

Drama & Theatre for Youth & Communities M.F.A. Program Handbook

(Revised Sept 2017)

Introduction

This handbook provides an introductory overview of the M.F.A. in Drama & Theatre for Youth & Communities program for both prospective and current students. This document does not attempt to answer every single question you might have, nor does it provide an exhaustive account of every aspect of the program.

The faculty presume that students enter the UT Drama & Theatre for Youth & Communities M.F.A. program, at least in part, because they want to pursue academic and practice-based study with the guidance of the DTYC faculty, the collaboration of dynamic peers, and the support of many rigorous learning environments and academic resources at UT Austin. The DTYC program offers ample opportunities and training for entering the profession and the highly competitive job market. Our graduate program resides within the Department of Theatre & Dance, within the large College of Fine Arts, within a large, multifaceted university, within a diverse and complex state (and so on). Working within these layers and systems presents academic, bureaucratic, and social challenges that partly determine our program's style and form, including our intentional focus on relational practice, dialogue, and reciprocity.

While DTYC offers a highly scaffolded program of study, the program is also somewhat informal in that the knowledge of how things work exists largely in oral form (this handbook excepted). Students are encouraged to approach faculty or fellow students with questions or challenges, and the academic rigor of the program occurs not only in formal course work or group meeting settings but also in offices and over meals, walks, or coffee/tea. Practically, then, we encourage graduate students to participate in graduate student life by connecting and collaborating within and beyond the classroom or official program requirements. Because of the program's size and the faculty's personable and individualized approach to learning, graduate students receive highly individualized mentorship from both their primary advisor and the DTYC faculty as a whole. The professors in this program bring vastly different experiences, perspectives, and expertise to the DTYC program. The faculty are committed to providing guidance and mentorship to help students progress academically and to meet students' goals; to this end, students must ask for support as needed, be prepared to dialogue around challenges, and be willing to proactively contribute to their personal academic and career goals, as well as the DTYC program at large.

Graduate school often presents and amplifies academic, individual, and discipline related challenges. Students are encouraged to navigate these intersections by regularly visiting professors' office hours or otherwise keeping in contact; engaging in discussions that prove fruitful for one's

own work as well as friends' and colleagues' work; making a regular practice of reading and writing and discussing ideas with peers and faculty; setting up outside reading groups to keep active and connected beyond the classroom; creating a syllabus or reading list to keep work on track during independent study courses or thesis work; and most importantly, asking for help when needed. In large part, the DTYC faculty pursued a life in academia because of the opportunities to mentor and collaborate with graduate students. Students are encouraged to engage in faculty-led research and practice, and to invite faculty and peers to engage with their academic and creative pursuits. We recognize the limits of our faculty in practice and perspective. Thus, we are equally committed to supporting practical and other mentee experiences for students outside the DTYC area to help meet the individual needs of each student in the program.

Mission

The Drama & Theatre for Youth & Communities program prepares graduate students for multiple career paths in education, community and nonprofit organizations, and professional theatre for young audiences.

Through drama-based pedagogy, youth-focused artistry, and rigorous scholarship, students and faculty in the program commit to exploring leadership and community, a diversity of ideas and experiences, innovation in the field, and models for social justice. The DTYC program focuses on embodied, performative, and dialogue approaches to building drama and theatre with/for young people and communities.

DTYC M.F.A. Program Overview

The Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities program at The University of Austin began in 1945 with a focus on creative drama classes and plays for children. Decades later, the program remains an integral component of the departmental landscape through the production season, as well as innovative school and community programs.

The Master of Fine Arts in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities (DTYC) is a nationally recognized program that focuses on the interdependence of theatre artistry, pedagogy and scholarship. Interdisciplinary in nature, the program draws on practice and scholarship from many fields such as theatre/drama, performance studies, education and critical pedagogy, youth theatre, youth development, feminist pedagogies and performance, and cultural studies among others.

The three-year M.F.A. degree stresses flexibility and encourages participation in classes throughout the Department of Theatre and Dance and the University at large. Our department offers a world-class educational environment that serves as the ultimate creative incubator for the next generation of artists, thinkers, and leaders in drama, theatre, and performance. The DTYC students often engage with department faculty, students, and curricula in:

- UTeach Theatre (formerly Theatre Studies)
- Dance and UTeach Dance

- Design and Technology
- Directing and Playwriting
- Integrated Media, and
- Performance as Public Practice

The DTYC M.F.A. program culminates in a practical thesis project coupled with a written thesis document in which students apply theory from a wide range of disciplines to an area of practice in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities. Thesis projects generally employ reflective practitioner research to address research questions in applied drama/theatre, arts integration, community engagement, drama-in-education, theatre for young audiences, teaching artist praxis, theatre education, theatre-in-education and theatre for dialogue, youth theatre and/or the creation or production of original works for young audiences. Within higher education and the theatre profession, the M.F.A. in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities is considered a terminal degree for related fields of study. The degree does not lead to public school teacher certification; however, students interested in teacher certification may take additional classes to achieve this goal.

Admission to the Program

Three to five DTYC candidates are admitted each year from a competitive group of applicants. After a preliminary round of application reviews, faculty invite a small group of applicants to our in-person interview days on campus. The interview process usually occurs over two full days at the UT campus and is required for admission into the M.F.A. theatre program. An M.F.A. degree is a substantial investment of time, money and other resources; our in-depth interview process offers applicants and faculty an opportunity to assess fit. Interviews are generally held on campus toward the end of February.

Graduate Studies in Theatre

The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), consisting of tenure-track and tenured faculty in the department, establishes the policies and requirements for all graduate theatre and dance degree programs offered by the department. The GSC members have delegated the administration of those policies to the Graduate Studies Executive Committee (XCOM). Students communicate with the GSC and XCOM through the department's Graduate Advisor (Dr. Megan Alrutz).

Application Process

The deadline for receipt of applications for the DTYC M.F.A. program is usually in early January. Please check our [website](#) for this year's deadline.

The application for graduate admission is a multi-step process. Applicants must first submit an application to UT Austin's Graduate School. For detailed instructions, please visit [The University of Texas at Austin Graduate School online](#).

- To apply, go to [ApplyTexas.org](#), create an account and fill out the form. Non-U.S. citizens should fill out the International Graduate Application.
- Choose "M.F.A. in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities" as the Area of Interest on a pull down menu. This will ensure application to the DTYC program.
- Pay the application fee. Fee waivers are available with proper paperwork.
- Look for the email that includes a UT EID and a link to the [Application Status](#) website. This email may take up to 48 hours to be delivered.

Application Materials and Criteria

In addition to the Graduate School application and fee, the following materials are required in order to be considered for admission in the M.F.A. in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities program:

- Official Transcripts and GPA Requirements: Applicants must submit transcripts from all colleges and universities attended, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. [Online instructions](#) for uploading transcripts (PDF format only). The University specifies a minimum grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) on all work taken after the first two years of college-level work (i.e., all upper-division courses), as well as any graduate-level courses already taken. The DTYC Program gives preference to those students with GPAs higher than the minimum.
- GRE Score: The GRE is required for admission to the M.F.A. in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities program. While there is no minimum GRE score requirement for admission, GRE scores are considered as part of our holistic approach to admissions for DTYC and may be used by the University when making scholarship and fellowship decisions. The University of Texas at Austin Institution Code is 6882. For more information, please visit [www.ets.org](#).
- Three letters of recommendation: At least three letters of recommendation are required. To be most helpful, letters should be from people qualified to speak to the student's work in areas related the DTYC field and should comment specifically on the student's aptitude for graduate level writing, analysis, and synthesis, as well as other advanced work in their areas of interest and related career specialization(s). Moreover, letters should address the student's skills and experience in applied drama/theatre, theatre for young audiences, and/or theatre education. Each reference will receive instructions on how to submit their letter online to the Graduate School's secured web site. Only one letter is required from each reference.

- Professional Resume: Applicants will upload a resume that details all relevant work, experience, and scholarship in the field.
- Personal Statement: Applicants will upload a personal statement that outlines and contextualizes their relevant experience, as well as future academic and professional goals in the field. Through form and content, this written statement should offer specifics about the candidate's purpose for pursuing graduate school in the DTYC program at UT Austin. The personal statement offers an opportunity for applicants to share their vision for graduate study, as well as their intended impact on the field.
- Teaching Philosophy and/or Artist Statement: Applicants will upload a teaching philosophy that addresses their beliefs and practices about teaching and learning and/or an artist statement that explains and contextualizes the applicant's artistic work and vision. Both documents require applicants to consider the relationship between form (What shape does the document take?) and function (What does the document aim to do?).
- Other supporting materials might include: Sample drama/theatre curricula or program, a detailed concept and approach for a theatre for young audiences production, and/or a community-engaged program/partnership pitch.

All other materials should be submitted [online at the Document Upload System](#).

Program Goals and Outcomes

All M.F.A. students are expected to build advanced knowledge in a set of areas of practice, knowledge domains, and skills. These combine to deepen graduate students' skills and knowledge in artistry, pedagogy, and scholarship.

AREAS OF PRACTICE:

- Applied Drama/Theatre
- Theatre for Young Audience (TYA)
- Theatre Education

OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD KNOWLEDGE IN:

- Aesthetics and artistry
- Arts integration, creative learning, and arts-based pedagogy
- Collaborative leadership
- Contemporary and emerging creative practices
- Contemporary, professional Theatre for Young Audiences
- Culturally responsive education
- Curriculum and teaching methodologies
- Devising, play-building, playmaking

- Drama-based pedagogy and practice
- Education and community engagement practices
- Ethical considerations within areas of practice
- History and theory of theatre/drama with and for youth
- Identity politics in theatre
- Museum theatre
- Operating structures and principles of arts and community organizations
- Playwrights and plays for young audiences
- Power, identity, and oppression
- Politics of representation
- Program evaluation and assessment
- Research and research methods
- Social justice and performance practices
- Theatre for social change
- Theatre for the very young
- Theatre of the Oppressed

SKILLS:

- Aesthetic and craft development in areas such as directing, dramaturgy, playwriting for youth, community-engagement, and/or devising with youth and communities
- Applied drama/ theatre development and facilitation skills
- Context-based communication and collaborative practices
- Curriculum and learning design appropriate to a variety of contexts
- Applying ethical considerations of work and theory in practice
- Facilitation and teaching skills appropriate to a variety of contexts
- Arts-based educational research methods and program evaluation

Program of Study

Curriculum

The M.F.A. in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities degree is a three-year, 60 credit hour program that is considered a terminal degree for related fields of study. Students are required to take a minimum of 9 credits per semester to remain full time. Students may not complete the degree in less than three years.

Required Coursework

The following courses are required in order to matriculate. These courses are offered on a rotating basis throughout a three-year degree cycle:

- *TD 387D: Applied Drama and Theatre (3 credits)* - An examination of the theories, practices, pedagogies and politics associated with the various uses of theatre games, improvisation,

role play and devised performance in a range of fields that extend beyond the formal theatre setting.

- *Colloquium (2 credits)* – DTYC Students must register for two credits of colloquium. This includes the student's first semester of enrollment and one additional semester chosen by the student during the three-year degree cycle. It is recommended that students register for each additional semester as well.
- *T D 383P: Community Engagement and Outreach (3 credits)* - An introduction to some of the justifications for and practices of theatre outreach and community engagement.
- *T D 383P: Drama-based Pedagogy and Practice (3 credits)* - A comprehensive pedagogical exploration and fieldwork experience in the use of drama-based instructional strategies (the use of kinetic activities, improvisation and role play) in a variety of contexts.
- *T D 383P: Dramatic Literature for Youth and Families (3 credits)* - A comprehensive study of the dramatic literature of theatre for children with an emphasis on historical context from fairy tales to mature themes; child audience engagement; playwriting requirements and production techniques specific to theatre for young audiences.
- *T D 383P: Historiography of Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities (3 credits)* - Discover the historical development of drama and theatre for youth and communities through the theoretical ideas articulated in professional writings from 1890 to present.
- *T D 383P: Pre-Thesis: Research and Practice (3 credits)* – Supports students to develop a rigorous, original research question, research design/methodology and thesis project that engages with salient scholarship and practices in the field.
- *T D 698A/B: Thesis (6 credits)* - This class is taken in the Fall and Spring semester of the third year.
- *T D 388: Research Methods (3 credits)* - Designed for students to practice knowledge, skills and techniques needed to conduct research, to include organization, style and bibliographic forms. Students will take this course first semester of their first year.
- *T D 398T: Supervised Teaching (3 credits)* - An examination of the theories and practices of contemporary pedagogy to prepare for work as a scholar and artist in higher education.
**This course is not required for graduation, however students must take this course to be eligible to be an Assistant Instructor for a course at UT Austin.*

Electives

The Program of Study invites students to take up to 31 credits in elective courses; 6 of these credits must be taken outside of the Department of Theatre & Dance. Examples of electives offered on a rotating basis within the Department of Theatre & Dance may include:

- Critical Theory for Performance
- Devising
- Directing
- Dramaturgy
- Digital Storytelling in Community-Based Settings
- Drama and Theatre Applications in Museum Settings
- Kinetic Storytelling
- Latino/a Theatre for Young Audiences

- Nonprofit Management and Strategy
- Playwriting for Youth
- Performing Justice
- Performance Ethnography
- Teaching Artists in Schools and Communities
- The Working Artist

Colloquium

This student run, faculty supervised course provides a space for M.F.A. DTYC students (and often faculty) to gather on a semi-weekly basis to explore the artistic, theoretical, and pedagogical practices associated with drama and theatre for youth and communities. Students set priorities and actions at the top of each semester and work collaboratively to meet their collective goals and inquiries throughout the semester through verbal, embodied, and written reflective practice. *The shape and outcomes of this course may change each year to meet the needs of student and faculty in the program.

Teacher Certification

Pursuing K-12 teacher certification is possible while pursuing the M.F.A. in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities. Faculty offer students a comprehensive curriculum in theatre, drama, technical theatre and educational methods combined with in-depth field and student teaching experiences. Interested students are encouraged to inquire about the UTeach Theatre option with Roxanne Schroeder-Arce (roxanne@austin.utexas.edu or 512-232-7345) in the first semester of study.

Portfolio Programs

Portfolio programs provide opportunities for students to obtain credentials in a cross-disciplinary academic area of study while they are completing the requirements for their M.F.A.

Students often consider the following portfolio programs:

- Arts and Cultural Management and Entrepreneurship
- Cultural Studies
- Disability Studies
- Mexican American Studies
- Museum Studies
- Native American and Indigenous Studies
- Nonprofit Studies
- Women's and Gender Studies

For a complete list of portfolio programs, descriptions and application requirements, visit the [Graduate School](#).

Progress Towards Degree

Theatre and dance are intensely collaborative fields of practice that require reciprocal relationships, engagement, and dialogue. Within the Department, DTYC students often create and lead intra- and inter-disciplinary collaborations through engagement with each other and with people in Austin and beyond. As artists, educators, and scholars, graduate students are expected to meet program and University standards in their classes, as well as program-related assignments, employment, and collaborations. Students must also demonstrate the ability to successfully navigate various partnerships and collaborative projects, and to meet the expectations required by the multiple contexts where DTYC graduate students work and collaborate.

The Department of Theatre and Dance requires graduate students to:

- Maintain a minimum GPA of 3.67.
- Earn a grade of “B” or higher in all core coursework; if a lower grade is earned, a student may have to retake the course.
- Demonstrate ongoing and consistent progress on all work required to earn an M.F.A. degree, as determined by the DTYC faculty and the graduate school.
- Complete assigned work on time and at a satisfactory level of accomplishment as established by the professor of record and/or faculty advisor.
- Develop and maintain productive working relationships with faculty, staff, guest artists, community partners, and colleagues.
- Successfully navigate collaborative projects and processes.
- Communicate in a regularly scheduled manner with a primary advisor outside of classes, with regard to DTYC assignments/projects, assistantships, outside projects and/or coursework.

All graduate students are expected to make on-going progress toward completion of their degree. This progress includes satisfying the above expectations and achieving the benchmarks and requirements set by the DTYC degree program and the GSC, as administered and evaluated by the DTYC faculty.

Ongoing and holistic assessment of student progress happens through:

- Class work (which is not equal to grades, but includes grades)
- End of semester chats
- Student employment observations and evaluations (written and verbal)
- Advising meetings
- Informal meetings and independent study
- Active participation in the DTYC program, as well as Department and University programming, including but not limited to guest artist visits, production and community engagement activities, conference attendance (local, national, and/or international), and opportunities to engage with schools and communities.

Students are expected to meet graduate school and DTYC industry/career standards in their work. The University expects students to progress toward degree in a timely fashion according to an approved program of study. If students do not progress toward degree or meet graduate school standards, the student may be placed on probation and graduation may be delayed. Students will be fully informed (via in person meetings with the faculty or written communication) regarding each step within the probation process. Students will be given the opportunity to explain extenuating circumstances.

Probationary Status & Academic Dismissal from the Department of Theatre and Dance

Conditions for placing students on Probationary Status & Academic Dismissal are established in consultation with the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) of the Department of Theatre and Dance.

All Graduate students entering the Department of Theatre and Dance will be evaluated at the end of each semester to ensure satisfactory progress towards degree, which includes but is not limited to meeting the departmental GPA requirement. A student whose graduate grade-point average falls below 3.67 at the end of any semester will be warned (in person or in writing) by the Area Head that their continuance in the program is in jeopardy. During the next semester or summer session for which the student is registered, the student must attain a grade-point average of at least 3.67 or be subject to dismissal. During this period, the student may not drop any course without the approval of the Area Head.

In addition to not meeting the GPA requirement, a student may be placed on departmental probationary status for any or all of the following reasons:

- Unauthorized and/or un-communicated periods of absence from the graduate program,
- Breaches of academic honesty (e.g., plagiarism, falsification of research data),
- Circumstances that cause a community organization, school or other partner to suspend or dismiss the graduate student due to egregious and/or repeated violations of professional responsibilities, violations of a professional code of conduct, district/organization policy, or state or federal law.
- Inability to meet Graduate School and DTYC Program standards, such as:
 - submit work on time and in a state of completion.
 - submit written and other work that is at the level appropriate of a graduate student (as determined by program faculty or advisor).
 - reflect with faculty and students on one's own work/progress.
 - respond to and incorporate faculty feedback into work/practice.
 - communicate clearly and respectfully in coursework, employment, and collaborative practices with all participants.
 - collaborate and engage with staff, faculty, guest artists, community partners, and colleagues in a manner that aligns with the expectations of the context/site.
 - meet the graduate school expectations and policies around academics and employment.

Link to the University's probation and dismissal policies: <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/scholastic-probation-and-dismissal/#graduatestudents>

Following a probationary semester, the area faculty will again review whether or not a student is making satisfactory academic progress toward their degree completion. In cases where students are determined to be "not making satisfactory academic progress" formal remediation or recommendations for dismissal will be made according to the policies and procedures in this handbook, as well as the graduate studies handbook.

Scholastic Dishonesty

Students who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. According to the *General Information Catalog*, "Scholastic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor), or the attempt to commit such an act." If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, you may also contact the Dean of Students, or find information online at:

<http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html>

Accommodations and Leaves

Accommodations

The University of Texas at Austin provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities upon request. It is important for students to discuss approved accommodations with their advisor and professors as early as possible so that all parties can design an effective plan for academic success. For information about accommodations at UT please contact: 512-471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

Leaves of Absence

Leaves of absence are highly discouraged, but will be considered in extenuating circumstances. Graduate students may apply for a leave of absence of no more than two semesters. A leave of absence does not alter the time limits for degrees or course work. For information on requesting a Leave of Absence or Readmission refer to the Graduate School:
<https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/leaves-of-absence>

*This document borrows language from UT's Graduate School, as well as graduate units from across UT Austin, Arizona State University, and the University of Central Florida.