



National Governing Body of DanceSport, Member  
Organization of the US Olympic Committee, and the  
World DanceSport Federation



## **USA Dance Gender Neutral Announcement**

**Monday, September 16, 2019**

USA Dance plans to make a long overdue change in the coming months – all their sanctioned competitions will be gender neutral. This means that regardless of an athlete’s gender, they are welcome to compete in the role that best suits them, and that traditional and non-traditional couples will compete on the floor together in the same categories. This change will establish USA Dance nationally and internationally as an organization that affords all dancers the equality, dignity, and respect that they deserve.

In September of 2014, the Governing Council approved the addition of what was then termed “same sex” divisions to any USA Dance competitions, including National Qualifying Events (NQEs). It wasn’t widely publicized however, and left to the discretion of individual organizers as to whether to add same-sex categories. A few did but it wasn’t widespread and many people weren’t even aware of this change.

In the summer of 2018, the DanceSport Council (DSC) asked for volunteers who would work together to identify and address the necessary changes to make all USA Dance competitions fully integrated. The newly formed committee consisted of amateur and professional dancers of all experience levels and various gender identities. One of their first actions was to adopt the term “gender neutral” over “same sex” in recognition of the fact that a competitive couple might consist of various gender configurations. That term has now been adopted industry-wide as other organizations have followed USA Dance in making similar changes.

One of the highlights for the Gender Neutral Committee (GNC) has been to craft a USA Dance motion to the World DanceSport Federation (WDSF) proposing to change the definition of a couple from a “man” and a “woman” to “two athletes” to allow competitors of any gender configuration to compete, and to be able to represent their country at world championships. While the motion process is ongoing with the WDSF, the GNC has been encouraged by the positive feedback on its 12-month rollout plan for gender neutral implementation received from USA Dance administrators and by responses from other WDSF member federations.



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Some have questioned the long timeline without considering there are many steps to a thoughtful implementation, to ensure everyone within the organization and the industry understands and accepts this change. Moving forward, the GNC has three primary goals:

- 1) To craft costuming rules which provide guidance to dancers, while allowing athletes the freedom to express themselves;
- 2) To establish an adjudicator training session to be held before the 2020-2021 competition season;
- 3) To work with event organizers so that they can easily make the transition to being fully gender-neutral.

USA Dance is fully committed to the inclusion of all, as members and at events. On behalf of the entire USA Dance organization, the GNC is working to anticipate all of the issues that may come up as USA Dance implements gender neutrality. The GNC recognizes that some dancers may not have felt welcome within the current framework, and welcomes questions and comments from past, current, and prospective USA Dance members regarding the upcoming changes. By giving all voices an opportunity to be heard, USA Dance can make the necessary structural and cultural changes within the organization.

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