

# 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