Academic Policy Memo 11

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Memo No. 11
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Policy and Guidelines for the Professional Actor Training Program (PATP)

The PATP admits students with demonstrated talent and the perceived determination to complete a challenging three-year course of training. We expect our students to be exceptionally focused, disciplined, and motivated. Even though the policy in some professional training programs assumes that several entering students will be cut from the program before the conclusion of their training, this is not the case at the University of Washington. The program is designed to graduate all who are admitted. Students receive careful attention and support and should expect to succeed in the program.

Any decision to retain a student or to recommend another action is made with consideration of the entire full-time PATP faculty. The final decision to recommend dismissal to the Graduate School is the responsibility of the Head of the PATP.

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

The following is a non-exhaustive list of learning goals. Students must demonstrate satisfactory progress quarter to quarter in their ability to:

- Analyze a dramatic text and glean from it the information necessary to enliven a performance;
- Combine the practical skills of physical, vocal, and emotional command with imagination and a strong sense of space in order to make performances which live in three dimensions;
- Deliver strong performances in a range of media, from stage to film to television and new media;
- Work collaboratively in service of the work at hand;
- Effectively and efficiently navigate the casting, rehearsal, tech, and performance processes;
- Create a new work either by self-generation, collaboration, or adaptation;
- Undertake self-production and marketing/promotion;
- Develop strategies for managing their careers.

GRADING

At the end of every quarter, each acting student will meet with the faculty for an evaluation of their work. Students
receiving a “B” (3.0) should consider this as an indication that their work in the program is not satisfactory, and that immediate improvement must be made.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

A respectful, civil, disciplined, and professional bearing is expected of each student. The following is offered as a guideline for such behavior:

- Be prepared and on time for all classes, rehearsals, and calls;
- Dress appropriately for all classroom, studio, shop, crew and rehearsal activities;
- Participate, rehearse, and perform to the best of your ability, following all reasonable direction, and conforming to the language of the script;
- Once cast in a show, wait for approval from Costume Designer before making changes to your appearance (i.e. hair, facial hair, piercings, tattoos);
- Properly care for your costumes and props;
- Respect the physical property of the production and the University;
- Use the utmost courtesy and respect with your colleagues, faculty, and University staff. In short, observe the Golden Rule: “Treat others as you would like to be treated.”

ETHICS

We expect our students to maintain a high standard of ethics in their dealings with one another and with the University. Plagiarism, stealing, forgery of documents, or misrepresentation of faculty/staff of any kind or any other unethical conduct will not be tolerated. Evidence of any of these may result in dismissal from the PATP. Ethics also involves adherence to the policies outlined in the UW’s Student Conduct code.

SOBRIETY

The nature of the PATP demands concentration, dedication, and commitment.

Experience teaches us that it is not possible for students to take full advantage of what is offered in the PATP while abusing drugs or alcohol. Students who show up impaired for class, work, rehearsal, or performance will be asked to leave, and repeated impairment may lead to dismissal. While students have the right to keep their medical concerns private, they may wish to alert appropriate faculty member(s) while taking any prescription medication which may affect their performance in department activities.

RESPECT

The PATP is committed to building a creative community that fosters the maximum amount of artistic and intellectual freedom among its members. Harassment of any kind in our community interferes with these goals and will not be tolerated.

Harassment is any behavior by an individual or group that contributes to a hostile, intimidating, unwelcoming, and/or inaccessible work environment. This can include (but is not limited to) sexual, racial, ageist, ableist, or retaliatory harassment. If you are being harassed, we encourage you to seek help and are committed to supporting you. You may
speak with your instructor, adviser, peers, the head of the PATP, the chair of the School of Drama, or any other members of the department with whom you feel comfortable. UW also has designated resources available, including the Health and Wellness advocate (for confidential discussion and assistance in reporting), the UW Community Standards and Student Conduct Office (for complaints against other students), the University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office (for complaints against employees), the Academic Student Employee Union, and the Office of the Ombud.

CONSENT

To create the conditions where bold, courageous, and generous collaboration and learning can flourish, we are committed to a culture of proactive communication. We encourage Affirmative Consent conversations between scene partners, and directors/faculty when sensitive interactions are required for class projects, rehearsals, and performances. “Affirmative Consent is a knowing, voluntary and mutual decision among all participants to engage in sexual activity. For our purposes, we wish to apply this idea to simulated sex, violence, and scenes involving especially sensitive material. Coming to an agreement about the approach you will be taking when working on this kind of material – including setting specific physical boundaries – is in alignment with professional rehearsal protocol, and engenders collaboration, trust, and everyone’s most courageous work.

ATTENDANCE

Part of the rigor of the program rests on the assumption that the carefully selected actors are adult, responsible, and dedicated. Further, the faculty assumes that taking advantage of the total program will be the first priority of the students’ time and efforts. The PATP is based on an ensemble model. Every actor is to a considerable degree dependent on every other actor being present, responsible and similarly dedicated as their fellows.

The most concrete and obvious indication of a student's dedication is punctuality and attendance. Therefore, we enforce a studio, class, and rehearsal attendance policy based on professional standards. In brief, all actors in the program are expected to be in attendance, on time, and ready to work for all classes, costume fittings, TA assignments, and called rehearsals. Attendance is kept for each class. Any absences will be considered unacceptable unless cleared by the Head beforehand. If an actor becomes too ill to attend classes or rehearsal they are expected to promptly email the grad advisor and Head. If a student is seriously ill or contagious to others, they will not be expected to participate in classes or rehearsals. Such decisions are made in conjunction with the Head and on a case-by-case basis. Routine doctor’s appointments are to be arranged outside of class and rehearsal times. Additionally, any individually arranged outside meetings or obligations must take place other than during class and rehearsal times. Students will not make travel plans during the term without express permission of the program Head.

Three unexcused absences, whether from class or rehearsal, will automatically trigger a warning and the possibility of probationary status; however, the program Head may decide that warning or probationary status is appropriate after one or two absences.

WHEN EXPECTATIONS ARE NOT BEING MET

UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS

If a student's work falls below acceptable standards in the judgment of the faculty, the student will receive a notice. The
Head of the PATP, and perhaps other faculty, will meet with the student and discuss the relevant problems.

The student may be placed on “Warning,” “Probation,” or “Final Probation.” The student will receive a letter from the program head as notification of their status, as outlined in the Graduate School's Policy Memo 16: Unsatisfactory Performance and Progress. This letter will contain information on steps necessary to return to good standing, and the consequences if the student's work continues to fall below acceptable standards.

**WARNING, PROBATION, AND DISMISSAL POLICIES**

A *warning* informs a student that a particular behavior or circumstance must be addressed to the faculty's satisfaction, or the student may be placed on probation at the end of the warning's term. The issuance of a warning is the beginning of a process that may lead to probation, loss of stipend, and/or dismissal from the department. Among reasons for the issuance of a warning are:

- Unsatisfactory progress in classwork
- Motivation or discipline problems
- Irresponsible, inappropriate, or rude behavior
- Failure to meet regularly with scene partners
- Not experimenting or participating fully in class work
- Not establishing and promoting an ensemble/collegial atmosphere (both in and out of the classroom)
- Unprofessional behavior at a rehearsal or performance
- Invasion of personal space outside of rehearsal or classroom
- Disrupting or impacting other actors’ growth/process by taking focus away from the work
- Unprofessional behavior while teaching
- Habitual tardiness or absence
- Flagrant disrespect of anyone in the classroom, theatre, or shop
- Lack of commitment and/or preparation
- Repeated failure of an assigned task or skill
- Negligence of duty
- Production infractions

Other reasons for warning may arise. Certain extreme behavioral issues may result in stronger disciplinary action such as probation or dismissal, which include but are not limited to:

- Repeated patterns of behavior listed above
- Deliberate destruction, theft, or unauthorized use University property
- Sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking
- Bullying, threatening, and other disruptive behaviors
- Actual or threatened violence or other forms of harassment
- Violation of University policies concerning illegal drugs and the use of alcohol

*Probation* is issued to a student deemed negligent, upon the recommendation of the faculty, in meeting the department's professional, personal, and/or academic expectations, or when the student's behavior is disruptive to the PATP learning environment or productions. Probationary status may impact casting and teaching assignments. A student may petition the faculty for a re-evaluation in writing. Should a student wish to appeal the probation, the
request must be made in writing (letter) and addressed to the Head of the PATP.

If behaviors and/or coursework do not improve to the satisfaction of the faculty during the probationary period, the student will be placed on Final Probation for the following quarter. At the end of the Final Probation quarter, the faculty will decide whether the student is returned to good standing, or recommended for dismissal. The final decision for dismissal rests with the Head of the PATP.

HEALTH, STAMINA, AND MOTIVATIONAL ISSUES

The faculty expects students to make productive and mature judgments concerning their own health and life issues so that they are able to give their all to their training and not put themselves, their fellow actors or the ensemble at a disadvantage or into jeopardy.

It is each student’s responsibility to maintain and nurture their health, strength, and motivation for the challenges of the program. If these standards become compromised for whatever reason, the student is encouraged to disclose enough information to the Head or, if preferred, to the Executive Director or faculty Graduate Program Coordinator, so together they can determine the best course of action for the benefit of the student and for the program as a whole. If a student decides not to, or is unable to disclose deteriorating health, stamina, or motivation issues, and is perceived to not be meeting the requirements put forth, the student can expect a “meeting of concern” with the Head and perhaps other members of the faculty to assess the problem and the best course of action. If a meeting does not succeed in solving the perceived issues, the student can be expected to be put on probation for a quarter, during which time they will need to meet the basic expectations for the program.

The University of Washington has resources for students struggling with health and personal issues. UW Health & Wellness provides support, advocacy, consultation, and education regarding alcohol and drug problems, suicide intervention, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking and harassment advocacy, and crisis advice. UW Disability Resources Office offers services to the UW community members with disabilities.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Students planning to leave school for any period of time need to be aware that re-admittance into the PATP program is not guaranteed. After an absence of one year, all students are required to re-audition for acceptance. Waiver of re-audition requirement is at the sole discretion of the Department Head of the PATP, with the following protocol:

- Proof of professional work;
- Portfolio must contain contract, letters of reference from director and/or stage manager of production, printed materials with student’s name, bio, character, etc., rehearsal/performance schedule(s);
- Any other related materials pertinent to professional endeavors.

If a student is going to be absent due to illness/medical/family emergency, a student should speak directly with the Head of the PATP. In cases of a high number of absences due to illness/medical/family emergency, a student may want to consider a complete withdrawal.
Students must also follow the guidelines established by the Graduate School in their Policy Memo 9.

**INCOMPLETE GRADE REQUEST**

A student who accumulates numerous absences due to illness may request in writing an Incomplete from their instructor in any course. A student should have done satisfactory coursework for most of the quarter. When an Incomplete is granted by determination of the instructor, a student must make arrangements with the instructor to complete the unfinished portion of the course within the determined time frame. Once the course is completed, the instructor is responsible to complete the appropriate grade change form; it is the student's responsibility to ensure this is done, and/or to be in contact with the grad Advisor.

**CASTING POLICY**

The faculty is committed to the growth of each actor in the program in all aspects of their development. As much as is possible we provide opportunities for actors to be cast in a variety of plays and roles. These same opportunities do not necessarily translate into equitable results. Every effort is made to give each actor in the program opportunities to play a wide range and size of roles. Even though the PATP continues to create more casting opportunities, there can be no guarantees about the size or nature of the roles any actor will play while enrolled in the program.

The casting process in any given production is subject to many variables and decisions are made in the context of several plays being cast at the same time, some directed by faculty, some by outside directors and some by student directors. Also, the casting pool changes depending on what year or quarter is current. Casting is based on a variety of considerations all in the service of balancing several intangible and subjective factors including:

- pedagogical considerations
- the director's vision for the play
- an actor's enthusiasm (or lack thereof) for a role
- the perceived quality or skill level of audition or previous work of any given actor
- maintaining standards of excellence in all UW productions

While the students' desires for roles are taken into account in casting, once final decisions are made it will be the obligation of the actor to accept the assigned role.

The faculty, with student input, continually and forthrightly, in the context of evolving sensibilities, examines these issues. We strive for diversity and inclusion in all such matters. It is the intent of the Program to enable that diversity to flourish. The School of Drama adheres to the University of Washington's policy of equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam era veteran.

This policy conforms to policies of the other leading programs around the country.

Please note that an actor may be removed from the mainstage casting pool or from a production at the discretion of the Head of the PATP if they are not meeting their coursework requirements, or if they are on Probation or Final Probation for academic or conduct reasons.
OUTSIDE WORK FOR ACTORS

The PATP provides irreplaceable training experiences that are time-sensitive. The training is challenging, comprehensive, and intricate enough that the faculty agrees it should not be interrupted, even by professional work. The acting program is a particularly concentrated endeavor, one which offers a series of coordinated and overlapping training activities to give actors the basis to acquire essential (and complex) skills that can only be grasped through trial and error, practiced with rigor, and reinforced through repetition. Our program provides the expertise and somewhat cloistered structure for this necessary and undistracted activity to take place. Further, valuable learning from other students' efforts goes on due to the interdependence among fellow students working together consistently on class projects, rehearsals, and assignments. We feel it is in best interest of the students to be part of an ensemble.

Therefore, the students in the program will be available for outside work during the periods from the end of spring quarter to the middle of September each year. The rest of the year is to be devoted to the training program only. The exclusion of outside theatre work for actors extends to film, television, commercials, industrials, etc. In addition students are not allowed to miss class or rehearsals for auditions/meetings with agents, casting directors, producers, or directors. This is a standard policy for the top 10 professional training programs around the country.

On the other hand, we do very much support students pursuing summer work. The faculty endorses and helps to bring directors and casting people to campus from Seattle and around the country to hold auditions for summer theatre festivals. We will do what we can to help students facilitate casting sessions for theatres who come to campus. When no other times are available, the Head may choose to interrupt classes for such auditions. If summer festival employment begins before the end of the school year, permission may be granted by the Head, on a case-by-case basis, to make it possible for a student to accept summer work.

Actors who, on their own, arrange out of town auditions for professional-quarter work may be granted permission, on a case-by-case basis, to miss a small number classes or rehearsals.

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