

MASTER of FINE ARTS (MFA) in DRAMATIC ART
MFA DEGREE REQUIREMENTS
Administrative Home: Department of Theatre and Dance
Revised: 2011 and May 2014
Graduate Council Approval: August 14, 2014

1) Admissions Requirements

Admission to the MFA program in Dramatic Art requires:

- An undergraduate degree in Dramatic Art or Theatre or a related field relevant to the discipline.
- A minimum GPA of 3.0.
- A statement of purpose.
- Three letters of recommendation.
- Demonstrated skill in one or more fields relevant to Theatre, Dance and Performance, such as Acting, Choreography, Design, or Directing.
- GRE scores are NOT required.
- Priority deadline for admission is December 15 and the final admission deadline is May 31.
- A completed Office of Graduate Studies application with supplemental materials noted below.

Materials:

A photograph (head shot of the applicant). A portfolio and/or DVD or videotape material. Recorded materials should include two clips of work from different productions, each three-to-five minutes long. If the applicant has choreographed or directed a production, the applicant may also include a recording of one complete piece. Reviews of the applicant's theatre, dance, or performance-related work (no more than five pages). A written paper (c. 1000 words) contextualizing area of professional interest, an understanding of 'interdisciplinary', creative goals, integration of practice and research, and reasons for studying at UCD. Portfolio material is submitted electronically. For more detailed advice on submission materials please contact the Graduate Administrator.

a) Prerequisites

There are no prerequisite course requirements for this program.

b) Deficiencies

Course work deficiencies should be made up by the end of the first academic year following initial enrollment by earning a letter grade of "B" or better.

2) Master's Plan: Plan I (Thesis Project)

Plan I. This plan requires 24 units MFA core courses, 8 units of Granada Productions (DRA 280), 8 units of Thesis Project (comprising DRA 299: performance-based research with written report) and 32 units of elective course work at the upper division (100 series) or graduate (200 series) level. In addition, a thesis or research project in lieu of a thesis is required. The research thesis/project serves as the capstone requirement. Note: this Plan requires more units than the UC

Davis minimum, which are: 30 units of graduate and upper division courses (the 100 and 200 series only), at least 12 of which must be graduate work in the major field.

3) Course Requirements (72 units minimum)

The Core courses are at the heart of the MFA program in Dramatic Art; classes meet for six quarters of the two years of graduate study and are required of all students. In addition to the Core courses, there are two required production courses with the Granada Artist in Residence, and several elective courses.

a) MFA CORE COURSES (24 units)

These classes open out the questions of interdisciplinary study by inviting dialogue between the disciplines of Acting, Choreography, Design, and Directing, exploring developments in traditional, contemporary and experimental practice. Many of the core courses aim toward collaborative production.

- DRA 251 Scoring and Scripting in Performance (4 units)
- DRA 252 Performance: Concepts of Space, Place and Time (4 units)
- DRA 253 Approaches to Collaboration (4 units)
- DRA 254 Performing Identities/Personae (4 units)
- DRA 255 Composition in the Arts (4 units)
- DRA 256: Visual Language in Performance (4 units)

b) Granada Productions: DRA 280 (8 units)

The Department of Theatre and Dance has hosted the positions of Granada Artists in Residence for over 25 years. Part of the value of these nationally and internationally recognized artists is their work with MFA students on productions that they direct, design, devise or choreograph. Each year the Granada Artists in Residence introduce work in the areas of traditional and experimental professional theatre, dance and performance. Students will be assigned to specific areas of one Granada production and the other may be of their choosing. One or more other departmental productions may contribute to these 280 units with faculty approval.

c) Thesis Project: DRA 299 (8 units)

Students work with their Major Professor through both years of the program to develop a Thesis Project which focuses on practice-based research. The Thesis Project is in two sections. The first section comprises one of the following options: a Portfolio of the student's collected MFA work; a Production (where the contribution to a third Granada production is significant); a 20-30 minute Solo Showcase; or a 40-60 minute Exploratory Collaboration (involving two or more MFAs from the same year cohort). The practice-based work should generate a creative contribution to any of traditional, contemporary and experimental performance practices. The second part of the Thesis Project is an individually written report normally of 5,000-8,000 words, discussed in an hour-long Thesis Project Committee meeting.

d) Electives (32 units)

Elective units may be taken from any courses offered by the University at upper division (100-level), 200-level courses, and 300- or 400-level courses, and must be approved by the student's Major Professor. Electives also include 299 (Individual Study) or 298 (Group Study) units for students to work closely with a faculty member in their area – usually for thesis preparation.

There is no limit on the number of 299 or 298 units. An Elective can be related to ongoing productions. An Elective can also offer the possibility for graduate students to develop pedagogy by teaching 198 courses, for which the graduate student takes 299 units with a faculty supervisor.

e) Summary: A minimum of 72 units total are required, including 24 units of core coursework (250-series), 8 units of Thesis Project (DRA299), 8 units in Granada Productions (DRA280) and 32 units of Electives. In addition the following UC requirements pertaining to coursework apply:

a) Students may only enroll each quarter in a maximum of 12 *graduate* units.

b) A maximum of 16 units *total* may be taken per quarter, including graduate (200-level), upper division (100-level), and 300- or 400-level courses, including DRA 396 (Teaching Assistant Training Practicum).

c) Students who wish to take more than 12 units of graduate coursework, or more than 16 units total, must first obtain permission from their faculty adviser, the Chair of the MFA Committee, and the Office of Graduate Studies.

d) A maximum of 24 units of 100-level undergraduate coursework will count towards the unit requirements.

4) Special Requirements

N/A

5) Committees

a) Admissions Committee:

The Admissions Committee consists of the faculty on the MFA Program Committee. Once the completed application, all supporting material, and the application fee have been received, the application will be submitted to the Admissions Committee of the MFA in Dramatic Art. The Admissions Committee will make all applications available to the faculty members, who will make recommendations for consideration to the Committee. Based on a review of the recommended applications and discussion with the entire faculty, a recommendation may be made to interview. Subsequently, a recommendation is made to accept or decline an applicant's request for admission. That recommendation is forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies for final approval of admission. Notifications of admissions decisions are sent by the Office of Graduate Studies.

b) Thesis Project Committees

The student, in consultation with his/her Major Professor and the Graduate Adviser, identifies, two additional faculty members to serve on the Thesis Project Committee in addition to the Major Professor by the beginning of the second year of the program. The student is strongly urged to identify one of the two additional faculty members from outside the Department of Theatre and Dance. The Graduate Adviser nominates the committee members to the Office of Graduate Studies for formal appointment in accordance with Graduate Council policy (DDB 80, Graduate Council B.1.). The Major Professor may serve as chair of the committee.

c) MFA Program Committee

The MFA Program Committee consists of:

1. The Chair of Department.

2. The MFA Graduate Adviser who serves as the Chair of the Committee.
3. No fewer than two and up to five members of the Department of Theatre and Dance.
4. The Graduate Program Administrator. (*ex officio*).
5. All faculty members in the Theatre and Dance Department have voting rights.

The duties of the MFA Program Committee are:

1. To meet twice each quarter. Other meetings may be called more frequently if needed.
2. To appoint such committees as it deems necessary to administer the activities of the Program.
3. To prepare recommendations regarding degree requirements.
4. To prepare announcements for the University Catalog, and for publications of the Graduate Division pertaining to graduate study and research in the Department of Theatre and Dance.
5. To consider information received from the other deliberative bodies on the campus.
6. To consider and act upon information and requests received from members of the Graduate Program and from the graduate cohort.
7. To review applicant and continuing student files for fellowships, financial aid, teaching assistantships, and research assistantships.
8. To appoint a faculty adviser for each student based on declared research interests and discussions with faculty members.
9. To receive from faculty advisers recommendations of graduate students for participation in productions, to the Chair and the directors and choreographers of Theatre and Dance Department productions.
10. Review and advise on the mentoring and advising of the graduate students.
11. Review curricular requirements and the courses used to fulfill those requirements. Make recommendations to the Chair and the Departmental faculty for delivering and improving those courses.

6) Advising Structure and Mentoring

The **Major Professor** is the faculty member who supervises the student's research and Thesis Project; this person serves as the Chair of the Thesis Committee. The **MFA Graduate Adviser**, who is nominated by the Chair for appointment by the Dean of Graduate Studies, is a resource for information on academic requirements, policies and procedures, and registration information. The MFA Graduate Adviser, in consultation with Major Professors:

- a. Responds to applicant and student appeals.
- b. Tracks student progress and submits yearly progress reports to students and the office of Graduate Studies.
- c. Provides advice on how the student may best complete the requirements of the Program.
- d. Determines whether and how graduate student work satisfies Program requirements.
- e. Communicates to students their standing in the Program.

The **Mentoring Guidelines** can be found in the MFA graduate student handbook:

<http://theatredance.ucdavis.edu/MFA/handbook.aspx>

7) Advancement to Candidacy

Every student must file an official application for Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts and pay the Candidacy Fee after completing one-half of their course requirements and at least one quarter before completing all degree requirements, normally in the 5th quarter.

The Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts form can be found online at: <http://www.gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/forms/>. A completed form includes a list of courses the student will take to complete degree requirements. If changes must be made to the student's course plan after s/he has advanced to candidacy, the Graduate Adviser must recommend these changes to Graduate Studies. Students must have their Graduate Adviser and Major Professor sign the candidacy form before it can be submitted to Graduate Studies. If the candidacy is approved, the Office of Graduate Studies will send a copy to: the Thesis Committee Chair, the appropriate graduate staff person, and the student. If the Office of Graduate Studies determines that a student is not eligible for advancement, the department and the student will be told the reasons for the application's deferral. Some reasons for deferring an application include: grade point average below 3.0, outstanding "I" grades in required courses, or insufficient units.

8) Thesis Project Requirements (Plan I)

The MFA candidate's Thesis Project consists of practice-based research with a written report. In ongoing consultation with the Major Professor, each student determines the specific nature of the practice-based research for the final Thesis Project, for which there are four options:

- a) *A Portfolio of work* (reflecting performance-based projects undertaken over the two years in any of the fields of design, choreography, acting, directing and performance);
- b) *A Production Project* (i.e. an additional Granada production where the student's contribution is significant in terms of design, performing a lead role, assistant directing, choreography, etc.);
- c) *A Solo Showcase* (lasting 20-30 minutes, researching through practice questions regarding performance);
- d) *An Exploratory Collaboration* (lasting 40-60 minutes, involving two or more MFA students from the same cohort, examining traditional, contemporary or experimental scripts and scores, and/or creating devised work).

The practice-based research is accompanied by an individually written 5000-8000-word report of the process, and a final hour-long Question and Answer session in the Thesis Project Committee meeting. Each student takes 8 units of DRA 299 Independent Study focusing on the Thesis Project with their Major Professor.

Portfolio option

Typically during the last two weeks of the Spring quarter of Year 2, candidates present their Portfolio in public exhibition. It may contain documentation in photographs and with items such as costumes and/or props of actual productions undertaken during the MFA program as well as paper projects for imagined productions. The Portfolio comprises photographs, video footage, scale set models, drafting elevations, light plots, hook-ups, lighting sketches, thumbnail mood boards, research, sketchbooks, costume plots, swatches, costume and/or scenic renderings, etc. The work should be of the depth and craft of professional standard. If material is deemed below professional standard, then the student will be asked to submit a 'Reflection' document with their written report. This 'Reflection' will respond to the challenges of articulating the work, where the problems lay, interaction with the audience (as appropriate), etc.

Production Project option

When the student is involved in a large and impactful way – e.g. leading role, design of set, lights or costume, choreography, assistant direction, dramaturg or playwright, etc. – a third Granada production may be taken as 4 practice-based units of the Thesis Project. If material is deemed below professional standard, then the student will be asked to submit a ‘Reflection’ document with their written report. This ‘Reflection’ will respond to the challenges of articulating the work, where the problems lay, interaction with the audience (as appropriate), etc.

Solo Showcase or Exploratory Collaboration options

Typically during the first four weeks of the Spring quarter of Year 2, candidates present their work in public performance, either as a Solo Showcase or an Exploratory Collaboration. Prior to this, there are two sharings of the exploration-in-progress, and a faculty review during rehearsal in the week before performance. The Solo Showcase or Exploratory Collaboration is a presentation of work designed to demonstrate skill, creative involvement and commitment of the highest quality, underpinned by research questions into performance processes. It should be of the depth and craft of professional standard. If the Solo Showcase/Exploratory Collaboration is deemed below professional standard within the bounds of exploration, it will be withdrawn from the public program and participants will be asked to present the piece to faculty only, within two weeks of the original date. The need for a second iteration, however, may lead to the forfeiture of departmental production support. Should the Thesis Project Committee determine that the Solo Showcase/Exploratory Collaboration is unacceptable, even after the second iteration, the MFA Graduate Adviser may recommend to the Dean of Graduate Studies that the student be disqualified from the program.

Report:

To accompany the Portfolio, Production Project, Solo Showcase or Exploratory Collaboration, the student is required to write an 5000-8000-word report, addressing the performance-oriented research questions, as developed and explored with the Major Professor over the course of two years of study. Any student failing to submit a written report of an appropriate academic level will be asked to re-work and resubmit it by the first week of August.

Thesis Project Committee

The Thesis Project is completed by an hour-long Question and Answer session in the Thesis Project Committee meeting typically during Week 9 or 10 of the Spring Quarter of Year 2. The Thesis Project Committee for each student will evaluate the Portfolio / Production Project / Solo Showcase / Exploratory Collaboration plus the written report based on the following criteria: the quality of the work in form, execution and professionalism; the integrity of the work in relation to the questions posed in the project proposal; the thoroughness with which the written report articulates the processes used to explore the posed research questions; and the overall excellence of the written material. The document should also discuss the student’s methodology in researching the questions, the practitioners and theorists who have influenced their research, and the quality of the process and Portfolio / Production Project / Solo Showcase / Exploratory Collaboration. Should the committee determine that the project is unacceptable, even after revision of the written report and/or the practice-based work, the MFA Graduate Adviser may recommend to the Dean of Graduate Studies that the student be disqualified from the program.

9) Normative Time to Degree

Normative time to degree is six quarters.

10) Typical Time Line and Sequence of Events

Students must self-assess skill level and develop initial recommendations for academic planning prior to conferring with faculty adviser about their academic plan.

FALL – FIRST YEAR

DRA 251 (4 units)

Electives (8 units)

WINTER – FIRST YEAR

DRA 252 (4 units)

DRA 280 [Granada] (4 units)

Elective (4 units)

SPRING – FIRST YEAR

DRA 253 (4 units)

Elective (8 units)

FALL – SECOND YEAR

DRA 254 (4 units)

DRA 280 [Granada] (4 units)

Electives (4 units)

WINTER – SECOND YEAR

DRA 255 (4 units)

DRA 299 [Thesis] (4 units)

Electives (4 units)

SPRING – SECOND YEAR

DRA 256 (4 units)

Elective (4 units)

DRA 299 [Thesis] (4 units)

This is only a sample. Actual coursework may be distributed somewhat differently and details of individual programs are subject to the approval of the student's faculty adviser. Quarterly workload is limited to 12 units of graduate coursework (200-level) and at most 16 units total of graduate and undergraduate combined.

11) Sources of funding

Students are funded through teaching assistantships, associate instructorships, department fellowships or graduate research assistantships.

12) PELP, In Absentia and Filing Fee status

Information about PELP (Planned Educational Leave), In Absentia (reduced fees when researching away from campus), and Filing Fee status can be found in the Graduate Student Guide: <http://www.gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/publications/>.