

**Program Guide for the Master of Fine Arts Degree  
In Design and Technology**

**Department of Theatre and Dance  
University of Texas at Austin**

## **M.F.A. in Design and Technology Program Guide**

### **I. Admission to the M.F.A. Program in Design and Technology**

In addition to your application, the following materials are required for admission to the program.

1. Transcripts and Grade Point Average: Applicants must submit transcripts from all colleges and universities attended at the undergraduate or graduate level. 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. Applicants are expected to have completed an undergraduate degree.

2. Recommendations: A total of three letters of recommendation should be written by those who can speak most authoritatively about your background, training, professional experience, and potential for a career in your chosen area of specialization in theatre. Each reference will receive instructions on how to submit his/her letter online to the Graduate School's secured web site. Only one letter is required from each reference.

3. Statement of purpose: A two-page statement of purpose is required that outlines educational and professional goals, philosophy, and/or personal theatre aesthetic.

4. Professional Résumé of your practical theatre work.

5. Design or Technical Resume.

6. Design or Technical Portfolio: A portfolio is required that includes examples of drawing, painting, drafting, or any other manual skills applicable to your discipline, including photos of realized productions or records of realized art work. All portfolios must be submitted in the form of a website link or DVD (PowerPoint or QuickTime image file) before an interview can be scheduled. Images uploaded as portfolio material (including the website link must be in PDF format. Applicants should bring an original portfolio to their on-campus interview, should one be scheduled. Résumés, statement of purpose, portfolios and other materials should be submitted [online at the Document Upload System](#). DVD portfolios and/or materials that cannot be uploaded in PDF format should be mailed directly to the Department of Theatre and Dance.

Decisions on admission cannot be made until all the required documentation has been received.

### **II. Organization of Graduate Studies in Theatre**

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

### **III. Field of Study**

The Department of Theatre and Dance is an artistic destination where students can practice a rigorous and daring exploration of their talent. We are dedicated to adventurous creative thought, critical contemplation, and the crafting of meaning through performance.

The University of Texas Master of Fine Arts in Design and Technology program is rigorous and particularly geared toward students actively pursuing a career in theatre, film, and other fields where narrative design principles are applied. We seek committed, focused students who have a realistic knowledge of the business and are ready to make a serious commitment to their education, and especially those who seek to cross the traditional boundaries of design, performance, and technology and have a strong desire to create original performance work. We believe that the design professional is a generative, rather than an interpretive, artist.

The M.F.A. degree is a terminal degree that qualifies the student to work in a variety of academic, artistic, and professional settings, whether as designer, technician, artisan, or as a manager of a production process. The M.F.A. program of study in Design and Technology permits considerable latitude and activity across disciplines. Students in the program are generally accepted as identifying with a particular focus in Scene Design, Costume Design, Costume Technology, Lighting Design, or Integrated Media, but are encouraged to explore courses and design activities outside their main area.

It is the goal of the Design and Technology program to prepare students for an active and fulfilling career in the professional performing arts or in a related professional field employing the skills and principles as taught in the program.

### **IV. Advising**

Each student enrolled in the M.F.A. program is assigned to an academic advisor (from among the faculty who teach in the Design and Technology area of the department). With this advisor, the student plans courses each semester, prepares the Program of Study that guides coursework, and fulfills other requirements for the degree. The academic advisor helps the student decide how to plan the core courses and production practicums, as well as electives that support the major field of study. At the end of the student's second year of coursework the student proposes two to three faculty members who would be appropriate to read and supervise the thesis project. The Design and Technology faculty consult and select one of these faculty members as supervisor. The academic advisor can help with this transition. The Department Graduate Advisor signs off on all the student's paperwork.

### **V. Coursework**

The M.F.A. Degree is completed within three years of study, including coursework, thesis preparation, and defense.

## VI. Program of Work

Before registration in the first week of the first semester in the program students must complete a Program of Work together with their academic advisor. The Program should be completed on the form provided by the Graduate Coordinator and submitted to the Graduate Advisor. The M.F.A. Program requires successful completion of 60 hours of coursework and thesis preparation:

1. Studio Courses (18 credits)
2. Skills Courses (18 credits)
3. Electives (12 credits, at least 6 of which are to be outside the department)
4. Applied Practice Courses (6 credits)
5. Thesis Course Hours (6 credits)

Curricula specific to each discipline within the Program may be found on the Department website under Graduate Programs > [Design and Technology](#).

The Office of Graduate Studies allows M.F.A. students to include up to nine hours of upper-division undergraduate courses in their programs of study. Such courses should only be taken after consultation with a faculty advisor.

## VII. Thesis

The thesis will be reviewed per the standards of the performing arts industries and the university's standards of research. The thesis will consist of three parts:

1. A demonstration of artistry and skill in the candidate's area(s) of focus.
2. A significant original project demonstrating the candidate's ability to generate new work, presented in a public interface.
3. A presentation of the candidate's portfolio.

The graduate thesis serves as the capstone of the candidate's graduate work at The University of Texas at Austin. It is the final opportunity for the M.F.A. candidate to demonstrate her/his aesthetic, artistic, intellectual and technical acumen relative to the standards of the professional model. The thesis is subject to the requirements of the university and the Graduate School. This means that a supervisor, usually the student's primary advisor, and an additional reader will examine the thesis in detail. The thesis will culminate in an oral defense of the work.

## VIII. Continuing in the M.F.A. Program

Each semester, the Design and Technology faculty, and through the Graduate Studies Committee XCOM, evaluate student progress. Continuing in the program is dependent on the student's satisfactory progress, as determined by the Graduate School policies in its most current bulletin. The Design and Technology faculty expects a consistent grade point average of at least 3.0, no record of lingering incomplete coursework, positive participation in and a clear commitment to the program, and

satisfactory and timely progress toward academic requirements and the degree. Unsatisfactory progress may result in a period of probation which may include rescinded financial support and cancelled teaching assistant opportunities. If a period of probation is recommended by the XCOM a letter will be sent to the student by the Director of Graduate Studies outlining the reasons for and the consequences of the probation, and detailing the steps the student must take to be returned to non-probationary status. If the program does not see satisfactory progress following the period of probation, the student could be dismissed from the program. See the University's [probation and dismissal policies](#) for more information.

## **IX. Accommodations and Leaves**

Accommodations: Students who require accommodations should contact and register with [Services for Students with Disabilities](#) (SSD). It is important to discuss approved accommodations with your advisor and professors.

Leaves of Absence: Leaves of absence are strongly discouraged, and should only be considered if necessary. Graduate students may apply for a leave of absence of no more than two semesters. A student on leave may not use university facilities nor is the student entitled to receive advice from any member of the faculty. 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>.