

## **M.F.A. in Theatre, with a Specialization in Playwriting**

### **Program Handbook**

#### **I. Admission to the M.F.A. in Theatre, with a Specialization in Playwriting**

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**
5. **Statement of Purpose:** This two-page statement purpose should outline educational and professional goals, philosophy and/or personal theatre aesthetic.
6. **Two original and complete plays:** which show the range and depth of your capabilities. No collaborations or adaptations unless your contributions are clearly and specifically demonstrated. One of the works must be a "full length" play, in that it should stand alone as a significant theatre experience.

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**

Write your story here.

The University of Texas at Austin's M.F.A. in Theatre, with a Specialization in Playwriting is a vital and ascendant program situated in a vibrant and non-traditional theatre city. This acclaimed three-year program combines a rigorous immersion in the tactical craft of playwriting with a bold and aesthetically diverse embrace of collaborative theatre models.

In addition, the university offers the only program in the country to provide specific coursework, professional counseling and practical experience in the teaching of playwriting in both academic and community environments. The program aims to develop each step of the writer's process, from the initial conception of new work, through development and revision, to production and further professional growth.

Targeted courses in entrepreneurship, devised work, collaboration and advanced story-making for the stage provide the cornerstone of a program that seeks to incite and inspire the next generation of theatre makers.

Drawing on the resources of both the prestigious [Michener Center for Writers](#) and the highly-ranked Department of Theatre and Dance, the program is committed to a professionally-mentored creative environment and a highly-engaged pedagogic reach. There are two ways for candidates to apply for admission as a playwright: through the Department of Theatre and Dance or Michener Center for Writers. Both programs share faculty and curriculum. Below is information on the M.F.A. in Playwriting in the Department of Theatre and Dance. Learn more about the [Michener Center for Writers](#). It is recommended that all applicant apply to both programs.

Graduate playwrights at the university have access to an unparalleled breadth and depth of production and play development resources, including the biennial [Cohen New Works Festival](#); mainstage, workshop and lab seasons; ongoing professional development workshops; and annual premiere productions in [UTNT \(UT New Theatre\)](#). These opportunities are augmented with financial support, marketing assistance and professional mentorship to provide maximum exposure for each student's best work.

Students have access to world-class research centers such as the esteemed [Harry Ransom Center Library](#), which houses the papers of many of the most acclaimed playwrights of the last century: Samuel Beckett, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Lillian Hellman, Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, David Hare, David Mamet and others.

Recent guests include playwrights Susan Soon He Stanton, Alice Tuan, Lucy Prebble, Taylor Mac, Antoinette Nwandu, Erik Ehn, Aditi Kapil, Sherry Kramer, Kevin Kling, Sarah Ruhl; Directors Pam MacKinnon, Risa Brainin, Meredith McDonough, Anne Kaufman, Ken Russ Schmoll, Les Waters, Pirronne Yousefzadeh and artistic leaders Sarah Benson (Soho Rep), Jeremy Cohen (The Playwrights' Center), Hana Sharif (Rep Theatre St Louis) Maria Goyanes (Woolly Mammoth Theatre), Adam Greenfield (Playwrights Horizons), Rob Melrose (The Alley) Aimee Hayes (Southern Rep), Joy Meads (Center Theatre Group), Tanya Palmer (The Goodman Theatre) and Maria Striar (Clubbed Thumb).

#### **IV. Advising**

Each student enrolled in the M.F.A. with a specialization in Playwriting is assigned to an academic advisor (from among the faculty who teach in the Playwriting/Directing 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 Playwriting/Directing area 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 Study**

Before registration in the first week of the first semester in the program students must complete a Program of Study 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 54 hours of coursework and thesis preparation:

1. Studio, theory and skills courses (30 credits)
2. Electives (12 credits)
3. Applied Practice Courses (6 credits)
4. Thesis Course Hours (6 credits)

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

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 two parts:

1. A demonstration of artistry and skill in the candidate's area(s) of focus.
2. A significant demonstration of mastered artistry through the inclusion of one or more plays composed while at UTexas.

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 Playwriting/Directing area 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 Playwriting/Directing 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>