

GRADUATE THESIS INFORMATION FOR THE MFA IN DESIGN STUDENT

As a requirement for their degree, the MFA in Design student is required to design scenery, costumes, or lighting, for a production or productions as agreed upon with the Design faculty. This is called a “thesis” production by the School of Drama, but differs from the UW Graduate School’s definition of a thesis and no material is submitted to the Graduate School

I. THE CONCEPT OF APPROACH

- A. Prior to beginning work on their thesis production, the student designer will select a faculty advisor, and will inform the advisor of progress through periodic meetings. During the process of designing and executing the thesis production, the student is expected to demonstrate a mastery of the aspects of the designer’s craft, such as understanding the script, taking into account the space, budget, and time limitations impacting the devising of an appropriate aesthetic approach through discussions with the director and other designers, doing appropriate research, and providing appropriate graphic material at appropriate times as the production is conceived and moves into the shop.

The faculty advisor is expected to provide guidance and useful criticism during this period, but the student is responsible for initiating periodic meetings and keeping the advisor informed about progress on the production.

- B. CREDITS

Nine credits of Drama 600 are required. When the thesis work is significantly divided between two quarters, the credits may be divided between quarters.

- C. THESIS COMMITTEE

At the time of thesis preparation, a Thesis Supervisory Committee will be formed of at least two members of the Design faculty, one member of the non-Design Drama faculty, and one or more other appropriate persons, (e.g. other faculty, staff, guest artists, etc.) The student is responsible for the recruitment of this committee. The responsibility of the committee members is both advisory and evaluative and will vary as the needs of the student vary.

II. WRITTEN COMPONENT GUIDELINES:

Each production thesis must include a written component to be completed after the thesis production has opened. This written document should focus on the candidate’s own work on the production including reflection and analysis both of the process, and on the product, of the design. While the main focus of this self-reflection will most likely be on the particular thesis production, it is also important to include the larger perspective of the candidate’s entire tenure at UW, and their broader growth as a designer.

In evaluating the final product of the design, it will be important to clearly state the aesthetic and dramatic goals of the director and the design team going into the conception of the production and to reflect on the degree to which those goals were completed. These goals might include dramatically, pedagogically, compositionally and/ or aesthetically defined goals and may have been initiated or stated by the candidate or any of the major collaborators on the production. The candidate should assess to what degree their work on the production succeeded in supporting or contributing to these goals, (and some analysis as to the coherency or appropriateness of those goals is also likely to be relevant.) It should be clear in the document where the candidate felt their work succeeded as well as in what ways the design may have fallen short. For this discussion of product, candidates may find it helpful to focus on the success of the production itself considering the question: "What was most effective, meaningful, and/or entertaining about this dramatic event and how might my work have improved it or detracted from it?"

In examining the process of the thesis production the candidate is likely to have made many aesthetic, practical and analytical choices, and practiced with many different tools, including communication techniques, with a diverse group of collaborators. They may have also experimented with or affected many other aspects of their personal methodology. The written document should take an honest, self-reflective approach in considering all of these aspects of the process, and contextualizing them against their time at UW as well as against the context of their expectations of emerging into the professional environment. It is important to note that this document should not be thought of merely as a personal diary or log of the events that happened along the pathway to the production. It must include the candidate's perspective or point of view of personal growth, challenges, accomplishments, and even failures, along that pathway. For this discussion of process, candidates may find it helpful to focus on the 'training exercise' aspects of the production, considering the question: "What did I learn about myself or my methodology in completing this exercise and in examining my methodology?"

This written 'post-view' consideration of the thesis must be delivered (on paper) to each member of the thesis committee *at least five days before* the scheduled thesis defense. The candidate is reminded that this document also constitutes a permanent record and will be kept in the School of Drama's records. It is important to make sure they are technically well-written and well proofread by at least two sources. (Any candidate feeling insecure about their writing abilities is encouraged to discuss this with their advisor.) Also, the candidate should not assume that any person or collaborator referenced in the document will be known by all parties reading the document. Please make sure that all people referenced in the document are also identified as to their role on the production.

II. DEFENSE

An oral defense should be scheduled the same quarter as the run of the thesis production. In rare cases, it may be required to happen at the beginning of the following quarter. The oral examination should be devoted to the student's effectiveness in realizing the objectives articulated in the written component. The committee, in executive session, then votes to determine whether or not the degree should be conferred.

III. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DESIGN THESIS

A. A production thesis in Scenic design should include:

1. Painted model of the set or sets and color photographs of the model under appropriate dramatic lighting. Sketches of set or sets as appropriate.
2. A complete composite ground plan in 1/2" scale, showing placement of the set or sets in the theatre. 1/4" plans of each scene.
3. At least one center line section, full at 1/2", others as appropriate in 1/4".
4. Complete paint elevations if information is not covered in painted model.
5. All necessary prop, furniture, and set dressing details, including drawings and/or research.
6. Production photographs that include the set or sets or phases of unit sets under production conditions, with actors, if possible.

B. A production thesis in Costume design should include:

1. A complete set of portfolio-ready, color sketches of designs for all costume and accessories with all necessary fabric and trim swatches. This includes costumes to be rented and/or pulled.
2. Complete research, well organized with appropriate notes and citations.
3. Annotated dressing lists; a complete costume list, scene by scene, to include: changes, dressing notes, maintenance notes.
4. All necessary drawings and/or descriptions of details, hair, wigs, make-up and accessories.
5. Color photos of costumes on actors in performance conditions (groups are good).

C. A production thesis in Lighting design should include:

1. A complete light plot including all necessary information for the show to be hung and circuited.
2. At least one center-line section, showing all hanging positions
3. A complete hook-up.
4. Any pertinent visual communication with the director, including art prints,

photographs, and/or personally drawn light renderings or sketches

5. Any other pertinent paperwork done for the production
6. Color photographs of each scene under production conditions, including actors
7. Drawings normally at $1/2" = 1'0"$ scale

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