most out of your dance training, but we recognise that it can be hard work. If you inform us of any problems, we can support you and you should ask questions about anything that you are unsure of. Your first point of contact should be your mentor.

Important: If a CAT student is unable to find their CAT teacher or mentor (e.g. during a lunch break at weekends) and they require assistance, they may also approach any of the staff at Dance City. The Dance City Ticket Office is staffed during all opening hours and there is always a member of staff on Ticket Office who is a trained First Aider.



CAT students perform in the Theatre.

CAT Rules & Policies

In order to maintain standards, the Dance City CAT has adopted the following rules and policies:

Anti-Bullying Policy

Bullying is not tolerated on the CAT. Students are expected to show respect to each other and staff at all times.

We are committed to providing a supportive, caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the Dance City CAT. If bullying does occur, any student should be able to tell a staff member and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. CAT staff will follow policy guidelines.

Please contact a member of the CAT Team should you have any concerns or require more information (contact details on page 21). A full copy of the Anti-Bullying policy is available on request.

Eating Disorder Policy

Due to the nature of dance and the associations with body image, the National Dance CATs have initiated a policy regarding disordered eating and eating disorders. If a student is identified by staff or parents as being a cause for concern, national CAT policy will be followed.

Please contact a member of the CAT Team should you have any concerns or require more information (contact details on page 21). A full copy of the National Dance CATs policy on Eating is available on request.

Dismissal

Students can be dismissed from the CAT for the following reasons:

- Poor attendance.
- If CAT staff feel that they have not progressed sufficiently.
- Bad behaviour.

Attendance issues will initially be addressed directly with the student by their mentor. This will be considered a first warning. If attendance continues to be poor, a meeting will be arranged with the student's parent/carer and a member of the CAT management staff. This will be considered a second warning. Further poor attendance will lead to a third and final meeting and will result in the student being asked to leave the Centre for Advanced Training Programme.

Concerns over progress in dance training will be highlighted in student's progress reports and will be discussed with students and parents as required. Any bad behaviour or aggressive outbursts will lead to students being dismissed from the programme with immediate effect.

We encourage students to continue with their external dance providers when starting on the CAT, providing there is no direct conflict over attendance. However, due to injury rates and establishing good technique practice and a balanced musculature we would ask students to consider the adverse effect that other physical activity, e.g. regular gymnastics / freestyle competitions / sports, could have on their CAT training.

Travel Policy

There is a small fund available to assist CAT students to cover their travel costs and who travel 15 miles or more from their home to CAT classes, regardless of the method of transport used. In exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the CAT Manager, consideration may be given to payments which do not meet these criteria.

All students are eligible to apply irrespective of whether or not they claim a grant.

Financial assistance will be given to those who make a written application at any point throughout the academic year. Payment will be made for the term in which you make the request up until the end of the academic year. We require a written request to process your claim, as our finance department needs evidence that you have requested financial assistance before they can make a payment. Travel claims will be processed at the end of each term. Please apply by letter or by emailing the CAT Coordinator (contact details on page 21).

Distances are calculated using the AA Route Planner (<http://www.theaa.com/route-planner/index.jsp>). The student's home postcode will be entered as the starting location and the postcode of Dance City or Hummersknott Academy as the destination.

Attendance registers will be used to calculate the number of sessions a student has attended each term. The following amounts may be claimed for each class attended.

- 15 – 20 miles from home = a set fee of £2.00 for each class attended
- 21 – 30 miles from home = a set fee of £2.50 for each class attended
- 31 – 40 miles from home = a set fee of £3.00 for each class attended
- 41+ miles from home = a set fee of £3.50 for each class attended

Please Note:

- The distance we use to calculate payment is the distance the student travels from home to get to their CAT class. It is this one-way journey that determines the set fee paid for each session attended
- Payment will be made termly by BACS transfer.

Dance City CAT - Safe Touch Policy and Physical Correction in Class

Dancing is a physical skill and in order to help facilitate students learning, tutors may need to physically guide or correct a movement by appropriately used touch. Touch promotes kinaesthetic learning and can produce a quicker response to correction than other teaching tools. Physical corrections may be given in classes amongst a range of other teaching tools.

We ask all tutors to ensure they are following the guidelines below, when using physical correction in class:

- Use alternative means of instruction before touch (verbal, imagery etc.).
- Consider the appropriateness of proximity in activities.
- Always seek permission before touching.
- Is the touch appropriate, consider circumstances/context/reaction.
- Recognise discomfort, and act appropriately.
- Contact should be direct - purposeful and non-lingering.
- All instances of touch should have a learning outcome.

Social Networking & Mobiles in class – Code of Conduct

Increasingly students are using their mobiles phones and social networking sites such as Facebook, TikTok and Instagram and we appreciate that they can be a useful tool for sharing information and learning. However, it is also important to be aware of issues that can arise and make sure that all students understand and follow the guidelines below:

- Mobile Phones must be completely out of sight in class time. No checking during class is allowed.
- It is against CAT policy for any staff member to be a “friend” or “follow” any student on the Dance City CAT. Students who make a “request” will be declined.
- Students must always make sure that they are respectful and supportive of each other when communicating with fellow students through social networking sites. Any hurtful or derogatory comments that are posted about students or staff will be considered cyber-bullying and taken very seriously by CAT staff. Any student who is participating in cyber-bullying will be considered in breach of the CAT’s Code of Conduct and further action will be taken. Please see the Anti-Bullying Policy at the back of this handbook for further details.
- Students must seek permission to share any images, videos or content relating to the CAT on social media.

- Students are solely responsible for content posted on their personal accounts and are asked not to post any material that is obscene, defamatory, profane, libellous, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful or humiliating regarding the CAT students or anyone at Dance City.
- Students accounts will not be tagged in Dance City posts however students are welcome to share Dance City posted content on their personal accounts. All parents/guardians are asked to sign consent forms for their child to be included in any images which may be posted on social media.
- Dance City has a Facebook page, an Instagram page and a TikTok page that students can safely follow @dance_city_newcastle & @dancecitytrainingacademy

Withdrawals

The CAT requires a lot of commitment from students so they can achieve as much as possible from the unique and high-level training opportunities available to them. However, it is sometimes the case that students decide they do not wish to continue their dance training. This could be for personal reasons or because of career choices they make as they get older.

We request that the parent or carer of any student withdrawing from the CAT notifies us in writing. This enables us to close the student file and send appropriate confirmation to the Department for Education of the date that the student has finished their training.

If a student is dismissed from the programme because of a decision made by the CAT management team fees will be payable up until the date of dismissal.



CAT Students performing in Dance City Theatre

Beyond The CAT

Visits to Vocational Schools (Audition Toolkit)

Our main goal is to prepare CAT students for a career in contemporary dance.

In their graduation year (normally the year that students turn eighteen) we invite students to attend an organised visit to three vocational training schools in London and Leeds. This is subject to satisfactory student attendance, performance and suitability for these schools. The invitation is issued at the discretion of the Head of CAT, in collaboration with CAT teachers and staff. The CAT may cover the cost of travel and accommodation, dependent on individual student's attendance in the year prior to them being eligible to go on the Toolkit visit. If a student's attendance does not meet the 80% criteria, then payment for the Toolkit will not be subsidized by the CAT.

During these visits the students attend a mock audition, have the chance to look around the buildings, tour the schools, take part in question and answer sessions with senior staff from each school and meet teaching staff and students. These visits take place during the October half-term week.



Dance City CAT alumni

Extra Information for Parents/Carers

All staff working at Dance City and teaching on the CAT hold an enhanced certificate or have been cleared to work with children through the new Disclosure and Barring Service.

We understand that parents and carers make a huge commitment to their children when they are training on the CAT programme, and we would encourage parents and carers to communicate with us openly about any matter relating to their child's development.

If you feel that you need further advice or support, please feel free to contact the CAT staff listed below:

Staff Contacts

Laura Connolly, CAT Manager
laura.connolly@dancecity.co.uk
0191 269 5587

Sofie Scholten, CAT Coordinator
sofie.scholten@dancecity.co.uk

Ellie Trow, CAT Coordinator
ellie.trow@dancecity.co.uk

Annie Lewis, CAT Assistant
annie.lewis@dancecity.co.uk

CAT@dancecity.co.uk

Important: Please report all student absences, late notifications and urgent messages to this email address. This is a shared email inbox accessible to all CAT administration staff and will ensure that your email is picked up promptly.

Dance City Ticket Office
info@dancecity.co.uk
0191 261 0505

Please contact the Ticket Office to book tickets for performances and to make CAT fee payments (cash only).

Useful Websites

Dance City

www.dancecity.co.uk

Dance City Training Academy

www.dancecityta.co.uk

National Dance CATs Website

www.nationaldancecats.co.uk

There are nine Dance CATs around the country (including Dance City) which are funded by the Department for Education's Music and Dance Scheme. This website gives a national overview of CAT activity.

CAHMS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/your-guide-to-support/guide-to-camhs/>

The NHS services that assess and treat young people with emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties. CAHMS provide services that young people can access directly as well as support for parents/guardians.

B-eat (Beating Eating Disorders) Website

www.b-eat.co.uk

If you are struggling with food and eating, this website gives information to help you take the first steps in seeking medical advice and supports you in making the right decisions.

KIDSCAPE (Anti-Bullying) Website

www.kidscape.org.uk

Offers help and advice to parents, young people and professionals

Kickz Dancewear

www.kickzdancewear.co.uk

A local dance wear shop. Purchases can also be made online.

Planet Dance

www.planetdance.com

An online dance wear supplier.

