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Welcome to the MFA Theater Program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. This handbook is meant as a concise guide to the major policies and procedures governing the Department of Theater’s five MFA programs. For a more complete overview of the Department as a whole, see the Undergraduate Handbook:

https://content.hfa.umass.edu/theater/sites/default/files/assets/theaterhandbook917.pdf?_ga=2.254817224.1176042508.1527009604-1036117414.1525790875

We start this handbook with this statement, which we adopted in November of 2016:

**Theater as a Space of Connection and Dialogue**

During times of uncertainty and change, when people may be grieving and in turmoil, we, the members of the Department of Theater, believe theater is a place for finding inspiration and new ways to come together with others. Theater is a place where diverse and divergent ideas and perspectives can be shared and exchanged. In a climate of oppression and silence, we are committed, as artists, scholars, intellectuals, and activists to amplifying and affirming those perspectives. In the aftermath of the election and the upheaval it has left in its wake, we make a commitment to be a welcoming space, on our stages and in our classrooms, to hold the vital conversations about what it means to live in this country and be a member of this society. We promote an artistic and academic engagement that:

- Affirms and validates our shared humanity
- Respects all racial, ethnic, religious, gender, class, ability, and sexual identities
- Encourages empathy and compassion for all
- Practices human connection and engagement

Our doors are open to all members of the community who want to be a part of the conversation.
I. **General Policies**

**GRADUATE COMMITTEE AND CHAIR/ADVISOR (Years 1 and 2)**

Each MFA student has their own individually constituted Graduate Committee over the course of their first two years.

The purpose of a Graduate Committee is to provide collective mentorship for the student’s academic progress over the first two years. Each student meets with their Graduate Committee at their End of Semester Review (EOSR) to update the committee on their work, confirm upcoming coursework, and talk about future plans. Each EOSR is generally 45 minutes long and takes place during Reading Period. Dates for the EOSRs are announced early in the semester.

If there are concerns about a student’s academic progress, they will be addressed via the Graduate Committee.

Each student is assigned a primary Advisor from their area of study at the beginning of their first year. That Advisor serves as Chair of the student’s Graduate Committee. Otherwise, students choose their own Graduate Committees. By October 15 of Year 1, each student should report the composition of their Graduate Committee to the Graduate Program Director (GPD). By that date, you should have already invited other faculty members to join your committee.

We recommend Graduate Committees that total 4-5 people (including your Chair) and that represent all three areas of the department: Design, Dramaturgy, Performance. You may have one person on your committee from outside the Department. Some areas may have further stipulations or recommendations about who should be on your committee.

You can change members of your committee at any time, with the approval of the GPD. Normally, however, your Chair remains the same throughout your first two years.

The GPD attends all EOSRs and also serves informally as an advisor and mentor to all MFA students. However, the student’s primary academic relationship is with their Advisor/Graduate Committee Chair, as well as with members of their Graduate Committee and other faculty in their area.

The nature of our small Department means that you will have many professors, mentors and advisors of various kinds over the course of three years. It is not necessary that every mentor of potential importance to you be on your Graduate Committee.
THESIS COMMITTEE (Year 3)

In year 3, the Thesis Committee replaces the Graduate Committee. This is the committee that will supervise and evaluate your Thesis. The Thesis Committee may be the same as the Graduate Committee or may be partially or entirely different. Thesis Committees tend to be smaller: 3-4 members overall. Students choose their own Thesis Chairs. However, your Thesis Chair must be a professor in your MFA program of study.

You should start identifying and inviting Thesis Committee members by the end of Year 2. You must report the composition of your Thesis Committee to the GPD no later than September 5 of Year 3. The Thesis Committee is duly certified by UMass to grade you on your thesis. Each MFA Thesis is evaluated on an Accept/Do Not Accept basis – the equivalent of Pass/Fail.

Most MFA Theses, with the exception of those in Dramaturgy, are tied to mainstage production assignments. See section on Thesis Guidelines for more information on what constitutes a Thesis in your program area.

PRODUCTION ADVISORS

Separate from your committees, each MFA student is assigned a faculty advisor from their area for each mainstage production to which they are assigned. This advisor is responsible for mentoring and evaluating your work on that production. This is the primary person for you to check in with regarding your work on a particular show. In the three MFA Design programs, your Production Advisor is almost always your Graduate Committee Chair since there is only one faculty member for each program of study. In the MFA Directing and Dramaturgy programs, a Production Advisor on a given show is likely to vary from your Graduate Committee Chair.

SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND RENEWAL OF TA-SHIPS

Continuing in the MFA program is dependent on highly successful academic progress, as assessed both through your graded coursework and your Advisor’s and Graduate Committee’s observations of your progress of the Benchmarks.

While our goal is to support all students for the entirety of their 3 years here, TA-ships are contracted on a yearly basis. The Department reserves the right not to renew a TA-ship for a 2nd or 3rd year if there is lack of successful progress. TA-ships may also be terminated or non-renewed for neglect of duties associated with them.

Finally, please note that grades function differently in a graduate context than in an undergraduate context. The selective nature of our program and the semi-independent nature of many of the assignments presume a high level of performance, at “A” level. If you are getting
grades of B or below in the studios specific to your particular MFA program, you should take this as a warning about your lack of successful progress in the program.

WHAT CONSTITUTES GRADUATE CREDIT

To fulfill the requirements for the Theater MFA degree, you must fulfill all the requirements in your Program of Study, while also completing at least 60 credits of graduate-level work. We do not apply previous graduate credit to your studies here. Students must do the 60 credits “in residence” (while enrolled here), even if some of these credits take place off-campus as part of an internship.

These are UMass’ guidelines for what constitutes graduate credit:

1) Any 500-level or above course at any of the Five Colleges, including UMass
2) Any 400-level non-Theater course at any of the Five Colleges, including UMass, with permission of Theater GPD (up to 6 credits max)
3) Any 300-level or below course at any of the other Four Colleges, with permission of Theater GPD, and documentation from instructor, sent to the GPD at end of semester, that the student has completed additional or enriched work to constitute graduate-level credit.
4) Any 400-level or below UMass Theater class, taken under the auspices of an Independent Study (TH 596), with permission of GPD, and documentation from instructor, sent to the GPD at the end of the semester, that the student has completed additional or enriched work to constitute graduate-level credit.

Otherwise, undergraduate courses at UMass do not qualify as graduate level work.

Please note that Option #4 requires the student filling out an Independent Study contract, with the instructor as sponsor, prior to the end of the Add/Drop period in the given semester. We strongly recommend that such contracts be submitted by the end of the previous semester.

It is all right to take some classes for undergraduate credit. Just keep your Advisor and Graduate Committee informed and be aware that they cannot count toward the 60 credits you need for graduation.

DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC YEAR

Fully enrolled students are expected to be in residence here for the academic year, roughly September 1-December 20 of the Fall semester and January 20-May 15 of the Spring semester. Please consult UMass’ official Academic Calendar for specific dates for each year. Orientation activities in a student’s first year generally require arriving on campus by Wednesday of the last week in August. Occasionally, mainstage production assignments may require students being
on campus for part of January break. The Department is dark over the summer, and rarely do MFA students encounter a situation requiring their residency over a summer.

**SCHEDULE “A” VS. SCHEDULE “B” COHORT**

The core curriculum classes are offered in different sequence depending on which year you enter. We do this so that all our MFA students, regardless of which year they have entered, can take World Rep I & II together.

Students entering in Fall 2017, Fall 2020, and so on, are Schedule A.

Students entering in Fall 2018, Fall 2021, and so on, are Schedule B.

Please sample courses of study for how this sequencing effects your entering cohort.

**FILING FOR GRADUATION**

In order to “walk” in the May commencement ceremony, 3rd year students must “file for graduation,” which consists of filling out the Graduate School’s Degree Requirements Form and leaving a signed hard copy with the GPD no later than March 30 (specific date announced each year).

Obviously, in order to graduate, students also have to complete all coursework and successfully defend and submit their Thesis prior to Commencement. With the permission of the GPD, Thesis defenses may take place as late as the week leading up to Commencement, though in most cases we advise completing them earlier.

**ACADEMIC GRIEVANCES**

If you have academic or interpersonally related questions, comments, complaints, or concerns, you are encouraged to talk directly to your advisor, your GPD, or your Department Chair. If they can’t help you, they will help you find someone who can. If you cannot find a resolution at the Department level, the University of Massachusetts has established an academic grievance procedure for providing students with a fair, reasonable, and efficient method of addressing academic grievances. A copy of the procedure may be obtained from the Ombuds Office, the Provost’s Office, or the office of the Student Government Association.

**TITLE IX ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Title IX is a U.S. law that prohibits discrimination in education on the basis of gender. A
particular focus of Title IX is the prevention of sexual misconduct on college campuses. “Sexual misconduct” includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, and stalking.

To create a caring and compassionate University culture, it is important for all of us to understand the resources that are available and our Title IX reporting responsibilities. Sexual misconduct harms its victims and the entire campus community; it is in the interest of all of us to prevent such offenses.

As a student, you or a peer may be a potential target of Title IX-related violations. As a graduate student employee, you have Title IX reporting obligations as well. Under federal law, graduate student employees who are made aware of a possible incident of sexual harassment, sexual assault, or any other kind of sexual misconduct are required to report it. If you or someone you know needs to report a possible Title IX offense, please follow these procedures:

- If the accused is a student, the report should be made to Patricia Cardoso, Deputy Title IX Coordinator, Dean of Students Office (DOSO): 227 Whitmore Administration Building, telephone (413) 545-2684 or email at pcardoso@stuaf.umass.edu.

- If the accused is an employee, the report should be made to Kelly Burgess, Deputy Title IX Coordinator, Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EOD): 243 Lederle GRC Lowrise, telephone (413) 545-3464 or email at kellyb@admin.umass.edu.

In either case, you are encouraged to seek advice from the Chair or GPD if such a situation arises.

Graduate student employees are not confidential reporters and therefore cannot guarantee confidentiality to anyone reporting a Title IX issue. If a student or employee asks to discuss such a matter in confidence, graduate student employees must state that they may not be able to maintain confidentiality. If you are approached regarding a possible Title IX violation, you might respond in this manner: “While I’m not a confidential source, I respect your privacy rights and will work with the campus Title IX coordinator and other resource areas to provide support.”

If the individual reporting the incident to you chooses not to continue the conversation, you should encourage them to contact the Dean of Students Office, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, the UMass Police Department (UMPD), the Center for Women and Community (CWC), or the Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH). UMPD, CWC, and CCPH are permitted to maintain confidentiality.

Failing to report a possible Title IX offense deprives the campus community of valuable information and may prevent victims/survivors from getting the resources they need.
You can find extensive additional information about Title IX and the University’s resources and policies by navigating to the UMass Title IX webpage.

**DESIGN AND PRODUCTION MEETINGS**

The Department schedules Design & Production Meetings for all its mainstage shows on Thursday afternoons between 2:30-5:00 PM. These meetings are clearly indicated on the Department’s online calendar. If you are assigned to a show, you should plan to attend all relevant Thursday afternoon meetings. For this reason, please do not schedule any other classes or appointments during this time block.

See Appendix for a guide to the Department’s Design & Production Meeting process.

**SEASON SELECTION**

Every fall, the Department issues a Call for Proposals for shows for the following academic year’s mainstage season. The deadline is around Thanksgiving. All MFA students are encouraged to submit proposals that meet both their needs and the needs of the Department. Proposals that come from teams of MFA students will be looked upon kindly. The Call for Proposals may vary from year to year.

1st and 2nd year MFA Directors are each required to submit 3 season proposals. Directors must be in active consultation with their advisors about potential projects. Faculty advisors may provide specific guidelines for submissions – guidelines that take into account the learning objectives of individual directing students. Again, proposals from teams will be looked upon kindly.

While every effort will be made to assign an MFA director to one of the 3 shows they have proposed, directors are often asked to consider other projects or to submit additional proposals.

The proposals are considered by a Season Select Committee consisting of faculty, staff, and students. The Season Select Committee recommends a slate to the faculty, who vote on the season no later than spring break each year.

**AUDITIONS AND CASTING**

The Department of Theater has an open audition policy: anyone is welcome to audition. While Theater majors and minors are welcome and encouraged to audition, Department status is not a guarantee that someone will be cast above someone from outside the Department. Information about each audition will be announced, as far in advance as circumstances permit,
on the Department website, via email, social media, and printed flyers around the department, as well as any other methods deemed helpful. Directors, in consultation with their creative time, set the parameters for what they wish to see at auditions.

The Department Production Manager decides each year, based on the Department calendar, which mainstage shows conflict with each other. This information is made public, so those auditioning can make the best-informed decision about which shows to audition for.

**INTERNSHIPS**

The MFA programs in Costume Design, Design, and Directing all require 6 credits of internship. Students have undertaken their internships in a wide variety of places, ranging from the local to the international. Most students choose to complete their internships over one or more summers, though some students have completed them over January break or in smaller increments over the course of a semester. Talk with your Chair, Graduate Committee, and mentors about what would work for you.

You can complete this internship via two separate 3-credit internships or one 6-credit internship, following these standards:

- 120 hours of work = 3 credits.
- 240 hours of work = 6 credits.

We do not credit more than 6 credits of internship, even if you exceed 240 hours.

All internships are enrolled through the Independent Study contract for TH 698 (Practicum), with a relevant faculty member in your program area serving as your sponsor. Even if you complete the internship over the summer, the internship is still enrolled in either the Fall or Spring semester, so that the credits are covered by your tuition waiver.

Please make sure you complete the independent study contract for the internship prior to the summer or term in which you are undertaking it so that your sponsor is aware of your plans. You have flexibility as to which semester (Fall or Spring) you wish to apply the internship credits.

Some Lighting Design and Scenic Design & Technology also voluntarily complete internships. The above guidelines apply to them as well.

**TRAVEL MONEY**

UMass gives the Department a small amount of money each year to support MFA students’ travel to conferences, internships, and professional development opportunities. The amount of
money varies from year to year. Normally, we are able to make 4-5 awards on the scope of $250 each, on a first-come, first-serve basis. There is a simple process for applying for these funds, which the GPD announces early in the fall semester.

OFFICE SPACE

Every MFA student is given a desk in the graduate student office, FAC 201 for the entirety of the time that they are a student in good standing here, with a TA-ship. We do not assign specific desks but leave it up to the cohort to figure it out.

THE MAIL ROOM AND COPIER

The Department’s mail room is located in the Curtain Theater Lobby by the main office. You will be given key access to the mail room and will have a personal mail box there.

The mail room is home to the copier. You will be given a code that allows you access to the copier. The copier is for Department-related tasks only. Please do not give your copier code to any other person.

COMPLIMENTARY TICKET POLICY

Complimentary tickets for faculty, staff, graduate students, and guest artists/scholars: All receive two comps for Rand Theater shows, and 1 comp for Curtain Theater shows, unless they are part of the creative team, in which case they receive an additional comp for each performance to view their own work.

Please note that we do not pre-emptively reserve tickets for MFA students or creative team members, so you must reserve the comp tickets to which you may be entitled.
All MFA students, in all programs of study, are assessed on the basis of these 10 benchmarks, in addition to the ones specific to each MFA program.

- Ability to clearly and effectively communicate ideas and concepts with your team, orally and visually
- Ability to read, analyze, and contextualize a wide variety of dramatic texts and performance styles
- Ability to listen well to others, and to remain flexible, open, and in dialogue throughout a collaborative process
- Ability to manage time effectively and get your tasks done on time
- A strong grasp of the research process, and the ability to transform research into viable ideas and visions
- Knowledge of all steps of the theatrical creation process, from early conversations through the realization of the work in all its performance, design and technical aspects through to the stage when the audience takes part
- Ability to show leadership and vision in your discipline, and to be proactive and entrepreneurial in creating opportunity for yourself and others
- Willingness to take risks, to try new things, to “fail”
- Ability to be creative, controlled, and professional, even in stressful situations
- Ability to remain joyful, playful, and resourceful in collaborative situations: a positive sought-after presence.
TH 680, GROUP STUDIO: A practical workshop, centered on a collaborative project, in which designers, dramaturgs and directors create a performance from scratch. The objective is to develop a shared vocabulary and common experiences in the basic process of transforming text or idea into performed event. All members of the studio may be asked to adopt the perspective of actor, director, designer, dramaturg, or playwright. Class consists of cohort who entered that year. (First semester of first year).

TH 730, TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: The close reading of dramatic texts for contemporary production. Focus on finding original answers to directorial, design, and dramaturgical questions. Dramatic texts selected from a broad spectrum of world repertory. Class consists of cohort who entered that year. (First or second semester of first year).

TH 734, WORLD REPERTORY I: First in a two-part sequence aimed at providing MFAs in Dramaturgy, Directing, and Design with an understanding of theatre history, theatrical texts, and dramatic practices. Covers the ancients through the Renaissance from a global perspective. Part II covers neoclassicism through the contemporary moment. Class consists of entire MFA cohort. (First semester of first or second year.)

TH 793D, WORLD REPERTORY II: Second in a two-part sequence aimed at providing MFAs in Dramaturgy, Directing, and Design with an understanding of theatre history, theatrical texts, and dramatic practices. Covers neoclassicism through the contemporary moment. Class consists of entire MFA cohort. (First semester of second or third year).

TH 699T, THESIS. An advance project in the student’s program of study, consisting of both a practical component and a written component. Most are tied to mainstage shows. See guidelines for each individual area.
Requirements

CORE CREDITS (REQUIRED OF ALL MFA STUDENTS):
TH 680: Group Studio (3)
TH 730: Textual Analysis (3)
TH 793B: World Rep I (3)
TH 793D: World Rep II (3)
TH 699T: Thesis (3)

Subtotal: 15 core credits

AREA CREDITS (REQUIRED OF COSTUME STUDENTS)
TH 762: Costume Design Studio (5 x 3-6 credits, depending on project/show)
TH 593D: Draping and Patternmaking (3)
TH 698: Internship (6)

Subtotal: 24-39 area credits

TH 762 will vary as Costume Design Studio and Interdisciplinary Design Studio. Students will also be encouraged to take special topics such as Mask-Making, Visual Storytelling, Fabric Painting & Dyeing, and Color & Proportion in 2D Design.

Note: Mainstage production assignments are credited via TH 762.

TOTAL CREDITS REQUIRED TO GRADUATE: 60
Sample Course of Study
(will vary according to student)

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MFA COSTUME DESIGN BENCHMARKS

The Graduate Costume Design Program provides a workshop where students hone their skills in research, conceptualization, oral, written and visual communication, drawing, project management and the technical disciplines of the costume shop. Through course work and assignments directly linked to Department of Theater productions, students not only gain design experience, they develop a firm understanding of the technical rigor required to succeed in the professional world of theatrical costume.

1. The ability to analyze and visually interpret a variety of dramatic texts from a costume designer’s point of view.
2. Exposure to a broad range of performance styles and important works of the western canon, including but not limited to comedy, drama, musicals, opera, devised work, and dance.
3. The ability to clearly articulate visual concepts to a director, the design team, the actors, the producing theatre and the general public.
4. An understanding of the processes of research for costume design, including a coherent overview of the timeline of clothing history, and the tools needed to carry out quality research for any design project.
5. The project management skills needed to execute a costume design from start to finish, including but not limited to:
   a. Clear paperwork including costume plots and piece lists
   b. Time management and the ability to make decisions for the costume shop in an expedient manner
   c. The ability to accurately budget a project and maintain financial paperwork throughout the design process
6. Advanced drawing skills in a wide range of drawing, painting and digital media, resulting in a clear expression of ideas about the design, the production, the character, and the construction of the garment.
7. An understanding of the properties of fabric, including its drape, body, weight, mass, elasticity, memory, movement and its ability to be manipulated with paint and dye techniques.
8. A fundamental knowledge of pattern making, tailoring, draping and construction, with a more concentrated focus in one area of interest.
9. Exposure to a wide variety of craft and millinery techniques for costume and the corresponding safe practices in regard to the use of paints, chemicals and dyes in the costume shop.
10. A thorough understanding of the other design disciplines, if not the opportunity to participate in the design process as a scenic, lighting, sound or projection designer.
11. A respectful, professional demeanor, whether in a classroom, production, or shop context.
12. Punctuality, precision and responsibility for assigned duties and tasks.
13. Openness to constructive criticism, and the flexibility to adjust accordingly.
Goals of the MFA Thesis in Costume

The MFA in Costume final thesis takes place in the student’s third year and should reflect the synthesis and application of the student’s coursework, creative collaboration skills, production experience, and design skills over the three years of the degree.

While the specific play and production needs will vary, this thesis project should function as a stepping stone towards the student’s future career in theatre.

MFA Thesis Criteria

- In the third year each M.F.A. costume candidate must design a fully produced play in our theatrical season. The designer chooses a thesis committee that provides guidance and also serves as the evaluator of the thesis work. In addition, a written record of the project, an oral defense of the production, and a formal written thesis are required. The permanent record of the thesis project will follow a format prescribed by the Graduate College.

- The thesis requires a student to design a project of significant scope and vision based on his/her research and creative interests as well as on the learning goals identified by the members of the Graduate Committee.

- The creative process should demonstrate initiative, ownership, and leadership in the field of costume design, including in the ability to collaborate affectively with directors, dramaturgs, actors, stage managers, technicians, supervisors etc.

- Significant preparatory textual analysis work and creative research should clearly frame and inform the project.

- The formal written thesis should clearly articulate a combination of practice and reflection. It should include the following:
  A. Dramaturgy:
     a. Plot synopsis and scene breakdown reflecting your understanding of the play
     b. Your approach and philosophy behind your design and style choice(s) for the production; how your choices support the play
     c. Appropriate research of the period, theatrical costuming conventions, etc

  B. Design:
     a. Complete color costume sketches (no larger than 11"x17").
b. Research book and complete designer bible up to date to show final choices in all fabrics, etc.

c. Swatches: Appropriate fabric and trim choices for items that have been built as well as an idea of what you would ideally do if all could be built.

d. Fabrication sample of two techniques specific to your production

e. Technical drawings: Style lines, back views, hair, jewelry, masks, glasses, purses, shoes, make-up, millinery, embroidery patterns, related costume props, etc. This can also be done by way of research boards for things like hair and makeup.

f. Budget: proposed and final budget

g. An indication of setting (landscape of play), to demonstrate when speaking about your realized project. Please ask your set designer for a model photo and also include a production still for context.

C. Reflection

a. A final post-production evaluation of total production experience, objectively and honestly addressing what worked and did not work, and reviewing how vision was influence by process and how concept was enhanced or tempered by imagination and/or the practical realities of the rehearsal room

Thesis Process

By the middle of Year 2
Students must submit written production proposals for consideration by the Season Selection Committee, the Graduate Committee, and the faculty at large.

By end of Year 2
Students should begin the process of assembling a Thesis Committee, a distinct body from the Graduate Committee (though there is often overlap). The Thesis Committee must include a Chair from the Design Faculty and a minimum of two additional faculty members, one of whom may be from outside the Theater Department.

During Year 3
Students must design their thesis production. Before the end of the spring semester, students must submit the written component of the thesis to their Thesis Committee members for approval. Students should build in a process for one round of feedback from the Thesis Committee and a final approval round before the Oral Defense.

Students must schedule a Final Oral Defense of their work with all Thesis Committee members. During the Oral Defense, students will be asked to summarize the project and what s/he learned in the process. Committee members may ask the student to defend any part of the thesis and answer questions. The Thesis Committee then meets in camera to vote on the student’s thesis and defense. The committee may vote to approve the thesis as it stands, approve with revisions, deny with revisions, or outwardly deny the project’s approval by a majority vote.
Thesis Proposal

The MFA Costume Thesis proposal should be a comprehensive document that includes all of the following:

- A descriptive title
- Goals or desired outcomes for the production
- Framing research question(s) and/or design approach
- A detailed description of the production in terms of scope and vision
- Supporting visuals, fabrics, and other design elements, as appropriate
- An annotated bibliography of relevant sources, if appropriate

Be sure to provide ample and workable turnaround times. It is highly recommended that you check with your Committee members on their availability and schedules before setting a timeline.
In addition to these Departmental protocols, you are responsible for completing the Graduate School’s graduation requirements. See
www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/checklist_for_masters_degrees.pdf

YEAR 2
☐ Invite Members and Assemble Thesis Committee
☐ Identify thesis production, in collaboration with faculty advisors

YEAR 3
☐ Finalize Thesis Committee by first day of Fall semester
☐ Submit written thesis proposal to Thesis Committee for approval
☐ Design thesis production
☐ Attend Fall End of Semester Reviews (EOSRs) with Thesis Committee
☐ Schedule feedback/approval deadlines and Final Oral Defense
☐ Invite Committee members to necessary events (give advanced notice)
☐ Submit written thesis to Thesis Committee for feedback
☐ Submit written thesis to Thesis Committee for final approval before Oral Defense
☐ Oral Defense
☐ Submit paperwork to Graduate School for graduation and degree
Department of Theater
MFA Directing
Requirements and Sample Course of Study

Requirements

CORE CREDITS (REQUIRED OF ALL MFA STUDENTS):
TH 680: Group Studio (3)
TH 730: Textual Analysis (3)
TH 793B: World Rep I (3)
TH 793D: World Rep II (3)
TH 699T: Thesis (3)

Subtotal: 15 core credits

AREA CREDITS (REQUIRED OF DIRECTING STUDENTS)
TH 750: Directing Studio (5 x 3-6 credits, depending on project/show)
TH 760, 761, or 762: Scenic, Lighting, or Costume Studio (3)*
TH 797: Performance Theory (3)
TH 698: Internship (6)

*Must be taken within first 3 semesters.

Note: Mainstage production assignments are credited via TH 750. Normally, students assistant direct in Year 1, and direct in Years 2 & 3.

Subtotal: 27-42 area credits

TOTAL CREDITS REQUIRED TO GRADUATE: 60
Sample Course of Study
(will vary according to student)

“A Schedule” Cohort

Fall, Year 1
Group Studio (3)
Textual Analysis (3)
Directing Studio (3)

Spring, Year 1
Directing Studio (3)
Production Assignment (3)
Design Studio (3)
Elective (3)

Summer: Internship?
credited to Fall, Year 2

Fall, Year 2
Directing Studio (3)
Production Assignment (3)
World Rep I (3)
Elective (3)

Spring, Year 2
Directing Studio (3)
Performance Theory (3)
Elective (3)

Summer: Internship?
credited to Fall, Year 3

Fall, Year 3
Internship (6)
World Rep II (3)
Elective (3)

Spring, Year 3
Directing Studio (3)
Thesis Show (3)
Elective (3)

“B Schedule” Cohort

Fall, Year 1
Group Studio (3)
Directing Studio (3)
World Rep I (3)

Spring, Year 1
Textual Analysis (3)
Directing Studio (3)
Production Assignment (3)
Elective (3)

Summer: Internship?
credited to Fall, Year 2

Fall, Year 2
World Rep II (3)
Directing Studio (3)
Design Studio (3)
Elective (3)

Spring, Year 2
Directing Studio (3)
Production Assignment (3)
Performance Theory (3)

Summer: Internship?
credited to Fall, Year 3

Fall, Year 3
Internship (6)
Elective (3)
Elective (3)

Spring, Year 3
Directing Studio (3)
Thesis Show (3)
Elective (3)
MFA DIRECTING  BENCHMARKS

INTRODUCTION

Students are accepted into the MFA Directing Program with the understanding that they have a fundamental grasp of the directing process, some practical directing experience, evidence of the ability to be an artistic leader, and a commitment to honing their craft.

The goal of our program is to prepare students to direct professionally and/or on the college level in an academic situation. For some students this will include a focus on pedagogy and intersections between directing and teaching. With this as our basic focus, the progress of each student will be measured against the benchmarks listed below. In addition, each student must meet regularly with their primary advisor for ongoing informal evaluation; meet once for a midsemester review with selected advisors; and once more for an end-of-semester review with their full committee during each semester they are enrolled.

It is expected that by striving toward the prescribed benchmarks, regularly communicating with advisors and participating in the review process, each student will generate a body of information that will enable both the student and his/her committee to determine if reasonable progress toward the goals of the program are being made.

BENCHMARKS

Each student must be able to demonstrate a satisfactory proficiency with regard to the following directorial responsibilities:

I. Action & Storytelling

- Identifying and illuminating “what happens” in the text and making it “happen in front of us” by creating a structure of information, impressions, images and ideas through the manipulation of all available theatrical elements.

II. Analysis & Conceptualization

- Breaking down the text, understanding its dramaturgical structure and significance, how it works as a live event, and conceiving a vision for presentation of discoveries.

III. Organization & Preparation

- Extrapolation and planning of the rehearsal process, the moment-to-moment life of the event, and the overall experience for actors and audience.
IV. Working with Collaborators

- Exchanging images, ideas and intuitions with performers, designers and other members of the production team in a manner that enables those involved to contribute fully as creative partners.

V. Solicitation of Support

- Enlisting the energy, resources, creativity and “buy-in”, of performers, production team, granting organizations, and anyone else capable contributing to the success of the project.

VI. Expanding & Sharing Knowledge

- Continuing to expand knowledge of the various theater arts, the Humanities, areas of specialization, and the world at large. Imparting an understanding of text, related material, process, and techniques in a clear, concise and repeatable manner.

VII. Networking & Marketing

- Presentation of professional/artistic self for colleagues, employers, granting organizations and audience in various formats and settings including portfolios, interviews, letters, press and advertisements.

VIII. Measurement

- To ensure that there are sufficient opportunities to demonstrate “satisfactory proficiency” in the above areas, students will be asked to do the following:

1. Direct one project each semester they are enrolled. (Details and substitutions for this project are to be worked out with the student’s primary advisor.)
2. Submit all supporting materials for their semester project including, but not limited to, production plan, director’s prompt book, directorial notes, post production observations, grant and publicity materials (if applicable) to their primary advisor.
3. Discuss and present work from semester projects in Directing Studio prior to public viewing.
4. Complete all directing assignments in Directing Studio.
5. Fulfill their teaching assignments or other assistantship and open their class to their primary advisor for observation; as well as submit course materials for evaluation.
Goals of the MFA Thesis in Directing

The MFA in Directing final thesis takes place in the student’s third year and should reflect the synthesis and application of the student’s coursework and creative collaboration skills, including production experience, over the three years of the degree.

While the specific play and production needs will vary, this thesis project should function as a stepping stone towards the student’s future career in theatre.

MFA Thesis Criteria

• In the third year each M.F.A. directing candidate must direct a fully produced play in our theatrical season. The director chooses a thesis committee that provides guidance and also serves as the evaluator of the thesis work. In addition, a written record of the project, an oral defense of the production, and a formal written thesis are required. The permanent record of the thesis project will follow a format prescribed by the Graduate College.

• The thesis requires a student to direct a project of significant scope and vision based on his/her research and creative interests as well as on the learning goals identified by the members of the Graduate Committee. Although the graduate student may submit potential scripts for consideration, the specific project will be approved by the members of the Graduate Committee and the entire voting faculty.

• The production should reflect thinking and vision that move beyond coursework and previous directing experience.

• The creative process should demonstrate initiative, ownership, and leadership in the field of directing, including in the ability to collaborate affectively with designers, dramaturgs, actors, stage managers, technicians, etc.

• The student’s preparatory textual analysis work should clearly frame and drive the project. Both the preparatory and the rehearsal processes should be rigorous, well-planned, well-conceived, and clear in the larger discourses or ideas with which the play and the production are engaging.

• The formal written thesis should clearly articulate a combination of practice and reflection. It should include the following:
  A. Strong analysis of the play and research of the period, playwright, theatrical conventions, etc.
B. A clear and well-argued statement of the production vision or approach and how that approach guided the design, casting and rehearsal processes
C. A final post-production evaluation of total production experience, objectively and honestly addressing what worked and did not work, and reviewing how vision was influence by process and how concept was enhanced or tempered by imagination and/or the practical realities of the rehearsal room

Thesis Process

By the middle of Year 2
Students must submit written production proposals for consideration by the Season Selection Committee, the Graduate Committee, and the faculty at large.

By end of Year 2
Students should begin the process of assembling a Thesis Committee, a distinct body from the Graduate Committee (though there is often overlap). The Thesis Committee must include a Chair from the Directing Faculty and a minimum of two additional faculty members, one of whom may be from outside the Theater Department.

During Year 3
Students must direct their thesis production. Before the end of the spring semester, students must submit the written component of the thesis to their Thesis Committee members for approval. Students should build in a process for one round of feedback from the Thesis Committee and a final approval round before the Oral Defense.

Students must schedule a Final Oral Defense of their work with all Thesis Committee members. During the Oral Defense, students will be asked to summarize the project and what s/he learned in the process. Committee members may ask the student to defend any part of the thesis and answer questions. The Thesis Committee then meets in camera to vote on the student’s thesis and defense. The committee may vote to approve the thesis as it stands, approve with revisions, deny with revisions, or outwardly deny the project’s approval by a majority vote.

Thesis Proposal
The MFA Directing Thesis proposal should be a comprehensive document that includes all of the following:

• A descriptive title
• Goals or desired outcomes for the production
• Framing thesis question or directorial approach
• A detailed description of the production in terms of scope and vision
• An annotated bibliography of relevant sources, if appropriate

Be sure to provide ample and workable turnaround times. It is highly recommended that you check with your Committee members on their availability and schedules before setting a timeline.
In addition to these Departmental protocols, you are responsible for completing the Graduate School’s graduation requirements. See
www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/checklist_for_masters_degrees.pdf

YEAR 2

☐ Invite Members and Assemble Thesis Committee
☐ Identify thesis production, in collaboration with faculty advisors

YEAR 3

☐ Finalize Thesis Committee by first day of Fall semester
☐ Submit written thesis proposal to Thesis Committee for approval
☐ Direct thesis production
☐ Attend Fall End of Semester Reviews (EOSRs) with Thesis Committee
☐ Schedule feedback/approval deadlines and Final Oral Defense
☐ Invite Committee members to necessary events (give advanced notice)
☐ Submit written thesis to Thesis Committee for feedback
☐ Submit written thesis to Thesis Committee for final approval before Oral Defense
☐ Oral Defense
☐ Submit paperwork to Graduate School for graduation and degree
Requirements

CORE CREDITS (REQUIRED OF ALL MFA STUDENTS):
TH 680: Group Studio (3)
TH 730: Textual Analysis (3)
TH 793B: World Rep I (3)
TH 793D: World Rep II (3)
TH 699T: Thesis (3)

Subtotal: 15 core credits

AREA CREDITS (REQUIRED OF DRAMATURGY STUDENTS)
TH 729/797: Dramaturgy Workshop/Special Topics (5 x 3-6 credits, depending on project/show) (includes Performance Theory)
TH 750: Directing Studio (3)
TH 698: Internship (6)

Subtotal: 24-39 area credits

Note: Mainstage production assignments are credited via TH 729.

Special Topics in Dramaturgy may include: Adaptation, Avant-Garde Theater, Multicultural Theater, Performance Theory Production Dramaturgy, Translation.

TOTAL CREDITS REQUIRED TO GRADUATE: 60
Sample Course of Study  
(Will vary according to student)

“A Schedule” Cohort

Fall, Year 1
- Group Studio (3)
- Textual Analysis (3)
- Dramaturgy Workshop/Special Topic (3)

Spring, Year 1
- Dramaturgy Workshop/Special Topic (3)
- Production Assignment (3)
- Directing Studio (3)
- Elective (3)

Summer: Internship?  
credited to Fall, Year 2

Fall, Year 2
- Dramaturgy Workshop/Special Topic (3)
- Production Assignment (3)
- World Rep I (3)
- Elective (3)

Spring, Year 2
- Dramaturgy Workshop/Special Topic (3)
- World Rep II (3)
- Elective (3)

Summer: Internship?  
credited to Fall, Year 3

Fall, Year 3
- Internship (6)
- Production Assignment (3)
- Elective (3)

Spring, Year 3
- Dramaturgy Workshop/Special Topic (3)
- Thesis Show or Project (3)
- Elective (3)

“B Schedule” Cohort

Fall, Year 1
- Group Studio (3)
- Dramaturgy Workshop/Special Topic (3)
- World Rep I (3)

Spring, Year 1
- Textual Analysis (3)
- Dramaturgy Workshop/Special Topic (3)
- Production Assignment (3)
- Elective (3)

Summer: Internship?  
credited to Fall, Year 2

Fall, Year 2
- Dramaturgy Workshop/Special Topic (3)
- Directing Studio (3)
- Elective (3)

Spring, Year 2
- Dramaturgy Workshop/Special Topic (3)
- Production Assignment (3)
- Elective (3)
- Elective (3)

Summer: Internship?  
credited to Fall, Year 3

Fall, Year 3
- World Rep II (3)
- Internship (6)
- Production Assignment (3)

Spring, Year 3
- Dramaturgy Workshop/Special Topic (3)
- Thesis Show or Project (3)
- Elective (3)
MFA DRAMATURGY BENCHMARKS

INTRODUCTION

As dramaturgy is a diverse, fluid and ever-changing field, the UMass graduate program in dramaturgy prepares students for a range of careers including as resident and freelance dramaturgs, literary managers, artistic producers, curators, scholars, adaptors, translators, and educators. Some of our students decide to pursue a Ph.D. after leaving UMass.

When evaluating students’ progress in the program, the faculty looks for significant growth in the benchmarks listed below. Although there is no quantitative determinant of what constitutes significant growth, the overriding goal is to achieve a professional level of competence by the end of the three-year residency. That is something the faculty can assess, based on the student’s progressive mastery of the program’s benchmarks.

Acceptance into the program conveys the faculty’s sense of the students’ potential to achieve the program’s overriding goal. Once in the program, students’ continuation from year to year is contingent on the demonstration of reasonable progress towards achieving those goals. Such progress is determined by faculty review and will be communicated to students by their advisors over the course of every semester and, again, by their full committee, during the end of semester reviews (EOSRs).

BENCHMARKS

I. Initiative/Leadership and Producing Skills

- Students are expected to gain experience as producing artists, with the understanding that dramaturgs often spearhead projects and become a driving force in theater companies, serving as founders, producers, curators, artistic directors, creators, visionaries, etc.
- Students should be able to coordinate and moderate events in conjunction with productions, including lectures, discussions, panels and exhibits, and their thesis projects.

II. Conceptual/Analytic Skills

- Students are expected to develop and hone the following conceptual and analytical skills:
  1. Facility working with a variety of dramatic texts, whether as new plays-in-development or as precursors to a specific production; and the ability to make meaningful, constructive contributions to either of these processes
  2. The ability to think analytically, conceptually and critically about texts from diverse periods and cultures
3. The ability to balance an understanding of the text (its literary, historic, social context) with a fresh, original approach to the material
4. An understanding of the production implications of specific dramaturgical choices

III. Communication Skills

• Students must be able to expressing themselves clearly and persuasively in oral and written formats.

a) Oral Format

1. Interact effectively with members of a production team.
2. Present theoretical, analytical and critical materials concisely and effectively in one-on-one and/or group settings.
3. Distill the product of research into its essentials for clear and concise presentation in one-on-one and/or group setting. Listen closely and consider carefully the ideas of one's production collaborators.
4. Give effective public addresses and conduct educationally viable public discussions to diverse audiences (at team meetings, talk-back sessions, class discussions).
5. Give effective constructive feedback when working with playwrights and directors on new plays.
6. Perform one's assigned teaching responsibilities effectively—either as discussion leaders in TH100, 105, 120, 130, as full instructors, or in other opportunities that may arise.
7. Collaborate effectively in the selection of a production season.

b) Written Format

1. Students must demonstrate proficiency and competence in:
   • expository writing—including syntax, grammar, organization, and style
   • production criticism (journalistic model and TJ scholarly journal model)
   • extended writing (thesis) (See Thesis Guidelines)

2. Students are expected to develop skills in at least one of these special forms of writing:
   • playwriting for stage, radio or screen
   • scholarly writing
   • translation
   • adaptation
   • grant-writing
   • performance documentation and archival work
3. Students must be able to prepare:
   a) Production materials
      Production book (also called a protocol) for the use of the dramaturg, director and other artists involved in a production
      Actor packets
      Rehearsal room displays and presentations
   
   b) Educational materials
      Study guides and classroom materials

   c) Audience/production materials
      • Program books—including research, writing, editing including visual design—collaborating with directors and graphic designers
      • General audience guides, either on-line or in print
      • Effective and visually impressive lobby displays that complement, enhance and expand the experience of the production

IV. Teaching

• Students are expected to become adept at teaching, and to make incremental progress so that they become able to potentially plan and teach a full course in their final year. Students will be evaluated on their increasing levels of sophistication in the following skills:
   1. Syllabus and/or lesson planning
   2. Time management
   3. Timely and effective grading and correspondence/responses to students
   4. Interacting with students effectively in and out of class, including maintaining regular office hours
   5. Meeting with faculty advisors regularly to discuss, plan, reflect on and improve pedagogical philosophy and skills and to plan applicable presentation of research/lecturing on specific topics

V. Research

• Students are expected to become adept at locating, assimilating and organizing information for oral and written presentation. In that respect, they should work comfortably and effectively with the basic tools of research:
   a) library
   b) internet
   c) off-site microfilm and special collections

• Students are expected to hone their ability to synthesize theoretical research and apply it to their work as dramaturgs.
VI. Workstyle and Professionalism

- Students will be evaluated on their workstyle and professionalism, including:
  1. Punctual and regular attendance at meetings
  2. Meeting all deadlines
  3. Understanding and encouraging the collaborative nature of theatrical production
  4. Communicating effectively and appropriately across various forms (emails, in person, in written proposals etc)
  5. Networking with faculty advisors, peers, others across campus, and within the larger field of the profession
  6. Multitasking, planning, and taking initiative
  7. Interacting with others with equanimity
  8. Practice self-care by demonstrating and taking responsibility for their own emotional and intellectual maturity
Goals of the MFA Thesis in Dramaturgy

The MFA in Dramaturgy final thesis takes place in the student’s third year and should reflect the synthesis and application of the student’s coursework over the three years of the degree.

While the subject, scope, and methodology of the thesis will vary depending on the student’s interests and skills, this thesis project should function as a stepping stone towards the student’s future career in theatre.

MFA Thesis Criteria

- It should be ambitious in scope. The thesis requires a student to conceive of, manage, and execute a project of significant scope and vision based on his/her research, dramaturgical, and/or creative interests.
- It should reflect thinking and vision that moves beyond coursework and into the creative, scholarly, and/or professional realm.
- It should demonstrate initiative, ownership, and leadership in the field of dramaturgy, broadly defined.
- It should be rigorous, well-planned, well-conceived, and clear in the larger discourses or ideas with which it engages. The student’s research questions should clearly frame and drive the project.
- It should involve a combination of theory and practice, practice and reflection. For example, a thesis might include a performance, curation of a festival or event, or a new translation and adaptation PLUS a significant piece of scholarly writing that accompanies the practical work. The written portion must engage with relevant scholarly literature and theories.

Thesis Process

By end of Year 1
Students should begin to identify research and/or creative areas of interest to them and take courses and focus their work accordingly.

By end of Year 2
Students should begin the process of assembling a Thesis Committee, a distinct body from the Graduate Committee (though there is often overlap). The Thesis Committee must include a Chair from the Dramaturgy Faculty and a minimum of two additional faculty members, one of whom may be from outside the Theater Department. The student should start applying for funding and secure necessary partners as early as possible.
By Fall of Year 3  
Students must submit a written proposal (see below) to their Thesis Committee for approval. The student drafts the proposal in consultation with his/her Chair. The proposal must be approved by all of the committee members before it may proceed so rigorous revision may form part of this process.

By end of Year 3  
Students must manage and execute their Thesis Project. Before the end of the Spring semester, students must submit the written component of the thesis to their Thesis Committee members for approval. Students should build in a process for one round of feedback from the Thesis Committee and a final approval round before the Oral Defense.

Students must schedule a Final Oral Defense of their work with all Thesis Committee members. During the Oral Defense, students will be asked to summarize the project and what s/he learned in the process. Committee members may ask the student to defend any part of the thesis and answer questions. The Thesis Committee then meets in camera to vote on the student’s thesis and defense. The committee may vote to approve the thesis as it stands, approve with revisions, deny with revisions, or outwardly deny the project’s approval by a majority vote.

Thesis Proposal  
The MFA Dramaturgy Thesis proposal should be a comprehensive document that includes all of the following:

• A descriptive title  
• Goals or desired outcomes for the project  
• Framing research question(s)  
• A detailed description of the project in terms of scope and vision  
• An annotated bibliography of relevant sources  
• As detailed a timeline as possible, including major and minor project deadlines and events as well as a plan for the committee’s input and review process across the project*  
• Budget  
• How (if at all) the project will interface with the Department’s season or other campus, Five College, or external events  
• Partners and funding sources, as appropriate

* Be sure to provide ample and workable turnaround times. It is highly recommended that you check with your Committee members on their availability and schedules before setting a timeline.
In addition to these Departmental protocols, you are responsible for completing the Graduate School’s graduation requirements. See
www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/checklist_for_masters_degrees.pdf

YEAR 2

☐ Invite Members and Assemble Thesis Committee
☐ Devise thesis project, in conversation with faculty advisors
☐ Secure funds/apply for grants, as needed

YEAR 3

☐ Finalize Thesis Committee by first day of Fall semester
☐ Submit written thesis proposal to Thesis Committee for approval
☐ Submit a signed thesis outline to Graduate School (within 4 months of anticipated defense)
☐ Once approved, manage and execute thesis project
☐ Attend Fall End of Semester Reviews (EOSRs) with Thesis Committee
☐ Schedule feedback/approval deadlines and Final Oral Defense
☐ Invite Committee members to necessary events (give advanced notice)
☐ Submit written thesis to Thesis Committee for feedback
☐ Submit written thesis to Thesis Committee for final approval before Oral Defense
☐ Oral Defense
☐ Submit paperwork to Graduate School for graduation and degree
Department of Theater
MFA Lighting Design
Requirements and Sample Course of Study

Requirements

CORE CREDITS (REQUIRED OF ALL MFA STUDENTS):
TH 680: Group Studio (3)
TH 730: Textual Analysis (3)
TH 793B: World Rep I (3)
TH 793D: World Rep II (3)
TH 699T: Thesis (3)

Subtotal: 15 core credits

AREA CREDITS (REQUIRED OF LIGHTNG STUDENTS)
TH 761: Lighting Design Studio (6 x 6 credits)

Subtotal: 36 area credits

TH 761 may meet as Lighting Design Studio or Interdisciplinary Design Studio.

Note: Mainstage production assignments are credited via TH 761.

TOTAL CREDITS REQUIRED TO GRADUATE: 60
Sample Course of Study  
 *(will vary according to student)*

**“A Schedule” Cohort**

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<tr>
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<th>Fall, Year 1</th>
<th>Spring, Year 1</th>
<th>Fall, Year 2</th>
<th>Spring, Year 2</th>
<th>Fall, Year 3</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Group Studio (3)</td>
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<td>Lighting Design Studio (3)</td>
<td>Lighting Design Studio (3)</td>
<td>World Rep II (3)</td>
<td>Lighting Design Studio (3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Textual Analysis (3)</td>
<td>Production Assignment (3)</td>
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<td>Elective (3)</td>
<td>Thesis Show (3)</td>
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<td>Lighting Design Studio (3)</td>
<td>World Rep I (3)</td>
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**“B Schedule” Cohort**

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<td>Lighting Design Studio (3)</td>
<td>Lighting Design Studio (3)</td>
<td>Lighting Design Studio (3)</td>
<td>World Rep I (3)</td>
<td>Lighting Design Studio (3)</td>
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<td>Production Assignment (3)</td>
<td>Production Assignment (3)</td>
<td>Production Assignment (3)</td>
<td>Elective (3)</td>
<td>Thesis Show (3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lighting Design Studio (3)</td>
<td>World Rep I (3)</td>
<td>Elective (3)</td>
<td>Elective (3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Production Assignment (3)</td>
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MFA LIGHTING DESIGN BENCHMARKS

The graduate program in Lighting Design prepares students to compete effectively for professional and educational positions in the areas of lighting design and technology. Students are expected to demonstrate craftsmanship and professionalism in all aspects of their work, and to bring an attitude of openness and enthusiasm to their studies and collaborations, both with fellow students and with faculty. Lighting design requires minute attention to detail as well as artistry, and significant collaborative and communicative skills. Students are expected to develop in all areas during their residency.

When evaluating students' progress in the program, the faculty looks for significant growth in the benchmarks listed below. The overriding goal is to achieve a professional level of competence by the end of a three-year residency. Acceptance into the program conveys the faculty's sense of the students' potential to accomplish this.

BENCHMARKS

I. Personal design skills

- The ability to respond to theater and to performance events in an imaginative, visual and collaborative way
- The ability to read, research and understand a wide variety of texts, and to respond creatively and visually
- The ability to watch or listen and understand a variety of performance events, and to respond creatively and visually
- The ability to observe and respond to light in the world, in research and on stage
- The ability to respond to other visuals with light – to the space, to the costumes, to the people
- The ability to make choices for lighting a stage production based on text, space, research and your own creative responses.

II. Collaborative design skills

- The ability to communicate your ideas, both in person and on paper, to the rest of the creative team
- The ability to understand and integrate the ideas of the rest of the creative team into your own design
- The ability to listen well and be flexible about your choices
- The ability to communicate your ideas clearly, on person and on paper, to the technical staff
- The ability to be creative and calm under pressure and in control as you work.
- The ability to see and to discuss what you are creating in the theater space, and to respond in a creative and flexible way
III. Craftsmanship

- The ability to communicate clearly through your drafting and the relevant paperwork, both on paper and on a computer
- The ability to work in multiple venues with multiple working styles, and the flexibility to use varying levels of resources and technology in your designs
- Developing an understanding of the industry standards for lighting design drafting, and for technologies
- Developing skills for making choices in angle, color, instrument type that truly reflect your vision
- Develop skills for working efficiently in the theater space, both during rehearsal, focus and cueing

IV. Professionalism

- The ability to meet deadlines regularly
- Punctual attendance at all relevant design and production meetings, work calls, technical and dress rehearsals.
- Courteousness and generosity with colleagues and collaborators, both technical and creative

V. Technical skills

- The ability to understand the technical needs of your own designs and how they might be accomplished
- The ability to work in the shop and in the theater on productions designed by fellow students and faculty
- The ability to learn and respond to new technologies, both in the theater and in the design studio

VI. Teaching skills

- The ability to effectively teach undergraduate courses during your residency period
- The ability to work well with undergraduate students as a mentor and as a collaborator
- The ability to design a course or part of a course, and to respond to other students work in a constructive way

VII. Presentation
• Developing an industry standard portfolio and website over the course of the residency
• Developing skills at presenting yourself, both as a potential employee and as a collaborator
Goals of the MFA Thesis in Lighting

The MFA in Lighting final thesis takes place in the student’s third year and should reflect the synthesis and application of the student’s coursework, creative collaboration skills, production experience, and design skills over the three years of the degree.

While the specific play and production needs will vary, this thesis project should function as a stepping stone towards the student’s future career in theater.

MFA Thesis Criteria

- In the third year each M.F.A. lighting candidate must design a fully produced play in our theatrical season. The designer chooses a thesis committee that provides guidance and also serves as the evaluator of the thesis work. In addition, a written record of the project, an oral defense of the production, and a formal written thesis are required. The permanent record of the thesis project will follow a format prescribed by the Graduate College.

- The thesis requires a student to design a project of significant scope and vision based on his/her research and creative interests as well as on the learning goals identified by the members of the Graduate Committee.

- The creative process should demonstrate initiative, ownership, and leadership in the field of lighting design, including in the ability to collaborate affectively with directors, dramaturgs, actors, stage managers, technicians, supervisors etc.

- Significant preparatory textual analysis work and creative research should clearly frame and inform the project.

- The formal written thesis should clearly articulate a combination of practice and reflection. It should include the following:
  A. Dramaturgy:
     a. Lighting analysis and scene breakdown reflecting your understanding of the play
     b. The World of the Play. Your approach and philosophy behind your design and style choice(s) for the production; how your choices support the play
     c. The World of the Play. Scenic Design, Costume Design and Sound Design. Include scenic sketches, model photos, and costume renderings
     d. Appropriate research of the period
B. Design Process:
   a. Developing the lighting key
   b. Seeing the actors: acting areas, systems and specials
   c. Drafting the light plot
   d. Implementation of the design
      i. Design runs
      ii. Focus
      iii. Building the show
      iv. Transitions
      v. Timing
   e. Paperwork
      i. Scene breakdown
      ii. Light plot
      iii. Centerline Section
      iv. Channel Hook-up
      v. Magic Sheets
      vi. Cue sheets
      vii. Shop Order
   f. Production photos

C. Reflection
   a. A final post-production evaluation of total production experience, objectively and honestly addressing what worked and did not work, and reviewing how vision was influence by process and how concept was enhanced or tempered by imagination and/or the practical realities of the rehearsal room or tech process.

**Thesis Process**

*By the middle of Year 2*
Students must submit written production proposals for consideration by the Season Selection Committee, the Graduate Committee, and the faculty at large.

*By end of Year 2*
Students should begin the process of assembling a Thesis Committee, a distinct body from the Graduate Committee (though there is often overlap). The Thesis Committee must include a Chair from the Design Faculty and a minimum of two additional faculty members, one of whom may be from outside the Theater Department.

*During Year 3*
Students must design their thesis production. Before the end of the spring semester, students must submit the written component of the thesis to their Thesis Committee members for approval. Students should build in a process for one round of feedback from the Thesis Committee and a final approval round before the Oral Defense.
Students must schedule a Final Oral Defense of their work with all Thesis Committee members. During the Oral Defense, students will be asked to summarize the project and what s/he learned in the process. Committee members may ask the student to defend any part of the thesis and answer questions. The Thesis Committee then meets *in camera* to vote on the student’s thesis and defense. The committee may vote to approve the thesis as it stands, approve with revisions, deny with revisions, or outwardly deny the project’s approval by a majority vote.

**Thesis Proposal**  
The MFA Lighting Thesis proposal should be a comprehensive document that includes all of the following:

- A descriptive title  
- Goals or desired outcomes for the production  
- Framing research question(s) and/or design approach  
- A detailed description of the production in terms of scope and vision  
- Supporting visuals, plots, and other design elements, as appropriate  
- An annotated bibliography of relevant sources, if appropriate

Be sure to provide ample and workable turnaround times. It is highly recommended that you check with your Committee members on their availability and schedules before setting a timeline.
In addition to these Departmental protocols, you are responsible for completing the Graduate School's graduation requirements. See [www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/checklist_for_masters_degrees.pdf](http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/checklist_for_masters_degrees.pdf)

### YEAR 2
- Invite Members and Assemble Thesis Committee
- Identify thesis production, in collaboration with faculty advisors

### YEAR 3
- Finalize Thesis Committee by first day of Fall semester
- Submit written thesis proposal to Thesis Committee for approval
- Design thesis production
- Attend Fall End of Semester Reviews (EOSRs) with Thesis Committee
- Schedule feedback/approval deadlines and Final Oral Defense
- Invite Committee members to necessary events (give advanced notice)
- Submit written thesis to Thesis Committee for feedback
- Submit written thesis to Thesis Committee for final approval before Oral Defense
- Oral Defense
- Submit paperwork to Graduate School for graduation and degree
Requirements

CORE CREDITS (REQUIRED OF ALL MFA STUDENTS):
TH 680: Group Studio (3)
TH 730: Textual Analysis (3)
TH 793B: World Rep I (3)
TH 793D: World Rep II (3)
TH 699T: Thesis (3)

Subtotal: 15 core credits

AREA CREDITS (REQUIRED OF SCENIC DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS)
TH 760: Scenic Design Studio (5 x 3-6 credits, depending on project/show)
TH 686: Technical Direction Independent Study (3)
TH 593C: Color and Proportion in 2D Design (3)

Subtotal: 21-35 area credits

TH 760 will vary as Scenic Design Studio and Interdisciplinary Design Studio. Students will also be encouraged to take special topics such as Mask-Making, Visual Storytelling, and Special Topics in Technical Direction.

Note: Mainstage production assignments are credited via TH 760.

TOTAL CREDITS REQUIRED TO GRADUATE: 60
Sample Course of Study
(will vary according to student)

“A Schedule” Cohort

Fall, Year 1
Group Studio (3)
Textual Analysis (3)
Scenic Design Studio (3)
Technical Direction (3)

Spring, Year 1
Scenic Design Studio (3)
Production Assignment (3)
Color & Proportion in 2D Design (3)

Fall, Year 2
Scenic Design Studio (3)
Production Assignment (3)
World Rep I (3)
Elective (3)

Spring, Year 2
Scenic Design Studio (3)
Production Assignment (3)
Elective or Sp Topics in Tech Theater (3)
Elective (3)

Fall, Year 3
World Rep II (3)
Production Assignment (3)
Elective (3)

Spring, Year 3
Scenic Design Studio (3)
Thesis Show (3)
Elective (3)

“B Schedule” Cohort

Fall, Year 1
Group Studio (3)
Scenic Design Studio (3)
World Rep I (3)
Technical Direction (3)

Spring, Year 1
Textual Analysis (3)
Scenic Design Studio (3)
Production Assignment (3)

Fall, Year 2
World Rep II (3)
Scenic Design Studio (3)
Production Assignment (3)
Elective (3)

Spring, Year 2
Scenic Design Studio (3)
Production Assignment (3)
Elective (3)
Color & Proportion in 2D Design (3)

Fall, Year 3
Production Assignment (3)
Elective or Sp Topics in Tech Theater (3)
Elective (3)

Spring, Year 3
Scenic Design Studio (3)
Thesis Show (3)
Elective (3)
The graduate program in Scenic Design and Technology prepares students to be skilled and competitive for positions in the areas of scene design and technology. Students are expected to demonstrate craftsmanship and professionalism in all aspects of their work and art, and bring an attitude of openness, enthusiasm, and commitment to learning and collaboration with fellow students, staff, and faculty. Spatial design and technology requires advanced skills in: design; computer-aided drawing; rendering; model-making; fabrication with various materials; and the effective application of technology. In addition to these skills are crucial abilities in critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, and an extremely strong work ethic. Students are expected to develop in all of the above areas during their residency. When evaluating students’ progress in the program, the faculty looks for consistent and significant growth in the benchmarks listed below. The overriding goal is to achieve a professional level of competence by the end of a three-year residency. Acceptance into the program conveys the faculty’s sense of the students’ potential to accomplish this.

**BENCHMARKS**

**I. Personal design skills**

- Extensive knowledge and historical understanding of art, architecture, and design
- Ability to read, analyze, and understand a wide variety of dramatic texts
- Ability to watch, listen, and understand a variety of performance events
- Ability to articulate visually and orally personal responses to events
- Ability to find and shape a personal artistic vision of a production event
- Ability to make effective and creative choices that support your vision based on the text, space, research, and your creative responses
- Ability to create and present a cohesive and effective scenic design presentation, including visual research, sketches, paint samples/renderings, finished scale model, finished drafting, and prop research and designs
- Excellent project management skills, work ethic, and consistency in meeting milestones and deadlines

**II. Collaborative skills**

- Ability to clearly and effectively communicate your vision and concepts to a director, the design team, actors, technicians
- Ability to respond to feedback in a positive, creative, and flexible way, shaping your vision in collaboration with director, designers, and technicians
- Ability to listen well, adapt, and take action
- The ability to maintain a high level of inspiration, creativity, joy, and passion through the process
- The ability to maintain the highest level of professionalism and work ethic
- Ability to be creative, calm, and in control under pressure
• Flexibility to lead and/or follow in the design process

III. Technical Skills

• Ability to understand the technical needs of your own designs and how they might be accomplished
• Ability to be a problem-solver
• Good hand-eye coordination
• Direct knowledge and competence in the use of common scene and property shop tools and equipment
• Direct knowledge of most theatrical equipment, standards, materials, and safe working practices
• Ability to learn, respond, and adapt to new technologies and processes in both theater and in all of the entertainment and architecture industries.
• Ability to communicate three-dimensional spaces and objects in two-dimensional drawings
• Ability to estimate, monitor, and control the three resources: money, time, and labor
• Familiarity with the demands and parameters of costume design, lighting design, projection design, and sound design

IV. Presentation

• Develop and maintain an industry standard portfolio/website/business cards/C.V. over the course of residency
• Demonstrate exceptional skills in presenting yourself and your work both orally and visually as an employee and as a collaborator and colleague.
Appendix I: Helpful UMass Links and Resources

Graduate School: http://www.umass.edu/gradschool

Graduate School New Student To-Do List: http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/Updated%20New%20Student%20To-Do%20List.pdf

Academic Calendar: http://www.umass.edu/registrar/calendars/academic-calendar

Arts Council, funding for student-initiated arts events: https://fac.umass.edu/Online/default.asp?BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::permalink=ArtsCouncil&BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::context_id=#link&menu_id=CE79A899-FCBE-419C-AB31-59C7373E6C8C&sToken=1%2C514710e1%2C5b05bf5f%2CCCD14E9DB-46E5-4D08-8ADE-B88B1D6F094C%2C5j%2BTTALciLGigoRiPYolQ2lwK2k%3D

Bursar’s Office, for details about tuition and fees at UMass: http://www.umass.edu/bursar/

Emergency: https://www.umass.edu/emergency

Health Plan: http://www.umass.edu/uhs/insurance/shbp

Housing resources: http://offcampushousing.umass.edu

International Students Office (IPO): https://www.umass.edu/ipo/iss

Legal Services: free legal consultation: https://www.umass.edu/slso/

Ombuds Office, advice and mediation for campus-related conflict and disputes: https://www.umass.edu/ombuds/

Psychological Services Center (counseling, support): https://www.umass.edu/psc/

Stonewall Center: https://www.umass.edu/ombuds/

TEFD (Institute for Teaching and Faculty Development), support and resources for teaching. https://www.umass.edu/ombuds/

Title IX, support for gender equity; resources for instances of sexual misconduct or assault: https://www.umass.edu/titleix/