

M.F.A. HANDBOOK

University of Oregon

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Department of Theatre Arts

revised December, 2005

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE M.F.A. DEGREE IN DESIGN

The Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Arts at the University of Oregon includes both academic and production components, differing from the M.A. essentially through additional credit hours and the satisfactory completion of a production project with a written component. All M.F.A. projects are juried by the full faculty and must demonstrate high artistic ability. The M.F.A. requires a minimum of 81 credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree, which no more than 12 can be practicum credits (TA 609). 81 credits equal nine credits per term for three years.

Required Courses

- 4 hours of research methods
- 4 hours in acting or directing
- 8 hours of Theory of Dramatic production (TA 651-653) or Theatre and Culture (TA 471)
- 8 hours of theatre history or dramatic literature
- 8 hours in a related field including textiles, art history, history of interiors, computer graphics
- 20 hours of design/technology classes including at least one class in each of lighting, scenery and costumes
- 12 hours practicum in design and technology (including 3 for the M.F.A. project)
- 3 hours readings for preparing the M.F.A. document

Variations to these requirements may be made by the diagnostic committee. In addition, the diagnostic committee may require additional courses to mediate recognized deficiencies in previous study (see Graduate Handbook).

Transfer students may transfer up to fifteen credits in graduate courses from other universities, where they have earned a grade of B or better. To be considered for transfer credit, a course needs to parallel coursework offered here and a syllabus from the course needs to be submitted.

Term Projects

To demonstrate a grasp of the artistic-practical application of the craft, all M.F.A. candidates will complete two to three projects per academic year. The student is responsible for initiating all projects. Projects should be selected to provide a broad base of experience.

Each term project, prior to beginning production, should be submitted to the advisor or committee for approval and validation. The student will be responsible for notifying the rest of the faculty of production dates three weeks in advance so that faculty can schedule the project into their calendars.

Within two weeks of the completion for each term project, the student will meet with the advisor for an evaluation of product and process. Designers working with faculty directors are strongly encouraged to have evaluation meetings with them as well.

At the conclusion of this preparatory phase of the program and before being advanced to the final project, the student will have demonstrated either through prior experience, extra-curricular preparation, or classroom work at the University of Oregon, a body of knowledge and/or skills delineated as follows:

- Knowledge of a representative cross-section of dramatic literature

- Knowledge of major stylistic periods in theatre history
- Methods of script analysis
- Exposure to a variety of professional theatre productions
- Scholarly writing skills
- Working knowledge of fundamentals of acting, directing, design, and technology
- Knowledge of major theoretical writings on design
- Background knowledge in the history of art, architecture, music , social/political history, theatrical style and aesthetics.
- Working knowledge of scenic, lighting, and costume design and execution
- Skills in delineating and communicating design concept
- Skills in rendering techniques
- Skills in designing a range of dramatic genres/periods
- Skills in management and organization of the execution processes
- Skills in adjunct technology to execute designs

FORMAL APPLICATION FOR CANDIDACY WITHIN THE M.F.A. PROGRAM

Advancement to the qualifying project will be made in the following manner.

During the second year in residence the student will submit a portfolio for advancement to candidacy, which will include the following documents:

- A transcript of all work at the University of Oregon
- A resume of the pertinent production experience
- A statement outlining the reasons for pursuing this degree and a summary of the student's professional objectives, and self-evaluation of progress towards these objectives
- Any other supportive or visual materials as his or her advisor may direct

The application will be submitted to the advisor who, after reviewing the form and content of the application, will distribute copies to the faculty and place one copy in the applicant's file. The applicant's request will be placed on agenda of the weekly faculty meetings. The student will attend the faculty meeting to present their portfolio and to answer questions posed by the faculty.

Following this presentation, the faculty will vote on formal candidacy for the M.F.A. degree. The results of this vote will be communicated to the student by the advisor and a written copy of the decision will be placed in the student's file. If there are any academic or performance stipulations attached to the approval of the request, the advisor will make note of that in the applicant's file. If candidacy is granted, the candidate will be assigned a degree project during the next academic year.

The Final Project

Following faculty approval of the qualifying project and advancement to candidacy, a final project will be scheduled. This project will be a presentation of University Theatre in the Robinson Theatre and will include full technical support and the participation of at least one

faculty member on the production staff. Although the candidate's input will be considered during the play-selection process, the choice of the actual project will be made as part of the regular play-selection process for University Theatre.

Upon assignment of the final project, the committee for reviewing the final document will be appointed. The recommended composition of this committee includes the faculty director of the final project and the student's advisor, along with one additional member of the Theatre Arts faculty.

Candidates register for 3 credits of TA 609 Practicum for the preparation and execution of their final project. All preparation must be completed before beginning the production phase of the project. Materials supporting this project will be developed in a thorough and timely process (see outline form at the end of this document).

The faculty will meet within one week of the final performance of the final project to assess the work. This may be delayed if dead week, finals or vacation make such a deadline impossible. The candidate will be present at this meeting and will present a summary of preparation and goals for the project as well as a brief critical analysis of successes and shortcomings of the process and the product. The candidate will also be asked to respond to faculty comments and questions. At the close of the meeting, the faculty will vote on acceptance of the project as sufficient to fulfill the requirements of the degree. The student's advisor will inform the candidate of the results of this vote.

If approved, the final project will be thoroughly documented in writing during the term immediately following the presentation of the project. Guidelines for the preparation of this document are provided.

Candidates register for an additional 3 credits of TA 601 Research for the writing of the supporting document (moved). The candidate will provide all member of the committee with drafts and a completed version of the document within one term of the closing of the production. The committee will meet with the candidate for a defense of the document to complete the degree process.

Standards of Judgment

The M.F.A. degree in theatre is a *juried* degree that will be evaluated at various stages of the student's academic and creative progression toward candidacy. For this reason, the student's continuation in the program will depend on the faculty's personalized assessment of the student's creative progress, commitment, and academic prowess. The basis for decisions will include classroom and outside project work.

Failure of Candidacy

At any phase, a juried opinion may remove the candidate from the program. Such a decision would be based on noted deficiencies in some facet of the student's demonstrated work record and failure to demonstrate corrective growth based on previous evaluations.

OUTLINES FOR PROPOSALS AND ANALYSIS

Scope of Project

- Statement of design concept including reference to visual resources and documentation.
- Delineation of scope of project (i.e. number of costumes/sets/lights, amount of construction, necessary rentals or purchases, special projects, size of crew, budget)
- Time line for completion of each phase of the project.

Preparation Outline

Costumes

Prior to beginning construction, the student designer shall have completed all of the following:

1. Research of visual and written resources arranged in resource bible to substantiate design concept and choices including script analysis and relationship to other designs.
2. Full color renderings for each costume being constructed (approval by the director and design advisor)
3. A costume plot indicating all costumes and costume props and how these items are to be realized (construction, pulling, rental, purchase).
4. Selection and purchase of all major fabrics and materials needed to execute costumes and costume props.
5. A construction schedule calendar for organization and assignments of show personnel.
6. A journal of production meetings describing the design process.

During the construction process, the student designer will be responsible for the following:

1. Preparing or supervising patterns, mockups, and fittings for all major costume pieces.
2. Supervising construction crew for their portion of costume assignments.
3. Obtaining or supervising purchase of all additional materials needed for completion of the costumes
4. Preparing a Wardrobe bible and organizing costume running crew for dress rehearsals and performances.
5. Attending rehearsals as needed to monitor cohesion of movement and costume needs.
6. Tracking expense records and keeping to assigned budget.
7. Keeping a journal of the process of execution including insights and problem solving.

Lighting

Prior to beginning of hanging and focusing, the student designer shall have completed the following:

1. A journal of meetings with the director and other designers establishing design concepts.
2. A conceptual cue sheet. This would outline basic cues in the play and what is taking place in them.
3. Optional: storyboard renderings or photo morgue showing major lighting effects.
4. A completed light plot from which a master electrician could hang the design. This should include a hanging section, instrument schedule and color inventory.
5. A schedule outline dates for hanging, focusing and all technical rehearsals.

6. A list of personnel needed to run the show.
7. Submission of any expenditures for lighting effects.

During the production process, the student designer will be responsible for the following.

1. Focusing of all instruments
2. Expenditures for lighting effects.
3. Training of board operator and other crew.
4. Coordinating cue-to-cue or first tech rehearsals.
5. Supervising the stage manager in regards to properly notating light cues in prompt book.
6. Keeping a journal of the process of execution including insights and problem solving.

Scenery

Prior to the construction phase, the student designer shall have completed all of the following:

1. Research and documentation of visual and written resources to substantiate design concept.
2. Journal of all design conferences with the director, other designers and technical director.
3. Preliminary designs in sketch, story board and/or model form
4. Scale plans, elevations, and construction drawings approved by the design advisor, technical director and director.
5. Scale color model showing scenic shifts and/or color renderings of a measured perspective.
6. Painter's elevations showing paint and fabric swatches.
7. A scenic inventory by unit, including set properties, furniture, etc.
8. Budget outline of all planned expenditures prepared in concert with the technical director.
9. Proposed building/painting schedule.

During the construction process, the student will be responsible for the following:

1. Journal of all design conferences with the director and technical director.
2. Daily contact with the director and the technical director.
3. A journal of the process of execution, including insights and problem solving.
4. Supervise artistic fabrications where skills are beyond the expected of shop personnel.
5. Attend rehearsals periodically as needed to monitor developments.

THE FINAL M.F.A. DOCUMENT

The M.F.A. document is expected to conform in all respects with a graduate thesis for the M.A. degree. For proper format refer to the “University of Oregon Style and Policy Manual for Theses and Dissertations”, available on the Graduate School Web site. The content of the M.F.A. document should include:

1. A description of the project, identifying the particular goals established by the designer.
2. A design analysis of the script and a detailing of design concepts as established by the director and designers.
3. A detailing of research of the playwright, time period and other cultural influences. This may include critical analysis and production reviews of other productions of the same script or of the author’s other work, relevant artistic or theatrical theories, movements, or designs influential in the formation of the concept.
4. A description of design concepts and modifications in those concepts that occurred during the process.
5. An analysis of the results, both in terms of the process and the product. This should include a statement of observed growth and an identification of future goals.

Appendices should include:

Costume

1. Costume plot
2. Copies of designs with swatches evident
3. Visual record of executed designs
4. Inspirational Imagery: color copies of specific works of art, photos, etc.

Lighting

1. A quarter-inch light plot (or scaled computer-generated plot)
2. A hanging section
3. An instrument schedule
4. “Magic” or “Cheat” sheet
5. Color inventory
6. Schematic of any special effect create
7. Visual record of executed design
8. Optional story board renderings

Scenery

1. A scale floor plan
2. A full-color rendering
3. A photo of the model
4. Painters’ elevations

5. Complete working drawings
6. Optional: thumbnail sketches
7. Visual record of executed design
8. Inspirational Imagery: color copies of specific works of art, photos, etc.

PROJECTED TIME LINE FOR COMPLETION OF DEGREE

NOTE: M.F.A. projects should be completed by the end of the eighth term in residence so that the final document can be completed by the end of the final term. Degrees will only be awarded to Candidates who have completed all requirements for the final project and the degree.

Terms 1-4

- required and elective coursework as determined by diagnostic committee and student
- term projects to build qualifying portfolio
- apply for any transfer credits

Terms 5-6

- coursework
- apply to be advanced to candidacy

Terms 7-8

- coursework
- final project
- approval of final project by faculty

Terms 8-9

- coursework, M.F.A. project, document preparation.
- register for TA 601: Research for credit for preparation and presentation of the final document

TRACKING PROGRESS TOWARDS YOUR DEGREE

COURSEWORK

		Term	Grade
TA 611	Research Methods		
One course	Acting/Directing		
Two Courses	Theory/T&C		
	Theory/T&C		
Two Courses	History/Literature		
	History/Literature		
Two Courses	Related Field		
	Related Field		
Five Courses Design & Tech	Scenery		
	Costumes		
	Lighting		
	Design/Technology		
	Design/Technology		
TA 605	Readings/Thesis		
Electives			

PRODUCTION/PORTFOLIO

Term	Production	Project	Faculty informed	Evaluation mtg. with advisor

M.F.A. FINAL PROJECT SCHEDULE

Task	Projected Date	Date Completed
Meeting with advisor to discuss candidacy, final project		
Faculty Meeting for Advancement to Candidacy		
Assignment for M.F.A. Project		
Appointment of MFA Document Committee		
Pre-Production deadlines determined		
Opening		
Faculty Meeting to Assess Final Project (one week after closing)		
First Draft of document to Advisor		
Rough Draft to Committee		
Final Draft to Committee		
Final Draft and Appendices to Department, Term after project		