

**MICHIGAN STATE**  

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**UNIVERSITY**



**DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE**  
[www.theatre.msu.edu](http://www.theatre.msu.edu)

**GRADUATE HANDBOOK**

Updated April 26, 2019

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## I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Graduate Studies

**Mission:** 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 a 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 largest research universities in the world and as such your exposure to world class artists will expand your understanding of your artistic process and expand 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, 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. Student have access to national and international conferences and training through funding and support from the University, Graduate School, College of Arts and 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.

**Structure:** The Department is led by the Chair who supervises three areas: Acting, Design and Theatre Studies. Each of these areas has an area head who coordinates separate units within theatre (e.g. Design includes costumes, lights

scenery etc.). These units work to create undergraduate and graduate educational opportunities that are separate yet complimentary. 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.

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 as a mentor to undergraduate students and proof of your deep commitment to the art form. It is expected that students learn the skills of prioritization and time management while also deepening their personal aesthetic and artistry through the successful completion of various projects and assignments. 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. It is also expected that candidates attend required meetings including departmental, area, and semesterly Graduate Guidance Committee meetings.

### **MFA Acting**

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

The MFA acting program at Michigan State University offers individualized and challenging advanced actor training. Intensive scene study and studio work cover a wide range of theatrical materials from the classics to contemporary. Training in voice and movement is an integral part of the program. 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 while visiting Michigan State University.

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 in 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 perform in an approved performance project. One exception to this casting policy is the major final project which will be chosen 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 IV)

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
- Create 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 Graduate Guidance Committee meetings

#### YEAR TWO

- Identify a secondary focus beyond acting (e.g. musical theatre, movement)
- Examine Certifications and alternate training related to secondary focus
- Master teaching of classes that were taught previously
- Create 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 Graduate Guidance Committee meetings

### YEAR THREE

Complete plans for professionalization as artist and educator  
Create content, syllabus and materials for 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  
Prepare performance project as capstone of your work  
Research and document the process of the capstone project for GGC review

## 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 course work 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 course work, 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 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 IV)

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 Graduate Guidance Committee 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 into practice via conference presentation or master class development
- Understand and practice the collaborative nature of theatre-making
- Attend two Graduate Guidance Committee meetings

#### YEAR THREE

- Create content, syllabus and materials for 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 Graduate Guidance Committee meetings

#### Advising and Mentoring in the Department of Theatre

The Department of Theatre operates under the GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISING AND MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS. In addition, each

graduate student experiences a mentor/apprenticeship relationship for each production assignment.



## II. PROGRAM COMPONENTS/PLAN OPTIONS

### Graduate Guidance Committee

The Graduate Guidance Committee is formed from faculty in the student's degree program. Students are required to select this committee with the approval of the Area Head no later than the completion of the first semester (see section IV).

### 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 Graduate Guidance Committee. (See section III)

However, MFA Acting candidates are required to research and document their final capstone project in a manner appropriate to the project. The guidelines for these projects are created in concert with student, GGC and Graduate Acting Program Director.

### 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 form of funding (grants from Graduate School, the GEU, University or Department) to complete external certifications.

### III. 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 Program Director to audition before the Acting/Directing Faculty on campus. 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 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 which 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 areas

Once the candidates have completed the auditions/interview, students 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 Program Directors may make provisional offers to applicants who will then apply to the Graduate school and complete a Department application along with official transcripts and a personal statement detailing interest in Michigan State University's program and an examination of the individual as artist and educator.

Final offers and contracts are made from the Chair who will share 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 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. The Graduate Program Director 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.

Those international teaching assistants (ITAs) may meet this requirement in one of the following ways:

- Presenting a TOEFL iBT speaking section score of 27 or higher.
- Receiving a score of 50 or higher on the [MSU Speaking Test](#)
- Taking [AAE 451 or AAE 452](#) (ITA language support courses) and receiving a score of 50 or higher on the [ITA Oral Interaction Test \(ITAOI\)](#).

Those ITAs who received a waiver of the TOEFL or of other accepted tests of English proficiency for admission, must also meet the requirement of proficiency in spoken English before they are assigned to teaching work that involves oral communication with undergraduate students. To meet this requirement, those ITAs may use any of three options listed above. Individual exceptions from these requirements (on a case-by-case basis in rare circumstances) will be considered by the Graduate School in consultation with the ELC upon the request of the department and with the endorsement of the Associate Dean of the College.

## 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, Program Director and Chair 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 (5) graduate credit hours is available.

### **Residency Expectations**

Since theatre is a live art form, residency of MFA candidates is expected. 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 handbook 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 their 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 Chair and Graduate Program Director that 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.

### **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 \$20,000 (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/>

### **MASTER OF FINE ARTS Academic Standards:**

The student 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 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.

### **Program Requirements FOR THE MASTER OF FINE ARTS – ACTING**

A minimum of 60 graduate credit hours must be completed for the MFA in Acting. Please see the see the university academic programs catalog for requirements.

#### **Curriculum**

A total of 60 credits are required with class offerings as follows:

##### **Acting Core (36 credits)**

THR 801 - Practicum: Acting  
THR 804 - Practicum: Voice  
THR 805 - Practicum: Movement  
THR 894 - Special Projects in Theatre

##### **Academic Core (14 credits)**

THR 830 - Introduction to Graduate Studies  
THR 831 - Studies in Theatre History  
THR 832 - Comparative Drama and Criticism  
THR 834 - Professional Aspects  
THR 870 - Collaborative Studio in Theatre

**Electives (10 Credits)****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 Graduate Guidance Committee 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 eligible 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 when their THR801 Acting Studio is devoted to a capstone project. The student will work on a piece for public presentation. The piece may be 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 Graduate Guidance Committee, the instructor of the course, and the student. The capstone project requires significant, detailed research and a report to the Graduate Guidance Committee. Details on requirements will be provided by the Graduate Guidance Committee.

Students are subject to formal reviews by the Area Faculty with regard to performance in both the classroom as well as their performance in departmental productions and independent projects. (See section V.)

**Program Requirements for THE MASTER OF FINE ARTS – DESIGN**

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

Please see the see the university academic programs catalog for requirements.

**Design Core (32 credits)**  
THR 818 - Design Studio

THR 819 - Applied Design Studio  
THR 811 - Practicum: Production Design and Technology  
THR 894 - Special Projects in Theatre

Three of the following:

THR 411 - Stage Lighting Design  
THR 412 - Stage Costume Design  
THR 414 - Stage Scene Design  
THR 416 - Audio and Visual Technology  
THR 419 - Digital Design for Theatre

**Academic Core (17 credits)**

THR 813 - Period Resources and Research  
THR 830 - Introduction to Graduate Studies  
THR 831 - Studies in Theatre History  
THR 832 - Comparative Drama and Criticism  
THR 834 - Professional Aspects  
THR 870 - Collaborative Studio in Theatre

**Electives (11 Credits)**

**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 must participate in production activities during each semester of enrollment in the program by accepting experiential learning assignments in addition to the design assignments. Students are subject to formal Process Portfolio Reviews by the Design Faculty in both the classroom and the production program. (See section V)  
A comprehensive portfolio review is conducted at the end of the year of study.

## **IV. FORMATION OF THE GRADUATE GUIDANCE COMMITTEE**

### **MFA – Acting Graduate Guidance Committee**

The Graduate Guidance Committee 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, rotating, member of the committee may be added as needed. The student's Graduate Guidance Committee must be constituted by the middle of the student's first semester of enrollment in the program and the composition of the Graduate Guidance



Committee will be submitted to the Head of Acting for approval. The intention is that this committee remains consistent throughout the student's tenure at MSU. Any changes must be approved by the chairperson.

## **MFA – Design Graduate Guidance Committee**

The Graduate Guidance Committee 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, rotating, member of the committee may be appointed as needed. The student's Graduate Guidance Committee must be constituted by the middle of the student's first semester of enrollment in the program and the composition of the Graduate Guidance Committee will be submitted to the Head of Design for approval. The intention is that this committee remains consistent throughout the student's tenure at MSU. Any changes must be approved by the chairperson.

## **ALL PROGRAMS**

It is imperative that the student and the Graduate Guidance Committee Chairperson meet during the first semester to map out an overall curriculum plan based upon the degree requirements and options. The plan must be approved by the Graduate Program Director in the area. 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 Guidance Committee Chairperson not only to select elective and required courses, but also to assess the student's progress toward completion of the degree.

## **Change in Graduate Guidance Committee Chairperson**

A change of chairperson may be initiated by the student or by the chairperson. The student must secure the agreement of the change from the proposed new chairperson before informing the Graduate Program Director in the area. The Program Director 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 Program Director will refer the matter back 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 agreement of

the change from the proposed new committee member before informing their chairperson. If their chairperson sees any problems with the assignment, the matter will be reviewed by the Graduate Program Director in the area 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 Program Director will refer the matter back to the Head of Area for review. (Refer to GSRR 2.4)

**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 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.

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

**Productions**

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

## V. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

### ALL PROGRAMS

#### Semester ACADEMIC REVIEW of Acceptable Academic Standards

The Department Chairperson monitors the semester reviews of all graduate students. It is the responsibility, however, of the Graduate Guidance Committee to conduct semester reviews. The Graduate Program Directors in turn, consider these semester evaluations in order to determine that students are making reasonable progress within their course of study. A student who does not maintain reasonable progress towards the degree, does not complete assigned production duties, does not maintain professional integrity or does not 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. All students must maintain a 3.30 or better grade point average. Academic review recommendations are forwarded to the Graduate Program Director for review and assessment. In a timely manner, the Graduate Program Director informs the Department Chairperson of the results of the semester academic review.

### ALL REVIEWS

#### **Graduate Guidance Committee Semester Review: MFA Candidate Paper Guidelines**

At the end of each semester MFA candidates will meet with their Graduate Guidance Committee (GGC) in order to constructively evaluate the work in the classroom, the hallways 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 on scheduling 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. At mid-first semester, the incoming candidate will immediately follow a similar protocol with scheduling their first GGC meeting in collaboration with the main office. The GGC meeting must take place in either the final week of classes or final exam week. Candidates must deliver to their committee members an updated Curriculum Vitae and a reflective written evaluation at least five business days prior to the GGC meeting.

The five- to seven-page paper should consist of deep reflection of several paragraphs within each section that address the following areas:

- 1) Progress as actor/designer
- 2) Progress as student
- 3) Progress as educator
- 4) Candidate's examination of how work as artist and educator informed each other in the past semester
- 5) Goals for next semester

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

The MFA student will prepare a bullet point list of feedback from the Graduate Guidance Committee meeting and send it to the committee members and Graduate Secretary within 24 hours of the meeting. The committee 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 committee chairperson or committee 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 Graduate Guidance Committee and Department Chairperson. After a negative review, the committee chairperson will notify in writing the Department Chairperson, 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 requirements of the student's graduate degree program. 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 completion of all coursework and the major final project within three years.

## ACADEMIC REVIEW

Following each academic review, the Graduate Guidance Committee 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 committee chairperson will provide the student with a written explanation of the overall recommendation as reflected in the Graduate Guidance Committee 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 be sure that they meet the requirements of the GA assignment, production duties or professional behavior. The six types of recommendations are defined below:

### 1. Proceed in Program

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

### 2. First Warning

The student will be placed under observation by the Graduate Guidance Committee 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 Graduate Program Director will oversee the process, in coordination with the Graduate Guidance Committee, and will keep the MSU Graduate School informed, as needed. The Graduate Guidance Committee Chairperson will notify the Department Chairperson at the mid-term review on the status of the corrective action. If these have been taken successfully, 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 Graduate Guidance Committee 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 Graduate Program Director will oversee the process, in coordination with the Graduate Guidance Committee and will keep the MSU Graduate School informed, as needed. The Graduate Guidance Committee Chairperson will notify the Department Chairperson at the mid-term review, if and when the Second Warning status is to be lifted. Without sufficient improvement as determined by the Graduate Guidance Committee, 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 Graduate Guidance Committee 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 Department Chairperson. The Graduate Guidance Committee Chairperson will notify the Department Chairperson 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 Graduate Guidance Committee Chairperson will notify the Department Chairperson of denial of further registration. The Department Chairperson 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 for a single serious infraction.

### ARTISTIC/ASSISTANTSHIP REVIEW

The artistic review will consist of review of the graduate student's performance in the GAship and performance/production involvement. The Graduate Guidance Committee will make one of the following recommendations as to the student's progress in the program: Proceed in 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 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 Graduate Guidance Committee 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 committee chairperson will notify the Department Chairperson at the mid-term review on the status of the corrective action. If these have been taken successfully, 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 Graduate Guidance Committee 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 committee chairperson will notify the Department Chairperson at the mid-term review if and when the Second Warning status is to be lifted. Without sufficient improvement as determined by the Graduate Guidance Committee the student will be placed on Probation.

### 4. Probation

The Department of Theatre imposes Probation if the student fails to perform the duties of the assistantship or artistic assignment adequately. The student will be provided with specific written reasons for the Probation and suggestive corrective actions. A student may be removed from assistantship or enrollment if the terms of the Probation are not met. The committee chairperson will notify the Department Chairperson 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 Graduate Guidance Committee Chairperson will notify the Department Chairperson of denial of further registration. The Department Chairperson will in turn notify the MSU Graduate School.

### 6. Disciplinary Action and Dismissal

The MSU Graduate Employees Union recognize 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 for a single serious infraction.

## **MFA – 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 instructor)
5. Professional Comportment
  - a. Punctuality
  - b. Preparation
    - i. Warm up
    - ii. Timely memorization and analysis
    - iii. Appropriate attire
  - c. Respect
    - i. Courtesy for fellow workers
    - ii. Care of 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 assignment related to evaluation and student review.
- a. Successful class preparation.
  - b. Completion of duties
  - c. Positive growth as educator

## **MFA –Design: Academic and Artistic Review Criteria**

### **Graduate Guidance Committee Review**

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 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 assignment related to evaluation and student review.
  - a. Successful class preparation.
  - b. Completion of duties
  - c. Positive growth as educator

Along with the reflection paper outlined above, the student should make a presentation of 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 will be included.
5. All drafting necessary for the creation and execution of the design: ground plans, sections, elevations, perspective drawings, light plots and pattern drafting may be included.
6. All organizational paperwork necessary for the implementation of the design, including but not limited to, budget statements, crew assignments, costume analysis, lighting paperwork, digital storyboarding, etc. will be included.
7. Demonstration of related graphic abilities in the arts, including painting, drawing, sketching, compositing, etc. may be included.

### **Deferred Grades**

#### **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 and Letters by the Department Chairperson, and approved by the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters.

#### **Graduate Student Academic Files and viewing procedures**

##### **Typical Inventory in Academic File\*:**

1. Original Admission Application
2. Official Academic Transcript
3. Graduate Guidance Committee Form
4. Special Projects' Forms including project descriptions
5. Semester Graduate Guidance Committee Reviews

GAs will 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 either be in the presence of their Graduate Guidance Committee Chairperson, Graduate Secretary or Department Chairperson.

### **Access to Student Information**

All policies concerning access, maintenance and release of students’ records must follow University guidelines (See the *MSU Access to Student Information* policy at <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 identity 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 and they 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 Department of Theatre: Graduate Guidance Committee Form with appropriate faculty signatures: <http://www.theatre.msu.edu/> (Academics: Forms)

\_\_\_\_\_ ALL PROGRAMS complete Department of Theatre: Record of Completion of Requirements: <http://www.theatre.msu.edu/> (Academics: Forms)

\_\_\_\_\_ 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/>

## **VI. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: INTEGRITY AND SAFETY IN RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

### **MSU POLICIES, REGULATIONS AND ORDINANCES REGARDING ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY**

The Office of the University Ombudsperson:  
<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/>

The Research Integrity Office: <http://rio.msu.edu/about>

The Graduate School Policy on Research and Scholarly Integrity:  
<http://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity/>

### **Violation of professional standards**

The Department of Theatre will initiate a review by the Graduate Hearing Board based on the following which may result in removal from the activity in question, probation and/or dismissal:

- 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, rehearsal, performances, public relations demands, etc.

### **Approval for Human Research Protection Program**

If you would like more information about the Human Research Protection Program or to schedule a presentation or session for your group, please email [hrpp@ora.msu.edu](mailto:hrpp@ora.msu.edu).

University By-laws and Guidelines: <http://hrpp.msu.edu/>

Activity in this category is supervised by the Graduate Guidance Committee and the Department Chairperson.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY (EHS)**

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

General training information can be found at:

[http://www.ehs.msu.edu/training/training\\_general\\_info.htm](http://www.ehs.msu.edu/training/training_general_info.htm)

### Policy Recommendations:

Each faculty advisor and graduate student will be provided with the document *Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities*

(<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/researchintegrity/guidelines.pdf>)

The academic unit will develop as part of its academic program mechanisms for communicating and discussing standards of professional integrity appropriate for the discipline.

The academic unit will inform students of MSU policy related to the use of humans (<http://hrpp.msu.edu/>) and vertebrate animals

(<https://animalcare.msu.edu/IACUC>) for research.

The academic unit will inform the student about the [Office for Environmental Health and Safety \(EHS\)](http://www.ehs.msu.edu/training/training_toc.htm) ([http://www.ehs.msu.edu/training/training\\_toc.htm](http://www.ehs.msu.edu/training/training_toc.htm)) regulations and policies related to laboratory safety and security).

The academic unit will provide students with information about safety when traveling for departmental/university purposes, and will inform them about the MSU Travel Clinic (<http://travelclinic.msu.edu/>).

The academic unit will provide students with information about general MSU safety resources (<http://studentaffairs.msu.edu/health-wellness-safety/index.html>).

The academic unit will provide information about safety in the classroom including information about active shooters' situations (<http://edwp.educ.msu.edu/ead/hale-happenings/2015/active-shooter-violence-prevention-workshop-for-msu-graduate-students-postdocs/>).

The academic unit will provide information about domestic violence and sexual misconduct policy and training

([https://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/uwidepolproc/RVSM\\_Policy.htm](https://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/uwidepolproc/RVSM_Policy.htm)).

### What to include:

- State the program or college Responsible Conduct of Research policy, plan and training requirements of the unit and provide information on documenting and tracking these requirements
  - Students should be logging into the ABILITY information management system at <http://ora.msu.edu/train/> to complete their on-line RCR training. This is the system that must be used for proper documentation of training.
- Include links to the MSU Guidelines on Authorship <http://vprgs.msu.edu/michigan-state-university-guidelines-authorship> and include information on authorship norms related to the discipline.
- Include a link to MSU's Institutional Data Policy <https://tech.msu.edu/about/guidelines-policies/msu-institutional-data-policy/> and describe any additional norms or expectations guiding the use of data in the unit and/or discipline.

- Include a link to MSU's Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities  
<http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/facacadhandbooks/facultyhandbook/misconductproc/>
- Provide explicit criteria for dismissal due to unethical or dishonest behavior while engaged in research, scholarly and creative activities (*GSRR 2.4.7 and 2.4.9*).
- Provide explicit criteria for what constitutes a violation of professional standards. Expectations about professional conduct should be set by the unit based upon the prevailing disciplinary standards and when appropriate by the standards demanded by external accrediting agencies.
- Provide instructions on how to obtain approval from the appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the respective use of humans  
<http://hrpp.msu.edu/> and vertebrate animals  
<https://animalcare.msu.edu/IACUC> for research.
- Provide instruction on how to comply with regulations monitored by the EHS.



## VII. STUDENT CONDUCT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

### STUDENT CONDUCT

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

All participants are expected to be cordial, respectful, and never disparaging of 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.

#### PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR AND DISMISSAL

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

While many of the lists below of behavior mention actor-specific subject, the concepts are similarly related to designers and academic expectations.

#### PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

**ATTENDANCE:** You are required be present and on time for every rehearsal and production related appointment, such as costume fittings. If you think that you may be late, please contact your stage manager to let them know. A 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 which, all conflicts need to be requested in writing to 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 exhibit 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 the problem once you exit.

**DRUGS/ALCOHOL:** You will be removed from the room if you arrive to any production related activity under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Further disciplinary actions will be taken and your Head of Area will notify you of the next steps.

**IMPAIRED BEHAVIOR:** If your behavior at an event is impaired for any reasons you may be sent home from said event by a faculty or staff member. This is not only for your own wellbeing, but 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 you may be contacted by your Head of Area to set up a meeting to discuss concerns.

**PERFORMANCE & REHEARSAL ROOM ETIQUETTE:**

- You are expected to do **personal research** in understanding 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 callboards/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 who to speak to you can always ask your faculty mentor or the production manager.
- Part of being a respectful member of a production means engaging in **self-care**. It is important to stay well-rested, 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, respectfully approaching the director after the note session has concluded to ask any clarifying questions. It is important to not 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 or critiquing on 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, it is important to have a second set of eyes 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 be someone who can collaborate well with others. A good collaborator is a person 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 the place that 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 a willing participant in rehearsal, production, and other activities.

**UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT includes the following:**

- Chewing gum during rehearsals.
- Arriving late for rehearsals, costume fittings, photos or publicity calls.
- Bad mouthing your show, the director, the designers, artistic specialist, supervisors or colleagues.
- Gossip and rumor-mongering.
- Disrespect and unkindness towards classmates and production members.
- Once cast through closing, no cutting or dying of hair, beards, acquiring tattoos or piercings without consultation from the Costume Designer.
- Allowing your personal issues outside of rehearsal and performance to affect your work there.
- 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.
- Wasting and purging energies and emotions prior to 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 area head is consulted, then the student's Graduate Guidance Committee 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 the all parties affected by the conflict is the final arbiter of these conflicts.

Classroom (with TA as student) conflicts are resolved at the lowest possible level by the persons involved through goodwill. The Department Chairperson after speaking with the 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 the 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 unit head, they may send a written request for a hearing to the appropriate unit head (i.e., 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 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:

- for graduate students starting at the Department/School/Program level
- for graduate students starting at the College level

Academic Grievance Hearing to contest an allegation of academic dishonesty:

- for graduate students starting at the Department/School/Program level
- for graduate students starting at the College level

Academic Disciplinary Hearing to impose sanctions in addition to, or other than, a failing grade in a course for an act of academic misconduct.

Refer to the Office of the University Ombudsperson's for additional information regarding MSU policies: <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/>

## ***VIII. WORK RELATED POLICIES***

### **Criteria for Department of Theatre Graduate Assistantships**

#### **ALL PROGRAMS**

Refer to MSU/GEU Contract for specific policy regarding University Procedures that are respected by the Department of Theatre: <http://geuatmsu.org/about/geu-contract/>

GEU Website: <http://geuatmsu.org/>

All GA job opportunities are available at:

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

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 241D; 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, the evaluation of the applicant via audition, interview, portfolio review and references. Faculty in the areas in which GA positions are available review all applicants and make recommendations to the Department Chairperson. Appointments are determined by funding availability and are renewed on the basis of progress toward degree as determined by the student's Graduate Guidance Committee.

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.

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 upon 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 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.

Department of Theatre GAs are given a written review of their assistantship performance by their designated supervisor. All responses will be sent to the Guidance Committee and kept in the GA personnel file.

### 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, as part of their regular duties, participate in such programs.

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.

### Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct

All graduate students are required to complete an annual online training program, which has been customized to address the unique experiences of graduate students. Students will not be able to access important academic information in the StuInfo system, including grades, until they complete this training. Please note that graduate students who are also employed as graduate teaching assistants or research assistants are also required to complete an online education program for employees.

<http://titleix.msu.edu/learn-more/online-education-programs.html>

### D2L

Student will be taught (either through the department, online tutorials or university sponsored training sessions) how to use the Desire 2 Learn (D2L) system and will be expected to use that system for all courses.

### Assigning Courses

TAs will be assigned courses by their Area Heads and Chairperson. Every effort will be made to offer students a wide range of teaching opportunities.

### Outside Employment and Work for Pay

A Graduate Assistant (50%) who is considering additional employment outside the Department or the University must first obtain the permission of their committee chairperson. The committee chairperson must evaluate the impact of the additional employment commitments on the student's academic progress and on their GA responsibilities. Once decided, Area Program Director must be informed.

### Early Departure

It is expected that all theatre students will remain on campus, attend classes and complete all course work 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 from their immediate supervisor accommodation to attend career-significant professional meetings, interviews and auditions not to exceed 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 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.

### Illness

Each professor sets their own policy regarding absence from class. Instructors may or may not honor an Olin physician's request, or any other physician's request, for an excused absence. This decision should be based on the instructor's attendance and make-up policies, as stated in the course syllabus.



### Medical Leaves

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

### 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 RA 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 CBU Article 18.

### Summer Appointments

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

### English Language Proficiency Level

Refer to section III of this handbook for GA expectations.

Refer to Criteria for the Appointment of a Graduate Assistant regarding a checklist of Procedures that are respected by the Department of Theatre:  
<http://www.vps.msu.edu/graduate-assistant-information>

### 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 section VII of this Handbook, and is not guaranteed.

### **Departmental resources and policy**

All Graduate Assistants will have access to the following:

1. An office (single or shared) to conduct office hours.
2. Copy machines with the approval of the Office Manager.
3. Office supplies with the approval of the Office Manager.
4. A mailbox located in the central office; 113 Auditorium.
5. Access to a telephone.
6. Digital Design Lab if a computer is not provided in the individual's office.

## IX. UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

### **Michigan State University**

<http://www.msu.edu/>

### **MSU: The Graduate School**

<http://grad.msu.edu>

### **Career and Professional Development (PREP)**

<http://grad.msu.edu/prep/>

### **MSU Teaching Assistant Program**

<http://tap.msu.edu/>

### **GEU/MSU Contract**

<http://geuatmsu.org/>

### **College of Arts and Letters**

<http://www.cal.msu.edu/>

### **MSU Department of Theatre**

<http://www.theatre.msu.edu/>

### **Summer Circle Theatre**

<http://theatre.msu.edu/index.php/productions/summer-circle-theatre/>

### **Broad Art Museum**

<http://broadmuseum.msu.edu/>

### **MSU Museum**

<http://museum.msu.edu/>

### **MSU Office of the Ombudsman**

<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/>

### **MSU Libraries**

<http://www.lib.msu.edu/>

### **MSU Libraries Magic**

<http://magic.lib.msu.edu/>

### **Counseling and Support Services**

<https://grad.msu.edu/partners-in-wellness>

### **Employee Assistance program**

[www.eap.msu.edu](http://www.eap.msu.edu)

### **Housing Information**

<http://www.liveon.msu.edu/>

### **Campus and Community Information**

<http://www.collegelifeel.msu.edu/>

### **Student Organizations**

<http://studentlife.msu.edu/student-organizations-activities>

### Funding resources:

<https://grad.msu.edu/funding>

### Other Resources as required by the Graduate School:

#### *Academic Programs:*

<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/>

#### *Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR):*

<https://grad.msu.edu/gsrr>

#### Medical Student Rights and Responsibilities (MSRR):

<http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/medical-student-rights-and-responsibilites-mssr>

#### Law Student Rights and Responsibilities (LSRR):

<http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/law-students-rights-and-responsibilities>

#### *MSU/GEU Contract:*

<https://www.hr.msu.edu/contracts/documents/GEU2015-2019.pdf>

#### *Guidelines for Graduate Student Advising and Mentoring Relationships:*

<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/researchintegrity/guidelines.pdf>

#### *Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities:*

<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/researchintegrity/guidelines.pdf>

#### Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct :

[http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/uwidepolproc/RVSM\\_Policy.htm](http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/uwidepolproc/RVSM_Policy.htm)

#### Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP):

<http://oie.msu.edu/policies-procedures-forms/documents/2015%2009-11%20Faculty%20Guide.docx.pdf>