



GRADUATE HANDBOOK

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Introduction

Welcome to the graduate program in the Department of Theatre within the College of Arts & Letters at Michigan State University. We are excited about the possibilities that arise from each cohort's arrival in the program. We know that each of you has something important to contribute to our intellectual community and our discipline's future.

Entering and completing graduate school is an exciting time filled with new opportunities. This handbook is a key source of information for guiding students through their degrees. The handbook will inform students, faculty, and staff on course and program requirements, standards for professional conduct in that field, the timetable for the selection of a faculty advisor and the formation of a guidance committee, examinations, graduation requirements, and policy for dismissal. Informing students of these requirements is required by [Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities](#) (2.3.2). The handbook is a crucial element for welcoming new students, supporting existing students, and ensuring the integrity and quality of the graduate program overall.

If this handbook conflicts with the GEU contract, the contract supersedes it. The policies contained within the GEU contract for teaching assistants shall apply to research assistants in the Department of Theatre graduate program.

Links to Select University Policies

All University policies override all inconsistent provisions of this handbook, including the following:

[Academic Programs Catalog](#)

[Anti-Discrimination Policy \(ADP\)](#)

[Code of Teaching Responsibilities](#)

[Disability and Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#)

[Digital Accessibility Policy](#)

[General Student Regulations](#)

[Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities \(GSRR\)](#)

[Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities](#)

[Integrity of Scholarship & Grades](#)

[Law Student Rights and Responsibilities \(LSRR\)](#)

[Medical Student Rights and Responsibilities \(MSRR\)](#)

[MSU Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising](#)

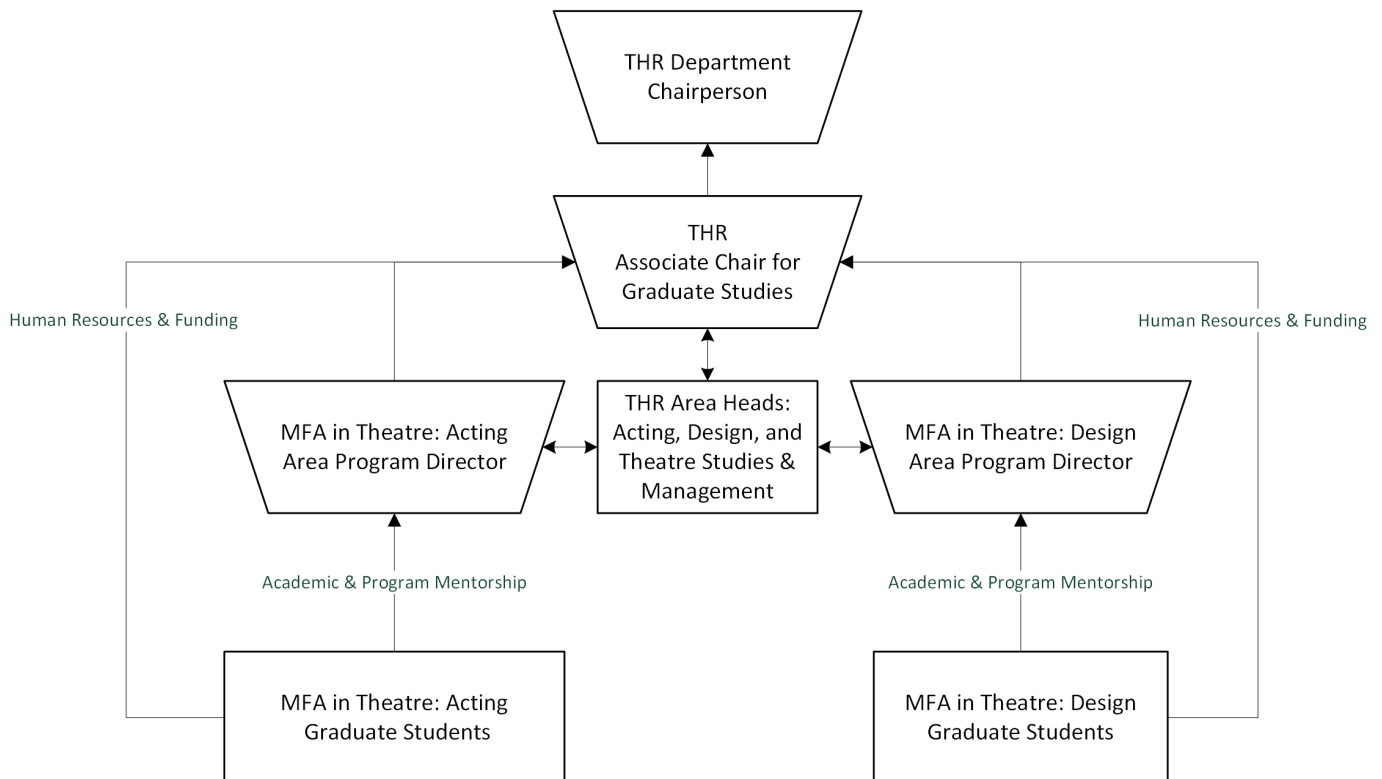
[MSU-GEU Contract](#)

[Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct](#)

Mission and Structure

Mission: Theatre is best when it incites or excites. Plays and musicals provoke action. Challenge complacency. Demand your attention. Productions from various eras and genres examine what makes someone rebel or challenge the established way things have always been done. Graduate Degree programs in the Department of Theatre are designed to prepare you for a career as a professor or administrator in higher education or a career in professional theatre.

Structure:



The Department is led by the Department Chairperson, who supervises three areas: Acting, Design, and Theatre Studies & Management. Each of these areas has an area head who coordinates separate units within theatre (e.g., Design: Scenery, Costume, Lighting, Sound, Media). These units work to create undergraduate and graduate educational opportunities that are separate yet complementary. The Acting and Design areas also have Graduate Area Program Directors. Graduate students are viewed as mentors (the educational focus of the MFA) and models (the artistic focus of the MFA). MFA candidates will be guided to unique teaching and artistic opportunities coordinated and supervised by MSU faculty. MFA Candidates have the opportunity to augment these opportunities through participation in various university and departmental committees. The goal of the graduate education is to assist MFA candidates in the transition from student to colleague over their three years at MSU.

1. Program Overview

Graduate Studies

Graduate degree programs in the Department of Theatre are designed to provide advanced work for persons preparing to teach or gain advanced theatrical training. Currently, the department offers a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree program. A graduate degree in theatre from MSU can prepare one for a career as a professor or administrator at major colleges and universities or for a career in professional theatre. The program is attractive to many seeking graduate education and has established itself as unique among its peers for this dual focus. Your acceptance into the program implies a level of professionalism, integrity, and promise in which the Department seeks to invest time, resources, and support (financial and emotional). Welcome.

Exposure: MSU is one of the world's largest research universities; as such, your exposure to world-class artists will expand your understanding of your artistic process and the possibilities of how you share that vision. Visiting professional artists and scholars augment the curriculum and provide further opportunities to learn from some of the best in the business. Our local Actors' Equity partner (the Williamston Theatre) offers a professional outlet for artistic expression through professional standards. Williamston Theatre and Michigan State University Department of Theatre have entered into a partnership that will ensure collaborative projects between the two producing units. The purpose of this alliance is to continue the successful mingling of academic and professional theatre artists. The MSU Department of Theatre is affiliated with the Arts Council of Greater Lansing, the American College Dance Association, American College Theatre Festival, the American Society for Theatre Research, the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, the Big Ten Theatre Alliance, the Greater Lansing Visitors Bureau, the National Alliance for Musical Theatre, the United States Institute for Theatre Technology, and the University/Resident Theatre Association. Students have access to national and international conferences and training through funding and support from the University, Graduate School, College of Arts & Letters, and the Department.

Diversity: MSU offers a variety of acting and design assistantships with very competitive stipend levels, and the graduate program works in tandem with a thriving undergraduate theatre program. The Department is committed to recruiting and maintaining a diverse and exemplary group of theatre artists. The Department recognizes the importance of diversity among peers and faculty for the professional development of all graduate students and the mirroring of professional standards within the discipline.

Expectations: As a graduate student at MSU, it is expected that you attend most departmental functions, including support of all mainstage shows and sponsored workshops or master classes, not only to gain a deeper knowledge of the craft but to show support for peers, mentees, and the mission of the department. It is expected that you complete your classes, teaching, rehearsal, performance, and other required duties to your fullest potential, not only to fulfill your contract but also as a mentor to undergraduate students and to prove your deep commitment to the art form. MFA candidates are expected to be sufficiently prepared (e.g.,

lines memorized, designs completed, and other discipline-based expectations) for all required rehearsals, work calls, classes, and other department events. Candidates are also expected to attend required meetings, including departmental, area, and semesterly Graduate Guidance Committee (GGC) meetings.

MFA Acting

The Master of Fine Arts in Acting is designed as a terminal degree that provides rigorous training in theatrical performance to students preparing for careers in professional theatre and future academicians. Extensive training in voice, movement, and acting provides a foundation for students' development as both artists and educators. Given the program's unique focus on preparing the artist and educator, an emphasis on the student as teacher is fundamental in most classes. Before graduation, MFA Acting students will be exposed to the professional theatre world and academia.

All MFA students must complete at least six required performance credits in order to receive the degree. Acceptance into the program is contingent upon a completed application to the Michigan State University Graduate School as well as the successful completion of an audition/interview. All acting candidates must demonstrate their potential at either larger unified auditions or through an audition before the Acting/Directing faculty.

MSU offers numerous performance opportunities for graduates in a 3,100-seat concert auditorium, a 600-seat thrust, a 450-seat proscenium, a 200-seat arena, a 150-seat endstage, a 100-seat studio, and MSU's popular outdoor 400+ seat Summer Circle amphitheater. While casting is not guaranteed in Department productions, MFA Actors are required to perform in an approved project each semester. A performance-based major final project must be completed during the MFA Actor's final year of study.

All Master of Fine Arts Actors must audition for all departmental productions even though there are no guaranteed roles in these productions. If a student is not cast in a production, the MFA Actor must conduct a project that has been approved by their graduate guidance committee. One exception to this casting policy is the major final project, which will be assigned in consultation with the student's guidance committee to be completed in the MFA Actor's final year of study.

MFA Actors will meet each semester with their chosen committee to evaluate the work over the semester. (See section 4)

Educational Overview: While each student's progress and mastery of the art form is unique, the MFA in Acting does have a basic educational trajectory that may be used to guide the student's work. The overview below is a general outline and will change based on faculty availability, performance opportunities, and curricular revision:

YEAR ONE

Understand university and departmental protocol and structure
Acclimate to graduate-level expectations in class and artistic assignments
Participate in university and department teacher training programs

Learn the skills of time management and effective communication
Nurture a personal aesthetic for truth and vulnerability in acting
Address habits and shortcuts in past acting work
Begin to create a personal process for approaching a role
Expand acting, vocal, and movement training
Begin to understand the rigors of research and theatre scholarship
Develop skills necessary to be an effective university educator
Understand and practice the collaborative nature of theatre-making
Attend two GGC meetings

YEAR TWO

Identify a secondary focus beyond acting (e.g. musical theatre, movement)
Examine certifications and alternate training related to a secondary focus
Master teaching of classes that were taught previously
Create a common aesthetic for truth and vulnerability in acting
Address habits and shortcuts in past acting work
Begin to create a personal process for approaching a role
Expand acting, vocal, and movement training
Begin to understand the rigors of research and theatre scholarship
Understand and practice the collaborative nature of theatre-making
Attend two GGC meetings

YEAR THREE

Complete plans for professionalization as an artist and educator
Create content, syllabus, and materials for a course of your own design
Refine materials such as website, CV, resume, and more for post-graduate work
Create and implement a plan for post-graduation work

MFA Design

The Master of Fine Arts in Design is offered as a terminal degree for a graduate student preparing for a professional career as a scene, costume, lighting, sound, or media designer or as future academicians. Importance is also placed on acquiring technical skills in these areas. Students will study multiple areas of theatre design with the expectation that they will become proficient in at least two areas. The rigorous three-year program places equal emphasis on classroom studies and production program activities. The program of study contains coursework in all the areas of theatre and related fields that inform and enrich the area of design selected. Because of the equal importance given to academic and practical experiences within the program, a graduate is well suited for teaching in a college or university in addition to being an articulate and capable theatre artist. MFA Designers receive personally tailored instruction in a well-rounded theatre context, which includes courses in the theory and history of theatre craft, as well as a carefully developed program of practical training put together under professional guidance with the student's career goals in mind. Small design classes assure a high degree of one-to-one response to projects and coursework, and the department's position within a large university enriches the opportunities available from other departments and disciplines. Design labs provide the necessary design and production software to allow familiarization with many of the most common professional practices in this growing

component of the theatre industry.

Given the program's unique focus on preparing the artist and educator, an emphasis on the student as teacher is fundamental in many classes. Students will have the opportunity to teach introductory classes in their specialty, master classes in specific design or technical topics, and general education humanities courses. MFA Designers will meet each semester with their chosen committee to evaluate the work over the semester. (See section 4)

Educational Overview: While each student's progress and mastery of the art form is unique, the MFA in Design does have a basic educational trajectory that may be used to guide the student's work. The overview below is a general outline and will change based on faculty availability, design opportunities, and curricular revision:

YEAR ONE

- Understand university and departmental protocol and structure
- Acclimate to graduate-level expectations in class and artistic assignments
- Participate in university and department teacher training programs
- Learn the skills of time management and effective communication
- Begin to create a personal process for approaching design
- Expand design and technical training in classwork and realized design
- Begin to understand the rigors of research and theatre scholarship
- Understand and practice the collaborative nature of theatre-making
- Explore teaching as one-on-one mentorship in shop work
- Attend two GGC meetings

YEAR TWO

- Identify a secondary focus in design
- Examine alternate training related to secondary focus
- Teaching opportunity in basic skills courses
- Expand design and technical training
- Understand the rigors of research and theatre scholarship and put them into practice via conference presentations or master class development
- Understand and practice the collaborative nature of theatre-making
- Attend two GGC meetings

YEAR THREE

- Create content, syllabus, and materials for a course of your own design
- Refine materials such as website, CV, resume, and more for post-graduate work
- Create and implement a plan for post-graduation work
- Master teaching of classes that were taught previously and expand teaching skills
- Refine personal design aesthetic and style.
- Attend two GGC meetings

Advising and Mentoring in the Department of Theatre

The Department of Theatre operates under the [MSU Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising](#). In addition, each graduate student experiences a

mentor/apprenticeship relationship for each production assignment.

2. Program Components/Plan Options

Graduate Guidance Committee (GGC)

The GGC is formed from faculty in the student's degree program. Students are required to select this committee with the approval of the Graduate Area Program Director no later than the middle of the student's first semester of enrollment in the program. (see section 4).

Requirements for the Master of Fine Arts Degree in Theatre

The program is available only under Plan B (without thesis). A total of 60 credits are required for the degree. The student's program of study must be approved by the GGC. (See section 3)

Optional Certifications and Certificates

Students may wish to examine both internal certificate programs, such as the College Certificate in Teaching offered by CAL within the University structure, and external certifications related to deeper mastery of certain subjects. The internal certificate program may use the elective credits within the student's required 60 credits. A student may seek alternate forms of funding (grants from the Graduate School, the GEU, the University, or the Department) to complete external certifications.

3. Degree Requirements

Admission Information

Audition/Interview Policy for the MFA - Acting Degree

All acting candidates must demonstrate their potential by auditioning, either through unified national auditions, or they may make an appointment through the Graduate Acting Area Program Director to audition before the Acting/Directing Faculty. In both cases, an interview will be part of the audition process.

Applicants should be prepared to present an audition according to the U/RTA Guidelines for Acting Auditions. Furthermore, applicants should be prepared to demonstrate additional skills upon request and to respond to direction. Applicants should not apply to the MSU Graduate School until they have been conditionally accepted to the MFA program.

Audition/Interview Policy for the MFA – Design Degree

All candidates must demonstrate a potential for growth in design through a portfolio presentation and interview, either through unified national auditions, or they may make an appointment through the Graduate Design Area Program Director to interview before the Design Faculty. Applicants should be prepared to present a portfolio interview according to the U/RTA Guidelines for Design/Tech. In addition to theatre design work, an applicant is encouraged to include any work that demonstrates creativity and design skills – such as photography, sculpture, paintings, textiles, collage, graphic design, animation, and web-based information technology. Applicants should not apply to the MSU Graduate School until they have been conditionally accepted to the MFA program.

All MFA in Theatre Candidates

Once the candidates have completed the auditions/interviews, they may be asked to provide transcripts of undergraduate study and references who may be contacted by representatives from the department. Most candidates will have an undergraduate degree in theatre of at least 24 credits. However, in some cases, professional experience or alternative paths of study that lead to application for graduate study will be accepted. (See provisional acceptance below.)

Following that, Graduate Area Program Directors may make provisional offers to applicants who will then apply to the MSU Graduate School with official transcripts and a personal statement detailing interest in Michigan State University's program, including an examination of the individual as artist and educator.

Final offers and contracts are made by the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies or Department Chairperson, who will share the contract and details related to study at MSU.

Provisional Acceptance

An applicant for the MFA program may be accepted provisionally if, in the judgment of the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies or Department Chairperson and advice from faculty, the student has sufficient promise of success in the graduate program but lacks the requisite entry academic credits in theatre. In conjunction with the Graduate Area Program Director, the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies will recommend specific courses or experiences for the student that may be achieved concurrently with graduate course enrollment or prior to entrance to MSU. When the specific provisions of the admission are accomplished, the student is moved to regular status.

English Language Proficiency

MSU candidates for TA appointments who were required to demonstrate English proficiency as a condition for regular admission to Michigan State University must also demonstrate that they meet a minimum standard of proficiency in spoken English before they can be assigned teaching work that involves oral communication with undergraduate students.

International teaching assistants (ITAs) may meet this requirement as outlined by the MSU Office of Admissions: <https://admissions.msu.edu/apply/international/language-requirements>.

Related Residency and Program Information

Completion of Degree

The MFA program is designed for the completion of credits within six consecutive semesters (fall and spring semesters) or three consecutive years of study (Three 9-month FS and SS 50% appointments). Should students not complete the work in the timeline described either through reduced credit load or interrupted study due to unforeseen circumstances or unique opportunity, the student will work in concert with the GGC, Graduate Area Program Director, and Associate Chair for Graduate Studies to create a plan for completion. Such a plan could include completion of the program at the student's expense, or the student may be denied re-entrance. A minimum residence of three (3) academic years (excluding summers) must be devoted to graduate work at Michigan State University.

Students holding Graduate Assistantships are required by the Department of Theatre and the

Graduate School to register for a minimum of six (6) graduate credit hours per semester, excluding summers when a minimum of three (3) graduate credit hours is required if a fee waiver is utilized. Students holding Graduate Assistantships will receive a tuition waiver for a maximum of ten (10) graduate credit hours per semester, excluding summers when a maximum of five graduate credit hours is available.

Residency Expectations

Since theatre is a live art form, MFA candidates are expected to be in residency at MSU. In unique cases, residency may be limited through negotiation prior to admission to MSU.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment provides an opportunity for academically talented undergraduate students to enroll in graduate courses and conduct research towards a graduate degree while completing the last two years of their bachelor's degree(s) programs.

To be considered for dual enrollment, the student must first file an Application for Admission to Graduate Study, as indicated under Application Procedure in this section of the catalog and be admitted into a graduate program. Subsequent to admission to a graduate program, in regular status, the student must complete a Request for Dual Enrollment Status form, available from the Office of the Registrar. A student who is accepted for dual enrollment can be admitted to both the undergraduate and graduate degree program upon reaching junior standing.

Within the first semester of dual enrollment, the student's graduate degree program advisor must be identified and the appropriate graduate degree guidance committee established. The advisor and committee assist the student in developing a program of study for the graduate degree. Admission to graduate study and the Request for Dual Enrollment Status form must both be approved before work to apply toward a graduate degree program is undertaken. Credits completed prior to admission to graduate study cannot be applied toward a graduate degree program.

A student will be classified as an undergraduate until the minimum number of credits required for a first bachelor's degree is completed. When the student is classified as a graduate student, eligibility begins for graduate assistantships, other forms of graduate student financial aid, or those services and prerogatives normally reserved for graduate students.

A student pays undergraduate tuition up to the total number of credits required for a first bachelor's degree(s) in his/her major(s), at which point graduate tuition is applicable and students are eligible for graduate fellowships and assistantships. If approved by the graduate program, a maximum of nine credits, at the 400-level or higher, from the undergraduate degree program can be applied toward the requirements for the graduate degree program for credits completed after admission to graduate study. Some colleges with programs that require more than 30 credits for the master's degree may apply more than 9 credits toward the master's degree but not more than 30% of the total number of credits required for the master's degree. Credits applied to a master's degree are not eligible to be applied to any other degree program.

In semesters when the student is dually enrolled, federal financial aid designated for the first

bachelor's degree (Federal Pell Grant and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)) will be determined based upon the number of undergraduate credits only. Awards will be manually adjusted as necessary once the student is registered. Students are not eligible for financial aid as a graduate student until the semester after the minimum number of credits required for the first bachelor's degree has been earned.

Substitution of Professional Credit

In unique cases, professional or educational experiences in the field may be substituted for appropriate credits within the student's required study. These substitutions will be made in concert with the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies and Department Chairperson and will require documentation of past experiences.

Transfer Credits

Transfer credits must have been completed within the time limit for the degree. A maximum of nine (9) credits can be accepted to a master's degree program from transfer courses through lifelong education or in transfer from another institution. In rare circumstances, the Department of Theatre may accept more than nine (9) credits in transfer but not more than one-third of the total number of credits required for the MFA degree. Transfer credits will be approved by the Graduate Area Program Director and Associate Chair for Graduate Studies.

Independent Study Credits

MFA candidates are limited to eight (8) THR 890: Independent Study credits, which may count toward their degree requirement.

Externally Funded Fellowships

Receipt of externally funded fellowships by students who have written their own grant applications worth at least \$24,000 (direct costs) now makes the student eligible for in-state tuition. The in-state tuition rate applies only to the semesters during which the student is supported by the fellowship. This policy applies only to grants funded through a competitive process by a US institution/agency/foundation. Funds obtained through non-competitive processes (e.g., need-based fellowships) or from international sources do not qualify the students for in-state tuition. For more information, go to Chittenden Hall, 466 W. Circle Dr., 2nd floor. <http://grad.msu.edu/>

Program Requirements for the Master of Fine Arts in Acting

A minimum of 60 graduate credit hours must be completed for the MFA in Acting.

Acting (60 credits):

- (1) All of the following courses:
 - THR 801 Practicum: Acting (18)
 - THR 804 Practicum: Voice (6)
 - THR 805 Practicum: Movement (6)
 - THR 830 Introduction to Graduate Studies (3)
 - THR 831 Studies in Theatre History (3)
 - THR 832 Comparative Drama and Criticism (3)
 - THR 834 Professional Aspects (2)

- THR 841 Advanced Directing Practices (3)
- THR 870 Collaborative Studio in Theatre (3)
- THR 894 Special Projects in Theatre (6)
- Electives approved by the student's guidance committee (7)

Students must enroll in 1 credit increments of Theatre 894. Each credit is associated with one of six major performance projects. Students must participate in production activities during each semester of enrollment in the program.

Transfer credits must have been completed within the time limit for the degree.

Additional Program Requirements for the MFA - Acting Degree

Students must enroll in THR 894: Special Projects in Theatre for each major performance project. In the judgment of the student's GGC and those faculty directly related to the THR 894 credit, the student must present evidence of growth in each project. Acting students must audition for all departmental productions and be available for casting in these shows during their three years of residency. If a student is not cast in a production, the MFA Actor must perform in a committee-approved project. With approval, such projects may include:

- Original performance piece
- Graduate student-directed production
- Professional theatrical production
- Other approved theatrical event

One exception to the required audition policy is in the student's final semester of study, which is devoted to a capstone project. The student will work on a piece for public presentation. The piece may be a solo performance or group work of original or published material. The format of this performance piece will be determined in consultation with the student's GGC and the student.

Students are subject to formal reviews by the area faculty regarding their performance in the classroom, departmental productions, and independent projects. (See section 5)

Program Requirements for the Master of Fine Arts in Design

A minimum of 60 graduate credit hours must be completed for the MFA in Design.

Design (60 credits):

- (1) All of the following courses (39 credits):
- THR 811 Practicum: Design and Technology (9)
 - THR 813 Period Resources and Research (3)
 - THR 818 Design Studio (9)
 - THR 830 Introduction to Graduate Studies (3)
 - THR 831 Studies in Theatre History (3)
 - THR 832 Comparative Drama and Criticism (3)
 - THR 834 Professional Aspects (2)
 - THR 870 Collaborative Studio in Theatre (3)

THR 894 Special Projects in Theatre (4)

Students must enroll in 1 credit increments of Theatre 894. Each credit is associated with one of four required design projects. Students must participate in production activities during each semester of enrollment in the program.

- (2) Three of the following courses (9 credits):
- THR 411 Stage Lighting Design (3)
 - THR 412 Stage Costume Design (3)
 - THR 414 Stage Scene Design (3)
 - THR 416 Stage Sound Design (3)
 - THR 419 Projection Design for Live Performance (3)
- (3) One of the following courses (1 credit)
- THR 819 Applied Design Studio (1)
 - THR 819A Applied Design Studio: Scenery (1)
 - THR 819B Applied Design Studio: Costume (1)
 - THR 819C Applied Design Studio: Lighting (1)
 - THR 819D Applied Design Studio: Sound(1)
 - THR 819E Applied Design Studio: Media(1)
- (4) Electives approved by the student's guidance committee (11 credits)

Transfer credits must have been completed within the time limit for the degree.

Additional Program Requirements for the MFA – Design Degree

MFA Design candidates develop portfolios by accepting a minimum of six (6) design or technical assignments for fully realized departmental productions as members of the production team. Students are subject to formal Process Portfolio Reviews by the Design Faculty in both the classroom and the production program. (See section 5)

A comprehensive portfolio review is conducted at the end of the year of study.

4. Formation of the Graduate Guidance Committee (GGC)

MFA – Acting Graduate Guidance Committee

The GGC consists of three members of the faculty: the student's self-selected chairperson, another member of the Acting Faculty chosen by the student in consultation with their chairperson, and a third member outside of the Acting Area of the Department of Theatre Faculty chosen by the student in consultation with their chairperson. A fourth member of the committee may be added as needed and, in some instances, this fourth member can serve as a rotating member. The student's GGC must be constituted by the middle of the student's first semester of enrollment in the program, and the composition of the GGC will be submitted to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies for approval. The intention is for this committee to remain consistent throughout the student's tenure at MSU.

MFA – Design Graduate Guidance Committee

The GGC consists of three members of the faculty: the student's assigned chairperson, another member of the Design/Technology faculty chosen by the student in consultation with their chairperson, and a third member outside of the Design/Technology Area of the Department of Theatre Faculty chosen by the student in consultation with their chairperson. A fourth member of the committee may be added as needed and, in some instances, this fourth member can serve as a rotating member. The student's GGC must be constituted by the middle of the student's first semester of enrollment in the program, and the composition of the GGC will be submitted to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies for approval. The intention is for this committee to remain consistent throughout the student's tenure at MSU.

All MFA in Theatre Candidates

It is imperative that the student and the Graduate Area Program Director meet during the first semester to map out an overall curriculum plan based on the degree requirements and options. This plan may be modified due to specific developments in the student's academic career, but it will provide a guide for the student to the degree program. Each semester, the student should meet with their Graduate Area Program Director not only to select elective and required courses but also to assess the student's progress toward completion of the degree.

Graduate Guidance Committee Responsibilities

For MFA in Theatre students, you need to engage your guidance committee in the following ways each semester:

- Schedule your end-of-semester meeting within the first two weeks of each semester, working with the main office to schedule meeting space. One exception to this timeline is the first semester at MSU, where the formation and scheduling of your GGC will take place by mid-semester.
- Share multiple dates when GGC members can watch you teach your scheduled class, guest lecture, workshop/presentation in another class within the first two weeks of the semester (or as opportunities arise throughout the semester). In the event that any GGC member is unavailable, record a class or workshop session for them to view on their own.
- Share dates of creative activities outside of the Department of Theatre productions within the first two weeks of the semester (or as opportunities arise throughout the semester).
- Meet all deadlines for GGC meeting paperwork.

THR Faculty GGC members will engage with the MFA student in the following ways:

- (If applicable) GGC Committee members attend one class, guest lecture, or workshop/presentation taught by the student every year (in person if possible, or view a recording). The GGC Chairperson should attempt to attend one class, guest lecture, or workshop/presentation taught by the student every semester. Respond to the student following the class/presentation and provide feedback for continued growth as an educator, which will be discussed at each GGC meeting.
- Attend performances or other creative activities to provide feedback about the

student's artistic growth at each GGC meeting.

- Read the GGC self-reflection in advance of the meeting to discuss the student's progress.
- Offer feedback on course selection, academic progress, creative opportunities, and strategies for career success.
- Occasionally, the GGC may need to approve or discuss electives/substitutions for required courses, creative work outside of the Department of Theatre productions, outside employment, or requests for adjustments to their academic or employment schedule. Unique circumstances may take place outside or regularly schedule end-of-semester meetings.

Graduate Guidance Committee Milestones

For MFA in Theatre students, it is advisable that you complete the documents listed below during your academic career. Many of these materials are part of your core classwork. You will work with your GGC to identify the appropriate timeline for submission.

Year I:

- Submit a Course Syllabus and/or Artist Statement (potentially a bio on a website) for GGC review/feedback.
- Consider creating or revising a website for GGC review.

Year II:

- Submit a draft of any of the following: Teaching Philosophy or Artist Statement, Research or Scholarship Statement, DEIB/DEIJ/DEI or Values Statement.

Year III:

- Submit the following materials (typical of an application process) for GGC Review: Course Syllabus, Website, Teaching Philosophy or Artist Statement, Research or Scholarship Statement, DEIB/DEIJ/DEI or Values Statement.

Change in Graduate Guidance Committee Chairperson

The student or the GGC Chairperson may initiate a change of GGC Chairperson. The student must secure the change agreement with the proposed new GGC Chairperson before informing the Graduate Area Program Director. The Associate Chair for Graduate Studies will review this request for procedural compliance with both Departmental and MSU Graduate School rules and guidelines. If the request is not in compliance, the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies will refer the matter to the Department Chairperson and, if applicable, the Graduate Hearing Board for review.

Change in Graduate Guidance Committee Member

If a change of committee member becomes necessary, it may be initiated by the student or by the committee member. The student must secure the change agreement with the proposed new committee member before informing their GGC Chairperson. If their GGC Chairperson sees any problems with the assignment, the matter will be reviewed by the Graduate Area Program Director, who will review this request for procedural compliance with both Departmental and MSU Graduate School rules and guidelines. If the request is not in compliance, the Graduate Area Program Director will refer the matter to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies for

review. (Refer to GSRR 2.4)

If a member of your graduate guidance committee is unavailable to meet during the semester of your meeting (due to leaves, sabbaticals, unexpected circumstances, etc.), please coordinate a temporary replacement member with the Graduate Area Program Director and the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies.

Other Mentorship Roles

MFA candidates will work with many faculty during their time at MSU in various capacities and will receive mentorship and guidance in several areas.

Teaching

Each course the MFA candidate teaches will have a supervisor attached to the course. This faculty member will guide the student through all aspects of the course. The supervisor will review in-class teaching assignments and work with students related to online teaching. The supervisors will be the point person for issues or problems that may arise unexpectedly. GGC members are also invited to observe in-class teaching each semester when appropriate.

Students may also choose to voluntarily TA a course with a professor to gain experience and observe teaching methods. It is important that the professor and student map out expectations and assignments prior to the beginning of the course.

Productions

Every departmental mainstage production will have a mentor for the graduate student. If the student is an actor, the director will be the mentor. If the student is a designer, the design area will be assigned a mentor. These faculty or guests serve as a sounding board for student questions or offer advice and guidance to successfully complete the assignment.

5. Departmental Policies: Academic and Professional Performance

Semester Academic Review of Acceptable Academic Standards

The Associate Chair for Graduate Studies monitors the semester reviews of all graduate students. It is the responsibility, however, of the GGC to conduct semester reviews. The Graduate Area Program Directors, in turn, consider these semester evaluations to determine that students are making reasonable progress within their course of study. A student who does not maintain reasonable progress toward the degree, complete assigned production duties, maintain professional integrity, or fulfill other Departmental and MSU Graduate School requirements may be denied funding support and/or denied further registration in the program. Departmental and Graduate School procedures apply in all cases. Academic review recommendations are forwarded to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies for review and assessment.

All MFA in Theatre Candidates must:

1. Maintain a grade–point average of 3.30 or higher in courses in the Department of Theatre.
2. Accumulate no more than six (6) credits with a grade below 3.0 in courses that are to be counted toward the degree.

3. DF-Deferred grades: The required work must be completed, and a grade must be reported within six (6) months, with the option of a single six-month extension. If the required work is not completed within the time limit, the DF will become U-Unfinished and will be changed to DF/U under the numerical and Pass-No Grade (P-N) grading systems and to DF/NC under the Credit-No Credit (CR-NC) system. This rule does not apply to graduate thesis or dissertation work.

MFA Candidate Paper Guidelines

At the end of each semester, MFA candidates will meet with their GGC to constructively evaluate their work inside and outside of the classroom and theatres while at MSU. This meeting is a chance to examine progress throughout the semester and assist in setting goals for future work.

Candidates must schedule their meetings during the first two weeks of each semester, working with the main office to schedule faculty and meeting space. One exception to this timeline is the candidate's first semester at MSU, where the formation of the student's GGC will take place by mid-semester. In the mid-first semester, the incoming candidate will immediately follow a similar protocol when scheduling their first GGC meeting in collaboration with the main office. The GGC meeting must take place during the last few weeks of class or final exam week.

Candidates must deliver an updated curriculum vitae and a self-evaluation to their committee members at least one full week before the GGC meeting.

MFA Acting Response Paper Guidelines

The three-page (minimum) paper should consist of a deep and honest reflection for each section that addresses the following areas:

1. Your performance and process in roles onstage or on-camera that semester, including a glimpse into your process.
2. Your progress in each of the classes that you took this semester
3. Your work as an educator, including classes that you assisted in.
4. An examination of how your work as an artist and educator has impacted each other.
5. Goals for next semester

MFA Design Response Paper Guidelines

The three-page (minimum) paper should consist of a deep and honest reflection for each section that addresses the following areas:

1. Progress as a Designer
 - a. Initial discussions with the director and production team.
 - b. Research process: primary and secondary sources.
 - c. Determination of concept/idea.
 - d. Personal creative process.
 - e. Collaborative experience with the director and production team.
 - f. Execution of concept/idea, challenges, and solutions.
 - g. Self-assessment of effectiveness: process, execution, and final product.

2. Progress as an Educator
3. TA self-evaluation
4. Coursework self-evaluation
5. Goals for next semester

The GGC will use the paperwork as a springboard for discussion, so it is incumbent upon the candidate to reflect deeply on their work as an artist, student, and educator.

Academic Review

The MFA student will prepare a bullet point list of feedback from the GGC meeting, send it to the committee members and the Academic Program Coordinator, and submit it to the [THR MFA Graduate Guidance Committee \(GGC\) Semester Response Form](#) available on the Graduate Studies page on the MSU Theatre website within 24 hours of the meeting. The GGC Chairperson will provide a written critique of the student's work if the bullet list does not align with the discussion of the semester review. This critique will be placed in the student's file. The student will receive a copy of the critique and may make an appointment with their GGC Chairperson or GGC to discuss the critique and recommendation of the faculty. The student may also respond in writing to this critique. The student's response will be added to the file and copied to the GGC and Associate Chair for Graduate Studies. After a negative review, the GGC Chairperson will notify the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies and include a statement about the student's continuance in the program. This notification, along with the individual evaluation sheets, will be placed in the student's academic file.

Reasonable progress toward a degree is defined as the timely completion of the student's graduate degree program requirements. The timetable for the completion of requirements is established by the Department and by general University standards. The Department defines timely completion of the MFA as the completion of all coursework and the major final project within three years.

Academic Review Recommendation

Following each academic review, the GGC will make one of the following recommendations as to the student's progress in the program: Proceed in Program, First Warning, Second Warning, Denial of Further Registration. In addition, if the student's GPA falls below a 3.30 average, the Department will place the student on probation, with the possibility of removal from graduate study if the course work does not improve under conditions communicated to the student at the time of notification.

Recommendations may be made for any or all of the following reasons in each category. The student has the right to be informed of the recommendation. The GGC Chairperson will provide the student with a written explanation of the overall recommendation as reflected in the GGC review critiques and evaluations. Recommendations are based on academic and artistic progress as demonstrated in oral and written performance and participation in the classroom and laboratory. The student is also evaluated to ensure that they meet the requirements of the GA assignment, production duties, and professional behavior. The six types of recommendations are defined below:

1. Proceed in the Program

The student's performance meets or exceeds the criteria established within the degree program, and the student is making satisfactory progress toward the degree.

2. First Warning

The student will be placed under observation by the GGC Chairperson to determine progress toward meeting the review criteria. The student will be provided with specific written reasons for the First Warning and will be given suggested corrective actions. The Associate Chair for Graduate Studies will oversee the process in coordination with the GGC and Graduate Area Program Director and will keep the MSU Graduate School informed, as needed. The GGC Chairperson will notify the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies at the mid-term review on the status of the corrective action. If these have been taken successfully, the first warning status is dissolved. If not, a second warning will be given. The student may respond in writing to this process.

3. Second Warning

The student will be placed under observation by the GGC Chairperson to determine progress toward meeting the review criteria. The student will be provided with specific written reasons for the Second Warning and will be given suggested corrective actions. The Associate Chair for Graduate Studies will oversee the process in coordination with the GGC and Graduate Area Program Director and will keep the MSU Graduate School informed, as needed. The GGC Chairperson will notify the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies at the mid-term review if and when the Second Warning status is to be lifted. Without sufficient improvement, as determined by the GGC, the student will be placed on probation.

4. Probation

The Department imposes probation if the student's GPA falls below a 3.30 average. A student may be dismissed from graduate study if the GPA fails to rise to 3.30 or better. The student will be under observation by the GGC to determine progress toward meeting review criteria in the degree program. The student will be provided with specific written reasons for probation and suggested corrective actions. The MSU Graduate School will be officially notified of the recommended probation status by the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies. The GGC Chairperson will notify the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies at the end of the semester when probation status is to be lifted. (Refer to GSRR 4.2.4)

5. Denial of Further Registration and/or Employment

When the student has not satisfactorily addressed the areas in need of improvement cited in the Second Warning or Probation reviews, the student will be denied further registration in the degree program. The GGC Chairperson will notify the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies of the denial of further registration. The Associate Chair for Graduate Studies will, in turn, notify the MSU Graduate School.

6. Disciplinary Action and Dismissal

The MSU Graduate Employees Union recognizes the authority of the Employer (MSU Department of Theatre) to discipline, suspend, or discharge employees and/or graduate students for just cause. Discharge is the termination of employment and/or registration

initiated by the employer prior to a previously stated appointment end date for serious misconduct or unsatisfactory performance. Discipline and Discharge may result from an accumulation of minor infractions as well as from a single serious infraction.

Artistic/Assistantship Review

The artistic review will consist of a review of the graduate student's performance in the GAship and performance/production involvement. The GGC will make one of the following recommendations as to the student's progress in the program: Proceed in the Program, First Warning, Second Warning, Probation, or Denial of Further Registration and/or Employment.

Recommendations are based on artistic progress demonstrated in the assistantship duties and production process. The student will be informed of any requirements that need to be met for Warning or Probationary status to be lifted.

The six types of recommendations are as follows:

1. Proceed in the Program

The student's performance in the classroom/laboratory/shop meets or exceeds the criteria established within the Department and the GA appointment. The student is making satisfactory progress.

2. First Warning

The student will be placed under observation by the GGC and immediate supervisor to determine progress toward meeting the review criteria. The student will be provided with specific written reasons for the First Warning and will be given suggested corrective actions. The GGC Chairperson will notify the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies at the mid-term review on the status of the corrective action. If these have been taken successfully, the First Warning status is dissolved. A Second Warning may be given. The student may respond in writing to this process.

3. Second Warning

The student will be placed under observation by the GGC and immediate supervisor to determine progress toward meeting review criteria. The student will be provided with specific written reasons for the Second Warning and will be given suggested corrective actions. The GGC Chairperson will notify the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies at the mid-term review if and when the Second Warning status is to be lifted. Without sufficient improvement, as determined by the GGC, the student will be placed on Probation.

4. Probation

The Department of Theatre imposes Probation if the student fails to adequately perform the duties of the assistantship or artistic assignment. The student will be provided with specific written reasons for the Probation and suggestive corrective actions. A student may be removed from the assistantship or enrollment if the terms of the Probation are not met. The GGC Chairperson will notify the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies after the mid-term review as to whether or not probationary status is to be lifted.

5. Denial of Further Registration and/or Employment

When the student has not satisfactorily addressed the areas in need of improvement cited in the Second Warning or Probation reviews, the student will be denied further registration in the degree program. The GGC Chairperson will notify the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies of the denial of further registration. The Associate Chair for Graduate Studies will, in turn, notify the MSU Graduate School.

6. Disciplinary Action and Dismissal

The MSU Graduate Employees Union recognizes the authority of the Employer (MSU Department of Theatre) to discipline, suspend, or discharge employees and/or graduate students for just cause. Discharge is the termination of employment and/or registration initiated by the employer prior to a previously stated appointment end date for serious misconduct or unsatisfactory performance. Discipline and Discharge may result from an accumulation of minor infractions as well as a single serious infraction.

MFA In Theatre: Acting: Academic and Artistic Review Criteria

At the semester review, the work will be discussed using the following criteria:

The candidate's reflection paper will serve as the basis for discussion within the committee meeting, so great care should be taken when writing it as it is a glimpse into the semester's struggles and successes. The following criteria can be used to determine the recommendation from the GGC:

1. Flexibility
 - a. Willingness to take direction
 - b. Commitment to in-class work
 - c. Willingness to take risks and demonstrate inventiveness
2. Preparation: Work Outside of Class
 - a. Practice of skills
 - b. Reading
 - c. Memorization
 - d. Development of material
 - e. Development of original material or original approaches
3. Classwork
 - a. Performance of scenes and exercises
 - b. Written work
 - c. Performance of other assignments and exercises
4. Contribution to Classroom Community
 - a. Ability to collaborate
 - b. Discussion skills
 - c. Appropriate critical commentary and constructive criticism
 - d. Adherence to classroom etiquette (as established by the instructor)

5. Professional Comportment
 - a. Punctuality
 - b. Preparation
 - i. Warm-up
 - ii. Timely memorization and analysis
 - iii. Appropriate attire
 - c. Respect
 - i. Courtesy of fellow workers
 - ii. Care for the rehearsal hall, theatre, props, costumes, etc.
 - iii. Demands of the profession

 6. Artistic Ability
 - a. Believability or Compelling Performance: The quality of truthfulness in a performance by which an audience recognizes the character's actions to be genuine and consistent within the context of the play. The ability to connect emotionally and intellectually with an audience in the exploration of the ideas and emotions set out in the performance.
 - b. Playing moments/discoveries where required. Full engagement in a sequence of actions, discoveries, and responses that are linked to create a varied, engaging performance.
 - c. The creative use of language and visual ideas through the invention of approaches to new performance.
 - d. The ability to clearly articulate ideas to an audience or clearly present challenging and difficult ideas to an audience.

 7. Techniques
 - a. Physical
 - i. Physical characterization
 - ii. Presence
 - iii. Physical ease and grace (elegance of execution)
 - iv. Specific demands of the role: dance, acrobatics, combat, etc.
 - b. Vocal
 - i. Vocal freedom and expressiveness
 - ii. Audibility
 - iii. Clarity
 - iv. Vocal characterization
 - v. Dialect
 - c. Emotional
 - i. Meeting the emotional demands of a role
 - ii. Easy and expressive use of a wide emotional range

 8. Text analysis:
 - a. Depth and quality of text analysis as demonstrated in specific, well-justified line readings and phrasing, well-conceived objectives, and appropriate character choices.

 9. Completion and respect of teaching assignments related to evaluation and student
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review.

- a. Successful class preparation.
- b. Completion of duties
- c. Positive growth as an educator

MFA in Theatre: Design: Academic and Artistic Review Criteria

At the semester review, the work will be discussed using the following criteria:

The candidate's reflection paper will serve as the basis for discussion within the committee meeting, so great care should be taken when writing it as it is a glimpse into the semester's struggles and successes. The following criteria can be used to determine the recommendation from the GGC:

1. Classwork
 - a. Execution of class assignments
 - b. Written work
 - c. Performance of other assignments and exercises
2. Contribution to Classroom Community
 - a. Ability to collaborate
 - b. Discussion skills
 - c. Appropriate critical commentary and constructive criticism
 - d. Adherence to classroom etiquette (as established by the instructor)
3. Preparation: Work Outside of Class
 - a. Practice of design and technical skills
 - b. Development of design aesthetic and style
 - c. Development of original material or original approaches
4. Preparation: Design and Technical Assignments
 - a. Appropriate response to show needs in design/production meetings
 - b. Adequate preparation of design deliverables
 - c. Attention to deadlines
 - d. Follow through on all designer responsibilities
 - e. Collaborative work as part of a team
5. Artistic Ability
 - a. Growth as a designer/technician
 - b. Development of personal design aesthetic and style
6. Professional Comportment
 - a. Punctuality
 - b. Preparation
 - c. Respect
7. Completion and respect of teaching assignments related to evaluation and student

review.

- a. Successful class preparation.
- b. Completion of duties
- c. Positive growth as an educator

Along with the reflection paper outlined above, the student should present and be prepared to discuss and evaluate their work to date, accompanied by proper documentation (papers, drawings, renderings, projects, animations, portfolio/website, etc.).

Portfolio Standards and Overall Content:

1. All designs are to be neatly and clearly labeled. The name of the show, character, or scene (if applicable), the date of the design, and the designer's name should appear on each work.
2. Visual materials will suggest an understanding of a range of periods and styles assembled in a method appropriate to the given text, music, and/or performance.
3. Visual materials must demonstrate the ability to conduct research and present findings in a method that communicates the design approach.
4. Visual documentation (photographs and/or computer or web-based visualization) of all realized designs.
5. All drafting necessary for the creation and execution of the design, including ground plans, sections, elevations, perspective drawings, light plots, and pattern drafting, may be included.
6. All organizational paperwork necessary for implementing the design, including, but not limited to, budget statements, crew assignments, costume analysis, lighting paperwork, digital storyboarding, etc., will be included.
7. A demonstration of related graphic abilities in the arts, including painting, drawing, sketching, compositing, etc., may be included.

Leaves of Absence

Under special conditions, graduate students may be granted one leave of absence. A maximum leave of one (1) year may be granted to master's students. The length and rationale for the leave of absence must be stated in advance, recommended to the Dean of the College of Arts & Letters by the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, and approved by the Dean of the College of Arts & Letters.

Graduate Student Academic Files and Viewing Procedures

Typical Inventory in Academic File*:

- Original Admission Application
- Official Academic Transcript
- Graduate Guidance Committee Form

- Graduate Guidance Committee MFA Self-Evaluations & CGC Meeting Responses

*Graduate Assistants have a separate “personnel file” required by the GEU/MSU contract.

Viewing Policy of Academic File:

A graduate student shall have the right to inspect her or his own academic record and shall also have the right to inspect reports and evaluations of her or his conduct. The personnel file has similar viewing rights.

All viewing must be in the presence of the GGC Chairperson, Academic Program Coordinator, or Associate Chair for Graduate Studies.

Access to Student Information:

All policies concerning access, maintenance, and release of students’ records must follow University guidelines: <https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s542>.

Graduation Requirements

Exit Survey for all graduate students

All students who have applied for graduation will have access to the survey. The survey asks questions about educational experiences in MSU graduate programs, as well as about immediate professional plans. The MSU Graduate School uses data from this survey when reviewing graduate programs and to guide decisions about services and initiatives for graduate students.

The identities of all respondents will be kept confidential, and only aggregate information will be made available to faculty and administrators. The students will receive an e-mail message from the Dean of the MSU Graduate School with a link to the survey. However, students do not need to wait for that e-mail message to complete the survey after applying for graduation. Instructions for completing the survey are also available from <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>.

Graduate Degree Certification Checklist

- All programs complete Application for Graduate Admission: <http://admissions.msu.edu/admission/graduate.asp>
- All programs complete the Department of Theatre: Graduate Guidance Committee Form: <https://theatre.msu.edu/graduate-studies/>
- All programs complete Application for Graduation: <http://www.reg.msu.edu/StuForms/GradApp/GradApp.asp>
- All programs review University Commencement Information: <http://commencement.msu.edu/>
- All programs complete the MSU Masters Destination Survey: <https://www.egr.msu.edu/masters/survey/>

6. Departmental Policies: Integrity and Safety in Research and Creative Activities

Ethical Expectations: Integrity in Research and Professional Conduct

When you enter the Department of Theatre graduate program at MSU, you enter an

intellectual community in which integrity in professional, research, and creative activities is highly valued. Faculty in the program believe that the best way to ensure the integrity of our collective efforts is to create a climate of care and ethical expectations in which graduate students are taught, advised, mentored, and supported in their teaching and research activities.

That climate includes several components:

- a shared understanding of what constitutes appropriate professional conduct, and explicit criteria for dismissal of students who violate those professional standards;
- a shared understanding of what constitutes unethical or dishonest behavior, and explicit criteria for dismissal of students who practice unethical or dishonest behavior while engaged in research, scholarly, and creative activities;
- a shared understanding of what constitutes ethical mentoring and advising, and explicit guidelines and policies for mediating conflicts and handling grievances/appeals between students and mentors, and between students and students.

Integrity in research and creative activities is based on sound disciplinary practices as well as on a commitment to basic values such as fairness, equity, honesty, and respect. Students learn to value professional integrity and high standards of ethical behavior through interaction with members of their academic unit and their faculty advisor and by emulating exemplary behavior.

The Department of Theatre expects that students adhere to the responsible conduct of research and creative activities of graduate students ([GSRR 2.4.7](#)). See MSU's [Integrity of Scholarship & Grades](#) policy, [GSRR 8.1.2](#), and [GSRR, Article 5](#).

Graduate students should follow the MSU Guidelines on Authorship, available at <https://rio.msu.edu/authorship>, and MSU's Institutional Data Policy, available at <https://tech.msu.edu/about/guidelines-policies/msu-institutional-data-policy/>.

Appropriate Professional Conduct

As faculty in an academic program, we share some common standards about what constitutes appropriate professional conduct, and we are responsible for sharing these standards with graduate students. Our collective understanding of these professional standards comes from our own practices as professionals in the disciplines and fields within the Department of Theatre and from our common belief that humans, in general, should treat each other decently, with respect, care, and generosity.

In general, we believe that appropriate professional conduct includes:

- respect for others' personhood and diversity of personhood, including but not limited to race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, style of dress, manner of speaking, political viewpoint, etc.
- a shared commitment to basic values such as fairness, equity, honesty, and respect
- honest and accurate representation of one's identity, credentials, and professional background
- awareness that appropriate professional conduct does not entail the transfer or appropriation of the work of others without shared decision-making, credit, and

benefits—a standard for how to work appropriately within a community and to collaborate professionally

- acknowledgment of the collaborative and social nature of the scholarly enterprise, which extends beyond the use of formal scholarly citations to an acknowledgment of how fellow scholars have helped one to form ideas, review drafts, suggest revisions, etc.
- actively and respectfully listening to and engaging with people, their ideas, and how they experience (and represent) cultural and intellectual institutions
- respect for human subjects involved in research
- explicit training of graduate students in sound disciplinary practices (including appropriate methodological instruction) in core courses and in the interactions that we have with one another as colleagues

Faculty in the Department of Theatre graduate program believe that any of the following constitute unethical and/or dishonest scholarly and/or research practices:

- violation of policies outlined in the current MSU Graduate Programs catalog (<https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/>) and the MSU Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR; <https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/article-one-graduate-student-rights-and%20-responsibilities-%20at-michigan-state-university.html>)
- violation of policies outlined in the Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities published by the MSU Office of Research Ethics and Standards in the Research Integrity Newsletter (Spring 2004, pp. 12–14)
- violations of the provisions of the MSU Human Research Protection (HRP) Manual, available on the Human Research Protection Program website (<https://hrpp.msu.edu/>)
- violation of policies outlined in the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) Handbook
- violation of ethics and research integrity guidelines developed and published by professional organizations such as the following, as applicable according to field of study:
 - **AATE**: American Alliance for Theatre and Education
 - **AEA**: Actors' Equity Association
 - **ASTR**: American Society for Theatre Research
 - **ATDS**: American Theatre and Drama Society
 - **ATHE**: Association for Theatre in Higher Education
 - **IATSE**: International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees
 - **IDC**: Intimacy Directors and Coordinators
 - **KCACTF**: Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival
 - **SAFD**: Society of American Fight Directors
 - **USA**: United Scenic Artists
 - **USITT**: United States Institute for Theatre Technology
 - **VASTA**: Voice and Speech Trainers Association
- violations of the above that include but are not limited to misrepresentation, falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism
- violations of professional standards:
 - Attempting to function in rehearsal, meetings, or performance under the influence of abusive substances (i.e., alcohol, illegal drugs, etc.)

- Abusive behavior (including but not limited to inappropriate language) to peers, colleagues, collaborators, etc.
- Lack of punctuality for deadlines, rehearsals, performances, public relations demands, etc.
- violation of the standards mentioned above of appropriate professional behavior

Reporting Unethical or Dishonest Scholarly and Research Practices and/or Inappropriate Professional Conduct

To report inappropriate professional conduct, contact the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies or Department Chairperson. If you are uncomfortable doing so or believe there is a better venue to express concerns, please contact the University Ombudsperson (<https://ombud.msu.edu/>).

Consequences of Unethical or Dishonest Scholarly and Research Practices

For dishonest scholarly practices in a course, the instructor will follow the university regulations found in the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR) Handbook. The instructor will also inform the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies and the student's GGC.

Refer to MSU's Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities for further information: <https://rio.msu.edu/misconduct>

Mandatory Reporting, Discrimination, and Harassment

Faculty are considered mandatory reporters. This means that they are required to report incidents of sexual harassment, sexual violence, sexual misconduct, stalking, credible threats of harm to oneself or others, and relationship violence that they learn about or observe in their professional capacity. Professional capacity includes information learned in classroom contexts, at individual meetings, in research contexts, and in spaces outside of the university, including on social media.

Similarly, you are considered a mandatory reporter if you have a teaching assistantship at MSU, in our department, or elsewhere. Workshops are offered through the Graduate School so that TAs can better understand their roles and possible actions as mandatory reporters.

MSU's Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance (OCR) reviews concerns related to discrimination and harassment based on age, color, gender, gender identity, disability status, height, marital status, national origin, political persuasion, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, and weight under the University's Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP) and Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (RVSM). OIE staff is available to provide information on the policies, connect MSU community members to resources, investigate complaints, and provide training. More information is available at <https://civilrights.msu.edu/>.

The University Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct is available at <https://safeplace.msu.edu/msu-policy-reporting>

Restorative Justice @ MSU provides an alternative source of training, information, and

resources on issues dealing with harassment, discrimination, and violence. This includes support-based resources for counseling, advocacy, and guides to navigating both MSU and legal systems of reporting. You can access more information at <https://www.deanofstudents.msu.edu/restorative-justice>

Campus Safety

General MSU Safety Resources are available at <https://msu.edu/state-transparency-reporting/campus-safety-information-resources>

The MSU Travel Clinic promotes safe and healthy travel by providing counseling to travelers about appropriate vaccines and preventive medication. More information is available at <https://travelclinic.msu.edu/>

Safety Guidelines for an Active Shooter Situation are available at <https://comartsci.msu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/resources/safety-guidelines-for-active-shooter1.pdf>

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Training

All students, faculty, and staff must complete MSU's online DEI training. Visit the Training page from MSU's Office of Research Regulatory Support for FAQs and the link to take the training.

Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR)

MSU's Graduate School has put into place requirements for all graduate students requiring responsible and ethical research. The Department of Theatre's RECR requirements are available on the THR website: <https://theatre.msu.edu/graduate-studies/>. There are annual requirements and expectations, and progress must be documented and filed with the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies and Academic Program Coordinator. Failure to comply with the RECR requirements will affect degree completion. MFA students will begin work to complete their RECR in THR 830. The module-based RECR requirements are completed and tracked through the system at <https://orrs.msu.edu/train>; students must track their overall progress using the Plan of Study.

Ethical Mentoring

Mentors are faculty members who take a special interest in helping students develop into successful members of the profession by optimizing their education experiences, assisting their socialization into disciplinary culture, advancing their personal growth as professionals, and helping them find jobs after they finish their degrees.

Effective mentoring is characterized by mutual trust, understanding, and respect for students' professional and personal needs. A successful mentor is prepared to deal with population-diversity issues, including those peculiar to ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and disability.

Good mentoring practices include the following:

- careful, patient listening
- building a relationship with a student beyond the classroom and studio

- using authority ethically
- nurturing self-sufficiency
- establishing focused time for one-on-one mentoring engagement
- sharing work and professional ethics
- providing introductions to important scholars/artists in the field
- offering constructive feedback
- providing personalized training and advice about the formation of a professional profile and the formation of a professional ethos in the student’s chosen field/discipline

Additionally, mentors should regularly reference and review the graduate school’s guidelines on mentoring and mentorship: <https://grad.msu.edu/msu-guidelines-graduate-student-mentoring-advising>.

Environmental Health & Safety (EHS)

EHS oversees University efforts to protect occupational health and the environment. EHS assists faculty and staff in maintaining safe, compliant workplaces. For more information, please see: <https://ehs.msu.edu/index.html>

EHS supports Michigan State University's mission and guiding principles through leadership, guidance, education, and partnership to promote and establish programs in health and safety, environmental protection, and regulatory compliance.

7. Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

The University has established a judicial structure and process for hearing and adjudicating alleged violations of recognized graduate student rights and responsibilities, outlined in the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook, article 5:

<https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/article-five-adjudication-cases-involving-graduate-student-rights-and-responsibilities.html>

Conflicts and Grievances

The Graduate Program follows the university’s Non-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment and Non-Retaliation Policy, which can be found here: <https://civilrights.msu.edu/policies/Notice-of-Non-Discrimination-Anti-Harassment-and-Non-Retaliation.html>

If a student has a disagreement or a conflict with an instructor, administrator, or another student or feels that in some way their academic rights have been violated, they should attempt to resolve that conflict directly with the person(s) involved through informal discussion. If you have questions, concerns, issues with committee members, committee composition, or any other conflicts, please initiate a discussion with your committee chair first. If need be, your next point of contact should be the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies.

Every graduate program on campus is required to have a formal, written grievance policy for graduate students. The THR graduate Hearing Board may be found in the Department of Theatre Bylaws. The College of Arts & Letters policy may be found on the ombudsman’s

website. Each of these policies stipulates that at any point, the student may file a formal, written grievance for consideration by a hearing board at the appropriate level. For disputes about a final grade received in a course, students must initiate the process by speaking to the instructor no later than the midpoint of the semester following the one in which the grade was received (excluding summer terms).

If a student finds themselves in this situation and has exhausted the internal resources for resolving the issue, they may contact the Office of the University Ombudsperson. The Office of the University Ombudsperson provides assistance to students, faculty, and staff in resolving university-related concerns. Such concerns include student-faculty conflicts, communication problems, concerns about the university climate, and questions about the options available for handling a problem according to Michigan State University policy. The University Ombudsperson also provides information about available resources and student/faculty rights and responsibilities. The office operates as a confidential, independent, and neutral resource. It does not provide notice to the University—that is, it does not speak or hear for the University.

Graduate students in the Department of Theatre operate in two separate but connected spheres: the classroom and the production process. In both spheres, all students must abide by the following required conduct, which follows a professional model.

Professional Behavior and Dismissal

All participants are expected to be cordial and respectful and never disparage others' viewpoints. Professional academic behavior includes punctuality, sincere and deeply motivated attempts to master the subject matter, and a willingness to share and cooperate with others.

As a theatre artist, your reputation is of the utmost importance, and as such, your collaborative attitude is expected to remain positive throughout your interactions with everyone at MSU.

The following expectations relate to your work as a theatrical artist and as a student.

Professional Conduct

ATTENDANCE: You are required to be present and on time for every rehearsal and production-related appointment, such as costume fittings. If you think you may be late, please contact your stage manager to let them know. Failure to adhere to call times will result in meetings with your Head of Area and the Production Manager. These meetings may result in disciplinary action and eventual removal from the production.

CONFLICTS: Please make all of your conflicts known on your Audition Form. Conflicts will only be accepted until you have accepted the role. After this, all conflicts need to be requested in writing by the director and the production manager. To receive approval for your conflict, both the director and the production manager must sign off. The production manager will notify you of whether or not your conflict was approved.

REHEARSAL ROOM ENERGY: You are at work starting at the time you enter the rehearsal or production space. There are a number of things that you can learn by actively watching rehearsal. Please keep quiet during rehearsal. Do not distract others by engaging in side

conversations or exhibiting disruptive behaviors. Rehearsal is a place where you can leave your problems outside of the door. Some people find that when you allow yourself to focus solely on what is happening in the room, you may have a new perspective on the problem once you exit.

DRUGS/ALCOHOL: You will be removed from the room if you arrive at any production-related activity under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Further disciplinary actions will be taken, and your Graduate Area Program Director will notify you of the next steps.

IMPAIRED BEHAVIOR: If your behavior at an event is impaired for any reason, a faculty or staff member may send you home from said event. This is not only for your own well-being but also for the safety of those around you. There are many reasons that you could be asked to leave; this is not a form of punishment. However, if you are asked to leave multiple times, your Graduate Area Program Director may contact you to set up a meeting to discuss concerns.

Performance & Rehearsal Room Etiquette: You are expected to do **personal research** to understand your role in this production and its importance.

- **Learn your lines on time.** Once you reach your “off-book” date, you will no longer be allowed to carry a script. Remember that other people in the production depend on you to know your lines.
- You are expected to **check your email** and call boards/bulletins daily for production information, appointments, costume fittings, publicity calls, etc.
- **Remain positive and professional.** If you have a concern in the rehearsal room, you can reach out to your stage manager or deputy. If you are unsure of whom to speak to, you can always ask your faculty mentor or the production manager.
- Part of being a respectful production member means engaging in **self-care**. It is important to stay well-rested and hydrated and maintain basic hygiene and nourishment. Self-care also means taking advantage of the many resources on campus. Your faculty mentor can help put you in contact with the right people.
- When **receiving notes**, it is important to do so in a professional manner. This means writing down the notes you are given and respectfully approaching the director after the note session has concluded to ask any clarifying questions. It is important not to be defensive because the artistic team has the responsibility to look at the production as a whole.
- **Do not give notes** or direction to anyone else on the production. The only people who should be commenting on or critiquing other’s performances should be the director, choreographer, and music director. It is considered highly unethical for performers and crews to direct each other. If someone gives you notes, please consult the Director or your immediate supervisor.
- **Please do not touch weapons, props, or costume pieces that are not assigned to you.** You also need to preset or double-check your preset items. Even though someone else may preset your items, having a second set of eyes is important to look over everything.
- **Support the values of a consensual, professional workplace through consent practices.** Rehearsal is a professional model. Check-in with your partners or ensemble members before engaging in any physical touch. When asking for consent, use open, specific questions such as “May I touch your shoulder with my hand?” Do a boundary check, and respect these boundaries at all times. If a boundary is accidentally crossed, apologize

and check in before rehearsal continues. Stop immediately and check in if a partner or member of the ensemble verbally or non-verbally indicates a change in their boundaries. Refrain from physical “horseplay” in rehearsal and performance.

Part of becoming a professional theatre artist is learning to collaborate well with others. A good collaborator is someone that the team can depend on, someone who gives as well as takes and whom the rest of the ensemble can trust. This means behaving professionally. While the list below is not definitive, it is where we expect you to start.

- Treat everyone with respect.
- Treat everyone as an equal.
- Approach the work with humility.
- Be appreciative of the opportunities you are given.
- Be fully prepared for rehearsal, production, and other activities.
- Remain an engaged and willing participant in rehearsal, production, and other activities.

Unprofessional Conduct may include the following:

- Chewing gum during rehearsals.
- Arriving late for rehearsals, costume fittings, photos, or publicity calls.
- Verbal or written comments that defame or negatively impact the collaborative environment and success of the project and its contributors
- Gossip and rumormongering.
- Once cast through closing, no cutting or dying of hair, beards, acquiring tattoos or piercings without consultation from the Costume Designer.
- Allowing for inconsistencies in the performance of your duties.
- Springing surprises, jokes, etc., during rehearsals or performances.
- Altering your performance in a way that contradicts the rehearsal process.
- Standing offstage where you could be blocking entrances or exits.
- Anything that could be distracting or intrusive in the dressing room, including boisterous behavior, loud noises, or playing loud music.
- Anything that could be distracting or disruptive backstage.
- Cell phone use during rehearsals or performances, including texting, calling, allowing it to ring, use of social media, etc.
- Bringing your cell phone with you on stage.
- Allowing visitors in dressing rooms prior to or during performances.
- Performing at less-than-optimal level at rehearsals or performances due to prior consumption of alcohol or drugs.
- Smoking in costume. Eating in costume. Unapproved beverages in costume.
- Behaving in any way that distracts a performer or colleague from the task at hand
- Resistance to trying new work, refusing to take risks, and refusing to test your boundaries as an artist.
- Poor work ethic, lackadaisical attitude, or attitudes of entitlement.
- Presenting unprepared or poorly prepared work.
- Defensiveness or disregard when given feedback.

In the event of transgressions or lapses, the student is advised by the immediate supervisor with recommendations for altering the objectionable behavior. If necessary, the Graduate Area

Program Director is consulted, then the student's GGC and Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, and finally the Department Chairperson. At all stages, an informal resolution is preferred.

Production conflicts are resolved at the lowest possible level by the persons involved through goodwill and the guiding principle that priority is accorded to the most immediate production. The Department Chairperson, after speaking with all parties affected by the conflict, is the final arbiter of these conflicts.

Classroom (with TA as a student) conflicts are resolved at the lowest possible level by the persons involved through goodwill. The Department Chairperson, after speaking with all parties affected by the conflict, is the final arbiter of these conflicts.

Shop or teaching (with TA as employee) conflicts are resolved at the lowest possible level by the persons involved through goodwill. The Department Chairperson, after speaking with all parties affected by the conflict, is the final arbiter of these conflicts.

When a graduate student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their discussions with the instructor and area directors, they may send a written request for a hearing to the appropriate unit head (e.g., department chairperson, school director, program director, or associate dean). Hearings for graduate student grievances should be held at the lowest possible administrative level.

Department-Level Hearing Procedures

The grievance procedure is outlined in the department bylaws; appeals are addressed by the college and university bylaws governing grievances.

Excerpt from Department of Theatre Bylaws:

2.2.3 Graduate Hearing Board

2.2.3.1 Composition

The Graduate Hearing Board shall be composed of three faculty members elected by the voting faculty and three graduate students. Graduate student representatives to the Hearing Board will be elected yearly from the total body of graduate students in the Department of Theatre.

2.2.3.2 Function

Procedures shall be in accordance with University policies and procedures pertaining to academic hearing protocol.

Following the outcome of that decision, the student has the right to escalate the process to the college level.

College-Level Hearing Procedures

For Graduate students, the hearing request letter must include the following information:

- The student's name and PID
- The student's local address, phone number and e-mail address
- A detailed explanation of the alleged violation of student rights to justify a hearing, with reference to the specific article in the SRR, GSRR, LSRR, MSRR, or Code of Teaching

Responsibility

- The name of the individual the student believes violated his or her rights
- The date of the alleged violation
- The name of the MSU instructor, student, or staff member, if any, who will assist the student throughout the hearing process
- The names of witnesses, if any, who will speak on the student's behalf at the hearing, if the hearing board grants the request for a hearing
- The redress sought to rectify the situation.

Deadline: The student should sign and date the letter and submit it before the middle of the semester following the initial dispute.

Graduate hearings initiated at the department, school or program level may be appealed to the college hearing board. Graduate hearings initiated at the college level may be appealed to the University Graduate Judiciary.

Based on the specific type of grievance, the hearing process for graduate students will follow one of the patterns listed below:

- Academic Grievance Hearing alleging violations of student rights (including grade disputes) established in the SRR, GSRR, LSRR, or MSRR.
- Refer to the Office of the University Ombudsperson for additional information regarding MSU policies: <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/>

8. Criteria for Department of Theatre Graduate Assistantships

Training and Professional Development

The Department of Theatre will offer an orientation training program in the fall of every year for all graduate assistants. During this orientation, graduate GAs will be provided training in the teaching of specific subject matter, an introduction to course goals, grading criteria and practices, and classroom and/or shop procedures. All GAs shall participate in such programs as part of their regular duties.

While such programs are important for all graduate assistants, attendance will not be required for any employee who is determined by the Department of Theatre already to have the skills and experience equivalent to those provided in the program.

Required training during the defined orientation period of a graduate GA's employment will be included as part of the hourly semester total.

Assigning Courses

TAs will be assigned courses by their Graduate Area Program Director and Associate Chair for Graduate Studies. Every effort will be made to offer students a wide range of teaching opportunities.

Early Departure

It is expected that all theatre students will remain on campus, attend classes, and complete all

coursework for each semester. All teaching and non-teaching assignments held by graduate students run until each is released individually by the faculty supervisor of the area in which the assistantship or employment is located or as defined by the GEU contract (see GEU Article 10). Requests for early departure must be made in writing and approved by each instructor, work supervisor, and the Graduate Guidance Committee.

Professional Meetings

Graduate students may request accommodation from their immediate supervisor to attend career-significant professional meetings, interviews, and auditions for a period not exceeding one working week. Preference is given to final-year graduates.

Religious Holidays

Students who miss classes because of the observance of religious holidays should not be penalized on this account and should be given ample opportunity to make up for the missed work. Faculty should not schedule examinations in their courses on the designated religious holidays or on the calendar day following the designated holidays.

The Department of Theatre adheres to the [MSU Graduate School's Graduate Assistant Appointment Procedures](#).

Criteria and Procedures for Reappointment ALL PROGRAMS

It is the policy of the Department of Theatre that Graduate Assistant appointments will be awarded according to enrollment in particular programs. Continued departmental support is not assured and is dependent upon semester-by-semester reappointment. Funding depends on satisfactory progress toward the degree, as referenced in this section of the handbook, and is not guaranteed.

9. Work Related Policies

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantship is a generic term referring to financial support of graduate students that results in a stipend and compensation and for which performance of defined duties is expected. A variety of graduate assistantships, fellowships, and funding opportunities are available to graduate students in the Department of Theatre, depending on the student's level of professional and instructional experience.

For a list of the assistantship information provided by the Graduate School, access <https://grad.msu.edu/assistantships>.

For a link to your Graduate Employee Union Contract, access <https://hr.msu.edu/contracts/>

All GA job opportunities are available at:

<http://theatre.msu.edu/index.php/academics/graduate-studies/>

English Language Proficiency Level

Refer to section 3 of this handbook for GA expectations.

Summer Appointments

Summer appointments are separate from regular academic year appointments, and positions to be available are announced in the Spring Semester. The Department Chairperson, in consultation with area faculty, will select graduate assistants for the summer term.

Appointment Responsibilities

According to the Graduate Employees Union contract, the academic year encompasses two appointment periods: August 16–December 31 and January 1–May 15. During each appointment period, a graduate assistant's responsibilities require an average of 10 hours per week for a quarter-time appointment and 20 hours per week for a half-time appointment. For more information on Graduate Student's Rights and Responsibilities, access <https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/index.html>.

Graduate students with a half-time appointment may, with permission of the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, work hourly for no more than 9 hours per week during the academic year.

Anticipated distribution of duties over the weeks of a semester should be communicated to the graduate assistant by the appointing unit at the time of appointment. To the extent that current policies and procedures contain provisions about wages, benefits, or other terms and conditions of employment, they are, for teaching assistants included in the collective bargaining unit, subject to negotiations with the Graduate Employees Union and the American Federation of Teachers.

Summer appointments are determined under a different budget category, are fewer, and are advertised by the department in early spring on the department email lists.

Each academic year, the Department of Theatre appoints Graduate Assistantships (one and two semester appointments), at up to 50% full-time equivalent, to perform duties in teaching, production, research, and administration. Some work in theatre research; some teach small-group recitation sections in conjunction with large service courses, principally IAH; some teach in introductory Department of Theatre courses; others serve as laboratory assistants in design and technical production. Preference for departmental appointments is given to returning students and to applicants whose admission is completed by April 15.

Appointment as a Graduate Assistant is based on the qualifications of the applicant and their evaluation via audition, interview, portfolio review, and references. Faculty in the GA areas review all applicants and make recommendations to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies and Department Chairperson.

Appointments are determined by funding availability and are renewed based on progress toward the degree as determined by the student's GGC.

Graduate Assistants receive bi-weekly stipend payments. In addition to the stipend, Graduate Assistants receive remission of general and instructional fees and, as applicable, resident tuition

for each semester of registration. Summer appointments are made separately from the regular academic year. The Graduate Assistantship does not cover [MSU Student Voted Taxes](#). Student Government Taxes, FM Radio Tax, and The State News assessment are refundable upon presentation of the appropriate receipt at the respective organization's office by the publicized date.

Area faculty recommend students for graduate assistantships based on student experience, abilities, and interests. Recommendations for new students are based on admission materials. Recommendations for continuing students are based on semester reviews. Graduate Assistant assignments are based on the needs of the Department and upon an educational philosophy that graduate students should have experience in a range of theatre activities. Graduate Assistant (50% appointment) assignments are for an average of 20 hours per week throughout the semester. Specific assignments may vary from week to week, semester to semester, during the academic year.

The hours are not assigned for work on any individual research or production assignment that the Graduate Assistant may be given as partial fulfillment of the degree requirements. Those individual assignments should receive specific credit under THR 894: Special Projects in Theatre. Graduate Assistant assignments are made each semester by the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies or Department Chairperson in consultation with the area faculty. Once the assignments are announced for the upcoming semester, the Graduate Assistant should make an appointment with the immediate supervisor of the assigned areas to establish the precise work schedule for the upcoming semester. Specific assignments may vary within a semester.

Program Expectations for Graduate Assistants (GAs)

GAships are subject to the policies and evaluation procedures of the units in which they are appointed. GAs are expected to observe the following norms of professional behavior established by the GGC and enforced by the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies:

Expectations of GAs

- The faculty member(s) with whom a graduate assistant is working should clearly specify the assistant's duties and responsibilities at the start of the semester or at a time sufficiently in advance of the date of expected completion
- Assistants should be available for work for the number of hours specified from the start of the contract to the end of the semester (the last day of the final exam week)
- Assistants should report to the person(s) to whom they are assigned at the start of their contract
- Assistants have the responsibility of reporting to the person(s) to whom they are assigned at least once per week
- The student will receive a regular evaluation each semester as part of their GGC meeting and submit a response to the discussion, including a list of goals for the next semester
- Inability to perform assigned duties should be communicated immediately to the faculty member directly or through the department's main office
- For TAs specifically:
 - Compliance with the University Code of Teaching Responsibilities
 - Desire2Learn (D2L) systems support instruction; tutorials on how to use the system

are available

Graduate Assistantship Levels

The following levels of assistantships have been contractually established by the Graduate Employees Union (GEU):

Graduate Assistants, Level 1. These graduate students have a bachelor's degree and have less than one year's experience as graduate assistants or as full-support fellows. They teach, do research, or are assigned supervised duties such as reading and grading papers.

Graduate Assistants, Level 2. These graduate students have a relevant Master's degree (or equivalent) and/or one year's experience as graduate assistants or as full-support fellows in the appointing department or school or in a unit considered relevant by the chair of the appointing department or school. They teach, do research, or perform administrative tasks with moderate supervision.

Graduate Assistants, Level 3. These graduate students have a relevant Master's degree (or equivalent) and have at least 2 years of experience as graduate assistants (or equivalent experience at the faculty level) in the appointing unit or in a unit considered relevant by the chair of the appointing unit. They teach, do research, or perform administrative tasks with minimum supervision.

Advancement to the rank of Graduate Assistant Level 3 is on a merit basis, with the above prerequisites considered minimal. The office of the registrar further requires that Level 3 be granted only to graduate students who have successfully completed doctoral comprehensive exams, as defined by the department in which the student is enrolled, and have experience as a graduate RA/TE at Michigan State University or equivalent.

Within the range established for the university, the stipend depends on the individual's qualifications and on the availability of funds in the appointing unit.

Graduate Assistantship Eligibility Policy

The College of Arts & Letters mandates that each graduate program in the College implement a policy limiting the total number of semesters of Graduate Assistantship eligibility and tying eligibility for assistantships to progress toward the degree. Students are encouraged to review the MSU rules and GEU contract.

For MFA students in the Department of Theatre

- Students are eligible for graduate assistantships within the program for a maximum of six semesters (not including summer).
- Students who have exhausted their assistantship eligibility may be given an assistantship if such are available after assistantships have been given to all normally qualified and eligible candidates.
- Students who are not making satisfactory progress toward the degree are not eligible for an assistantship.
- Academic-year funding provided by fellowships or other achievement awards will not

count towards the number of eligible semesters.

Disability Accommodations for Graduate Students

Graduate assistants (RAs, TAs, and TEs) are both students and employees. Thus, they are eligible for disability accommodations in both roles, which are provided through distinct documents coordinated by RCPD. Graduate assistants can register for both situations using RCPD's MyProfile portal.

Allowable Reasons for Leave

- **Illness, Injury, or Pregnancy:** In the event that a graduate student is unable to attend courses because of illness, injury, or pregnancy. Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) should refer to the medical leave policies in the GEU contract Article 18, and other graduate assistants should refer to Academic Programs.
- **Religious Observance:** It is university policy to allow graduate students to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen and practiced religious faith.
- **Professional Conferences:** It is the policy of the program to encourage graduate students to attend professional and scholarly conferences.
- **Adoption and Parental Leave:** This policy applies to graduate students who are unable to attend courses because they adopt a child or become parents by birth.
- **Bereavement:** In the event that a graduate student is unable to attend courses because they experience a death in their immediate family.
- **Jury Duty:** Refer to MSU policies on jury duty covered by the GEU contract.
- **Military Service:** In the event that a graduate student is unable to attend courses because they are called to do military service.

Medical Leaves

Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) should refer to the medical leave policies in GEU CBU Article 18.

Personal Leave Policy

This policy is designed to address leave from coursework and scholarly obligations required by the program. Graduate students who also hold teaching assistantships should consult Article 18 of the GEU Contract for policies governing them as employees of Michigan State University.

General Guidelines

If a student misses a class (for any of the allowable reasons referenced below), they should inform their GGC Chairperson and all course instructors as promptly as possible so that arrangements for completing missed coursework may be made. Every effort will be made to assist the student in making up missed work, but the final responsibility for completing missed work in a timely fashion rests with the student. If a student will be missing from the program for more than a week, they should also inform the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies and request a formal leave of absence from the program. In the event of such a leave, the student shall have the right to return to the program, within the dates of the current appointment, at such time as they are able to resume the required program of study. If a leave occurs while a student is taking a comprehensive examination, the student's GGC Chairperson should consult with the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies about how to best restart that component of the

exam process.

Grief Absence Policy

For master's (Plan A), master's (Plan B) with research responsibilities, and doctoral students, it is the responsibility of the student to: a) notify their advisor/major professor and faculty of the courses in which they are enrolled of the need for a grief absence in a timely manner, but no later than one week from the student's initial knowledge of the situation, b) provide appropriate verification of the grief absence as specified by the advisor/major professor and faculty, and c) complete all missed work as determined in consultation with the advisor/major professor and faculty. It is the responsibility of the advisor/major professor to: a) determine with the student the expected period of absence – it is expected that some bereavement processes may be more extensive than others depending on individual circumstances, b) receive verification of the authenticity of a grief absence request upon the student's return, and c) make reasonable accommodations so that the student is not penalized due to a verified grief absence. If employed as a GA or TE, the graduate student must also notify their employer. Both employer and student will swiftly communicate to determine how the student's responsibilities will be covered during their absence. Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) should refer to the bereavement policy in GEU contract Article 18.

Outside Employment and Work for Pay

Graduate students who hold half-time graduate assistantships (either teaching assistantships or research assistantships) at MSU may not hold full-time employment elsewhere.

At times, students may find it necessary to work additional hours beyond their assistantship assignments. TA and RA assignments typically require 20 hours of work per week. Working too many additional hours beyond the assistantship can interfere with progress toward the degree. For this reason, we strongly recommend that students limit the number of extra hours they work while they are holding an assistantship so as not to jeopardize their performance in courses or their progress toward the degree.

A Graduate Assistant (50%) who is considering additional employment outside the Department or the University must first obtain permission from their GGC. The GGC Chairperson must evaluate the impact of the additional employment commitments on the student's academic progress and on their GA responsibilities. The GGC's recommendation will be sent to the Graduate Area Program Director and Associate Chair for Graduate Studies for final approval.

Departmental Resources

The Department of Theatre provides the following support for GAs assigned to work in the department: office space, a mailbox, a desk, and a desk chair, as well as access to a computer and software necessary for teaching. GAs have access to copying services to support their work.

10. University Resources

Resources provided by the Graduate School:

- [Graduate Career Development](#)
- [Diversity, equity, & inclusion programs](#)
- [Events](#)

- [Forms](#)
- [Funding](#)
- [Graduate Educator Advancement and Teaching \(GREAT\)](#)
- [Graduate School Office of Well-Being \(GROW\)](#)
- [Mentoring](#)
- [Out-of-State tuition waivers](#)
- [Policy information](#)
- [Professional development](#)
- [Research integrity](#)
- [Traveling scholar opportunities](#)
- [University Committee on Graduate Studies](#)

Resources provided by university-level units: [OISS](#), [RCPD](#), [Office of Spartan Experiences](#), [the Libraries](#), [the Olin Health Center](#), [Institutional Diversity and Inclusion](#), [the Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship & Innovation](#), [the Writing Center](#), and [University Outreach & Engagement](#), and [the Ombudsperson's Office](#).

Resources provided by the Student Life & Engagement Division: [Student Parent Resource Center](#), the [Gender and Sexuality Campus Center](#), the [Student Veterans Resource Center](#), and [Women's Student Services](#).

Additional funding resources include: [Department graduate funding](#), [CAL support and funding](#), [Graduate School research support](#), [Graduate School travel funding](#), [COGS conference awards](#), [COGS professional development awards](#).