

MFA, Theatre
Specialization in Live Design and Production 2024-2025
(Revised October 2023)

*This document borrows language from UT's Graduate School and graduate units across UT Austin.

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Introduction

This program guide provides an introductory overview of the MFA in Theatre with a Specialization in Live Design and Production for prospective and current students. A Live Design and Production specialization offers opportunities and training for entering the profession and the highly competitive job market. The specialization prepares graduate students for multiple design, production, and creative practice career paths. Students and faculty commit to exploring diverse ideas, experiences, and innovation through ethical, creative practice and rigorous scholarship.

Our graduate program resides within the Department of Theatre & Dance, within the College of Fine Arts, within a large, multifaceted university, within a diverse and complex state, country, and world.

Working within these layers and systems presents academic, bureaucratic, cultural, and social challenges and opportunities that inform our program's style and structure, including our intentional focus on relational practice, dialogue, and reciprocity.

Land Acknowledgement

As the flagship institution in our state university system, it is important that The University of Texas at Austin demonstrate respect for the historic and contemporary presence of Indigenous Peoples in Texas and, particularly, in the greater Austin area. To that end, it is incumbent upon us as faculty, students, and beneficiaries of The University of Texas at Austin to recognize that our campus resides on what were historically the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples who were dispossessed of their homelands. Land Acknowledgements are an expression of gratitude and appreciation to the Indigenous Peoples, the traditional caretakers of the land, for the use of their lands on which we work, study, and learn. In this spirit, the Live Design and Production program acknowledges that our work originates from (and may meet on) Indigenous land. Moreover, we acknowledge and pay respects to the Carrizo & Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Lipan Apache, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, Tigua Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas, here on Turtle Island.

**Thank you to the Committee on Land Acknowledgements from whom this statement was borrowed and adapted. This committee has also made further recommendations for how we can support Indigenous students, faculty, and research at UT Austin.*

About Live Design and Production

Live Design and Production is applied to a specialization of study within the Department of Theatre and Dance that prepares visionary applicants to create innovative careers that cross boundaries of design, fabrication, and technology to new work in all performance areas. Students have opportunities to create work within their chosen disciplines and collaborate across disciplines, foregrounding experimental and new work. Faculty practice culturally responsive, interdisciplinary mentorship rooted in inclusive excellence and engage in transdisciplinary conversations rooted in community and society.

The three-year MFA degree stresses flexibility and encourages participation in classes throughout the Department of Theatre and Dance and the University. Our department offers a world-class educational environment and creative incubator for the next generation of live performance artists, thinkers, and leaders. Live Design and Production students often engage with department faculty, students, and curricula in:

- Dance and UTeach Dance
- Directing and Playwriting
- Drama Theatre For Youth and Communities
- Performance as Public Practice
- UTeach Theatre
- BA in Theatre and the BFA in Acting

Study in Live Design and Production culminates in a performative thesis project with a written thesis document and portfolio in which students apply theory and practice from a wide range of disciplines to an area of practice in Live Design and Production. Thesis projects generally employ reflective practitioner research to address research questions in design and production. Within higher education and the theatre profession, the M.F.A. specializing in Live Design and Production is considered a terminal degree for related fields of study.

The faculty and staff in the Live Design and Production area aim to prepare students for an active and fulfilling career in the professional performing arts and related live performance fields.

Admission and Application Information

Admission

Eight Live Design and Production candidates are admitted each year from a competitive group of applicants. After a preliminary round of application reviews, the faculty invites a small group of applicants to our in-person interview days on campus. The interview process usually occurs over one to two full days at the UT campus and is not required but preferred for admission into the MFA theatre program. An MFA degree is a substantial investment of time, money, and other resources; our in-depth interview process allows applicants and faculty to assess possible collaborations. 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 (X-COM). Students communicate with the GSC and X-COM through the department's Graduate Advisor, Dr. Paul Bonin-Rodriguez.

Admission to the M.F.A. Degree program, Live Design and Production specialization

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

Application Process

The early decision deadline for receipt of applications for the MFA program specializing in Live Design in Production is January 21, 2024. The final decision deadline for receipt of applications for the MFA program specializing in Live Design in Production is March 21, 2024.

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.

To apply, applicants should go to ApplyTexas.org, create an account and fill out the form. Non-U.S. citizens should fill out the International Graduate Application. Choose "MFA in Theatre" and will subsequently select "Live Design and Production" as the Area of Interest on a pull-down menu. This will ensure application to the Live Design and Production specialization. Pay the application fee. Applicants should look for the email with 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

Our admissions process is intentionally holistic and aims to remove barriers to access by offering multiple ways for applicants to demonstrate interests, skills, and experiences that will support graduate study in this field. In addition to the Graduate School application and fee, the following materials are required to be considered for admission in the MFA in Live Design and Production specialization:

Official Transcripts: 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) and any graduate-level courses already taken.

Three letters of recommendation: At least three letters of recommendation are required. To be most helpful, letters should be from persons qualified to speak to the applicant's work in areas related to the Live Design and Production field and should comment specifically on the candidate's aptitude for graduate-level creative activity, training, professional experience, potential for growth, and leadership, as well as other advanced work in their areas of interest and related career specialization(s). Each reference will receive instructions on submitting their letter online to the Graduate School's secured website. Only one letter is required from each reference.

Resume: Applicants will upload a resume that details all relevant work, experience, and scholarship. We welcome non-traditional and expansive definitions of professional and work experience in the field. We recognize the financial burdens that internships and other unpaid experiences may not be accessible to all, and so we anticipate that students will present from a broad array of opportunities. Applicants are invited to list all relevant life experiences, curiosities that have prepared them for graduate inquiry and study, and their desired career path.

Personal Artistic Statement: Applicants will upload a personal artist statement that explains and contextualizes the applicant's artistic work and vision. The statement contextualizes their relevant experience and future academic and professional goals in the field. This written statement should offer specifics about the candidate's purpose for pursuing graduate school in the Live Design and Production specialization at UT Austin through form and content. The personal statement offers an opportunity for applicants to share their vision for graduate study at UT Austin and their intended impact on the field. This is also an opportunity for the candidate to reflect on their desire to experiment, learn, grow, and collaborate with a small cohort of students and faculty.

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 artwork. All portfolios must be submitted as a website link or flash drive (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, statements of purpose, portfolios, and other materials should be submitted [online at the Document Upload System](#). flash drive portfolios and materials that cannot be uploaded in PDF format should be mailed directly to the Department of Theatre and Dance.

Admission decisions can only be made once all the required documentation has been received.

Program Goals and Outcomes

All MFA 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.

Skills and Competencies:

- Aesthetics and artistry
- Research and research methods
- Critical Thinking
- Visual Acuity
- Organizational Management
- Collaborative leadership
- Contemporary and emerging creative practices
- Devising, world-building, and storytelling
- Design and fabrication
- Ethical considerations within areas of practice
- Culturally responsive performance practices
- Program evaluation and assessment
- Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary communication

Program of Study

Curriculum

The M.F.A. in Live Design and Production specialization is a three-year, 60-credit-hour program 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.

Program of Work

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

Studio Courses	18 credits
Skills Courses	18 credits
Electives	12 credits (6 of which are to be outside the department)
Applied Practice Courses	6 credits
Thesis Course Hours	6 credits

Curricula specific to each area of focus within the Program of Work may be found on the Department website under Graduate Programs > [Live Design and Production](#).

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.

Required Coursework

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

TD 188M: Advanced Projects in Design and Technology (6 credits- 1 credit per semester) – This course is a faculty-supervised, 1-credit course. The Colloquium provides a space for M.F.A. Live Design and Productions students to gather every week to explore the artistic, theoretical, and pedagogical practices associated with Live Design and Production communities. The shape and outcomes of this course will change each semester to meet the current needs of students and faculty in the program. Live Design and Production Students attend and actively participate in the MFA Colloquium across all six of their semesters in the LDP program. Students enroll in Colloquium for credit, which includes additional mentorship and time with their primary faculty supervisor for six semesters, Fall semester assessment, and Spring Showcase with semester assessment.

TD 388J: Design Studio (18 credits)- This course introduces students to the practices and problems of scenic design, costume design, lighting design, costume technology, and integrated media for live performance.

TD 388L: Graduate Production Laboratory (credits vary)- This course supports the practical application of and the design and production practice.

TD 388L: Portfolio For Design and Production (3 credits)- This course begins the preparation for the move from academic study to the professional field. Required for Third-year graduate candidates.

TD 698A/B: Thesis (6 credits) - This faculty-mentored, independent study, pass/fail course is taken in the Fall and Spring semester of the third year. Typically, Thesis A is the practical portion of the thesis project, and Thesis B is the written and defense portion of the thesis project. Thesis B must be taken during a student's final Live Design and Production MFA program semester.

Advising

Each student enrolled in the M.F.A. degree program's Live Design and Production specialization is assigned to a primary academic advisor (from among the faculty who teach in the department's Live Design and Production area). With this advisor, the student plans courses for each semester, prepares the Program of Work that guides coursework, and reviews all other requirements for the degree. The academic advisor helps the student decide how to plan for core courses, production practicums, and electives that support the student's focus of study. Within 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 Live Design and Production 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.

Progress Towards Degree

Theatre and dance are intensely collaborative fields of practice that require reciprocal relationships, engagement, and dialogue. Within the Department, Live Design and Production 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 and program-related assignments, employment, and collaborations.

Students must also demonstrate the ability to navigate varied partnerships and collaborative projects successfully and to meet the expectations required by the multiple contexts where Live Design and Production graduate students work and collaborate.

The Department of Theatre and Dance requires graduate students to:

- Maintain a minimum GPA of 3.5.
- 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 Live Design and Production faculty and the graduate school.
- Complete assigned work on time and at a satisfactory level of accomplishment as established by the professor of record 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 regularly with a primary advisor about your Live Design and Production assignments/projects, assistantships, outside projects, and coursework.

All graduate students are expected to make ongoing progress toward the completion of their degree. This progress includes satisfying the above expectations and achieving the benchmarks and requirements set by the MFA Theatre Degree, Live Design and Production specialization, and the GSC, as administered and evaluated by the Live Design and Production faculty.

Ongoing and holistic assessment of student progress happens each semester through:

- Classwork (which is not equal to grades but includes grades)
- End-of-semester assessment regarding progress toward degree with the Live Design and Production Faculty and Staff
- Live Design and Production Spring Showcase
- Production observations and evaluations
- Teaching Assistant observations and evaluations
- Advising meetings
- Informal meetings and independent study
- Active participation in the Live Design and Production 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, or international), semester assessments, Spring Showcase, and opportunities to engage with professional communities at national and international showcases.

Students are expected to meet graduate school and Live Design and 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.

Continuing in the M.F.A. Degree Program / Probation

Each semester the faculty of the Live Design and Production specialization, and through the Graduate Studies Committee Executive Committee, evaluate student progress. Continuing in the M.F.A. program is dependent on the student's satisfactory progress, as determined by the Graduate School policies in its most current bulletin. Live Design and Production faculty expect a consistent grade point average of at least 3.5, no record of lingering incomplete coursework, quality of work at a level appropriate for a graduate student, positive participation in and a clear commitment to the program, and satisfactory and timely progress toward academic requirements and the degree.

The Live Design and Production faculty will base an evaluation of a student's unsatisfactory progress on the underlined factors listed in the paragraph above. Unsatisfactory progress may result in a period of probation. Probationary status 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 Graduate Advisor 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 Live Design and Production faculty do not see satisfactory progress during and at the close of the probation period, the student could be dismissed from the program. See the University's [probation and dismissal policies](#) for more information.

Accommodations and Leaves

Accommodations: Students who require accommodations should contact and register with [Services for Students with Disabilities](#) (SSD). It is important for the student to discuss approved accommodations with his/her 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 up to two semesters. A student on leave may not use university facilities, nor is the student entitled to advice from any faculty member. A leave of absence does not alter the time limits for degrees or coursework. For information on requesting a Leave of Absence or Readmission, refer to the Graduate School: <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/leaves-of-absence> .

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

Conditions for placing students on Probationary Status and 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, including but not limited to meeting the departmental GPA requirement. A student whose graduate grade-point average falls below 3.5 at the end of any semester will be warned (in person or 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 3.5 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 LD&P Program standards, such as:

- submit work on time, in a state of completion and at the level appropriate of a graduate student (as determined by program faculty or advisor).
- engage in meaningful reflection with faculty and students on one's work/progress.
- respond to and/or incorporate faculty feedback into work/practice.
- communicate clearly and effectively in coursework, employment, and collaborative practices with all participants.
- collaborate and engage effectively with staff, faculty, guest artists, community partners, and colleagues in a manner that aligns with the expectations of the context/site.

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 program guide and the graduate studies program guide.

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>
<http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

OUR COMMITMENTS

Live Design and Production offers a program of study with space for individual interests. 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 person-centered approach to learning, graduate students receive highly individualized mentorship from their primary advisor and the Live Design and Production faculty. The Live Design and Production professors each bring different experiences, perspectives, and expertise to the Live Design and Production specialization program. The faculty is committed to providing guidance and mentorship to help students progress academically and to meet each student's goals.

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 also recognize the limits of our faculty in practice and perspective. Thus, we actively work to create and support mentorship experiences for students with other faculty and field experts outside the Live Design and Production area when desired and required.

Graduate school often presents and amplifies systemic, academic, individual, and subject discipline-related challenges. Students are encouraged to navigate these complexities through regular office hour visits with course professors and current Live Design and Production advisor to discuss their work and progress. Please ask for resources and support when needed.

In our ongoing work to create a better working environment and field, the MFA faculty in LD&P commit to:

- Maintaining a holistic recruitment process that values a wide range of skills, experiences, identities, and cultures.
- Clarifying faculty roles and how/where decisions are made each year.
- Listening, responding, and taking action when issues are raised by any member of the Live Design and Production community (students and faculty). Whenever possible and inline with FERPA and UT Austin policies, we will share information about grievances and conflicts that may arise. *This may not always be possible due to privacy protections in place at the university, state, and/or federal levels.
- Sharing resources for reporting harm, grieving, and gaining support outside of our area faculty (see end of this document).
- Ongoing revision and transparency in our Teaching Assistant development and evaluation process to support growth.
- Ongoing revision and transparency in our Live Design and Production Program Guide to include language and actions that center ways of working, learning, and knowing.
- Creating a culture of open dialogue and ongoing actions that build trust among members of our multiracial and gender-diverse community of practice.

STUDENT RESOURCES ON THE UT CAMPUS

- Student Conduct
 - General Information Catalog (GIC): Appendix C, Chapter 11 – Student Discipline and Conduct <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/>
 - Prohibited Conduct: Subchapter 11-400
 - 11-404: General Misconduct
 - Disciplinary Procedures: Subchapter 11-500
 - Sanctions: Subchapter 11-700
 - Dean of Students Overview of Student Conduct Process <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/processesandprocedures.php>
 - GIC: Student Services – Discipline <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/student-services/discipline/>
- Student Grievances Policy
 - GIC: Student Services, Student Grievance Procedures <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/student-services/student-grievance-procedures/>
- The Graduate School
 - Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) 9-1240 <https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/graduate-school>
 - Section D.1. Adjudicating Grievances of Graduate Students
 - Graduate School – Grievances <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/grievances>
- Discrimination
 - GIC: Appendix I, Non Discrimination Policy <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-i/>
 - HOP 3-3020: Nondiscrimination Policy <https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/nondiscrimination-policy>
 - Section II – General Procedures
 - Section IV – Complaint Resolution Procedure
 - OIE Investigation <http://equity.utexas.edu/investigations/>
 - OIE Procedure and Practice Guide <http://equity.utexas.edu/investigations/procedure-and-practice-guide/>
 - HOP 9-1810: Hate and Bias Incidents <https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/hate-and-bias-incidents>
- Title IX
 - HOP 3-3031: Prohibition of Sexual Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Sexual Misconduct, Interpersonal Violence, Stalking <https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/prohibition-sexual-discrimination-sexual-harassment-sexual-assault-sexual-misconduct>
 - GIC: Appendix D – Policy On Sex Discrimination, Sexual Harassment,

- Sexual Assault, Sexual Misconduct, Interpersonal Violence, Stalking
<http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-d/>
- Investigation Process <https://>
- Protection from Retaliation for Suspected Misconduct Reporting
 - HOP 3-1022 <https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/protection-retaliation-suspected-misconduct-reporting-whistleblower>
- Research Misconduct
 - HOP 7-1230 Misconduct in Science and Other Scholarly Activities
<https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/misconduct-science-and-other-scholarly-activities>
 - Section II.A. Reporting Misconduct or Retaliation
- TA/AI grievance procedure
 - HOP 9-2050 <https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/teaching-assistant-and-assistant-instructor-grievance-procedures>
 - IV – Grievance Procedures
- Employee Grievance procedures
 - HOP 5-2430 <https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/grievance-policy>

Places to report challenges with:

- Discrimination
 - Office of Inclusion and Equity, Campus Climate Response Team, Dean of Students, Compliance Office, Title IX
- Student Conduct
 - Dean of Students – Student Conduct Academic Integrity, Department Chairs, Deans
- Employment
 - Supervisor and Human Resources
- Research
 - VP for Research

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a documented disability (physical, cognitive, etc.) who requires academic accommodation for a course or courses should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

Optimizing Learning

It is difficult--if not impossible--to thrive and learn to your full capacity if you are experiencing hunger. Studies show that about 22% to 25% students on college campuses face food insecurity challenges at some point in their college career. A few resources available to students include:

- School of Social Work Food Pantry <https://socialwork.utexas.edu/food-pantry/>
- Central Texas Food Bank <https://www.centraltexasfoodbank.org/>