



THEATRE, DANCE, &
PERFORMANCE STUDIES

Handbook

MFA in Design

Updated: August 2017

Table of Contents

I. General Information.....	3
Program Description	3
Administrative Structure of the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies (TDPS)	3
II. Requirements for the MFA	5
Program Design and Duration	5
Example 3-year timeline	6
General Information	7
Residency	7
Probation and dismissal.....	8
Advisors	8
Course & Credit Requirements.....	8
Mandatory coursework.....	8
Additional coursework.....	9
Incompletes.....	9
Production/Performance Requirement	9
Portfolios	9
First year portfolio	9
Second year portfolio	10
MFA Portfolio Reviews.....	10
Thesis.....	10
Thesis Committee	10
Defending the Dissertation	11
III. Assistantships and Research Funding.....	11
Admissions.....	11
Information for International Graduate Students	12
Contact.....	12
MFA Design application requirements	12
Production/Performance Requirement	14

I. General Information

Program Description

The M.F.A. degree is an advanced, professional training for superior students with specializations in costume, lighting, scenic, and projections/multi-media design. State-of-the-art facilities in the six-venue Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. All mainstage productions, including the annual opera produced by Maryland Opera Studio, are designed by MFA candidates. Programs in theatre, dance, and opera design prepare the student to enter the professional performance and entertainment fields, as well as academic careers. Students work with award winning faculty and guest artists and directors on campus as well as in many of the 80+ professional theatres in the WDC/Baltimore area, in New York, and in leading regional theatres. Professional partnerships/design opportunities with Washington-based LORT theatres. (Imagination Stage, Studio Theatre, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Theatre J etc.)

Administrative Structure of the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies (TDPS)

- a. The **Director of TDPS** is appointed by the Dean of Arts and Humanities and is the chief administrative officer of the School. The person holding this office has the final say on all financial decisions involving TDPS funds—including graduate assistantships, travel funds, and matching funds for awards from other units of the university—and approves the assignments for winter and summer term teaching.

- b. The **Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)** is a faculty member appointed by the Director of TDPS. The DGS acts as the chief advocate and representative of all graduate programs in TDPS and works with the faculty to ensure that each of our four graduate programs is in compliance with all policies and procedures established by the university and the Graduate School. The DGS, in conjunction with the Coordinator of Graduate Services, makes annual reports on all TDPS graduate programs to the Graduate School, the Office of the Dean of Arts and Humanities, and the Director of TDPS. The Heads of the graduate programs in TDPS report to the DGS. The DGS collects data on placements, publications, production work, awards and honors, and other data important to the promotion of the graduate programs; they must also be informed of all issues relating to a student's progress towards the degree. The DGS signs all relevant forms sent to the Graduate School or Registrar's Office. Students

¹ Charles Caramello, "The Centennial Vision—Graduate Education at UMD: Research and Professional Practice for a Global Economy" (publication of the Graduate School, University of Maryland, College Park, October 14, 2014), http://gradschool.umd.edu/sites/gradschool.umd.edu/files/uploads/centennial_vision_for_graduate_education_at_umd_page_1.jpg.

should always allow three to five working days before a deadline to secure the signature of the DGS (working days do not include weekends or holidays).

- c. The **Coordinator of Graduate Services (CGS)** is a full time staff member who keeps records related to the graduate programs and is the primary facilitator for helping students get their paperwork submitted on time. The CGS works closely with the DGS to coordinate all contact between TDPS graduate students and the Graduate School, the College of Arts and Humanities, the Bursar's Office, the Registrar's Office, and the university administration. Any student wishing the assistance of the CGS in submitting paperwork must send the forms at least three days in advance, must have them completely filled out, and must follow up to ensure that the materials were submitted and received at their final destination.

- d. The **Head of MFA Design** is appointed by the Director of the School, in consultation with the Design faculty. Whenever possible, this position should be rotated and the term of service should not exceed three years. Whenever possible, this appointment should be made from among the tenured faculty. Act as chief advocate and School representative for the MFA in Design Program. Consult with Associate Director on matters pertaining to the MFA Design Program, including curriculum, advising, scheduling, recruitment, and annual recruitment budget. In consultation with the Design Program faculty, coordinate recruitment of MFA Design candidates. Advise the Director of Graduate Studies on recruitment of MFA Design students. Advise the Director of Graduate Studies on financial awards (including fellowships and assistantships) to MFA Design students which have been decided upon in consultation with the Design Program faculty. Coordinate assignment of graduate teaching assistantships with the Head of the Design Program and Design Program faculty. Coordinate Learning Outcome Assessments (LOA) with Director of Graduate Studies as needed by ARHU. Advise the Director of Graduate Studies, and the PCC committee on the scheduling of MFA in Design courses and seminars. Work with the Design Program faculty to promote and monitor special programs, symposia, and seminars for Design Program MFA students. Advise all first year MFA Design Program students. Supervise and conduct annual evaluations of Design Program adjunct graduate student faculty and forward recommendations to the Director of the School. In coordination with Design Program faculty conduct bi--annual evaluations of Design Program graduate student assistantship teaching and duties as well as progress in academic coursework. Prepare documentation of these evaluations for student files. Attend first reading design presentations, design runs, dress rehearsals and opening nights of Main Stage theatre productions in which the MFA Design Program students are involved.

II. Requirements for the MFA

Each graduate student in the program is responsible for meeting all degree requirements, for submitting all paperwork (with all required signatures) by the required deadlines, and for confirming that all paperwork has been properly received by the Graduate School or Registrar's Office. The student's advisor, the Head of the MFA program, the CGS, and the DGS can assist, but the student is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all requirements are met and that all paperwork is submitted on time. Deadlines and forms may always be found on the Graduate School's [website](http://www.ter.ps/deadlines) (www.ter.ps/deadlines).

Program Design and Duration

MFA Students in the School of Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies work closely in seasonal professional design faculty members in the studio, production laboratories and in the field. It is rigorous, three-year program that prepares students in traditional techniques and methods but more importantly guides each student in the development of a unique personal aesthetic.

MFA students work with professional directing faculty and with guest professional directors and choreographers to devise new works and to explore new approaches to the traditional canon. Although nearly all of our students declare a primary design area of study, we encourage all to study and mast as many other disciplines as possible.

Student designers must present and pass three formal design portfolio reviews, at the conclusion of their second, fourth, and sixth semesters in the program. In addition, portfolio interviews take place at the end of the first, third, and fifth semesters. Design portfolios include studio projects as well as fully realized academic and professional scenic, costume, or lighting designs. The fourth semester portfolio review will include an evaluation of a pre-thesis design project (usually a fully realized design, but may include independent study design projects). The pre-thesis design project, in preparation for the thesis, will include a written component. Successful completion of the portfolio reviews will result in the assignment of the thesis project.

Example 3-year timeline

Blue text in the table below links to the relevant portion of the Handbook.

- 1**
 - Portfolio Review
 - Portfolio Interview.

- 2**
 - Portfolio Review.
 - Portfolio Interview.

- 3**
 - **Write** the thesis and submit a final copy to the committee
 - Successfully **defend** the thesis.
 - Submit the thesis to the Graduate School.

General Information

Residency

TDPS recommends students establish residency in the state of Maryland as soon as possible. Requirements, procedures, and the Petition for Change of Classification for Tuition Purposes form may be found [here](http://www.ter.ps/ResPet) (www.ter.ps/ResPet). Establishing residency in Maryland (though not in DC or Virginia) allows students to pay in-state tuition should they exhaust or lose [funding](#). While graduate assistants are eligible for in-state status, their classification will not be changed until they submit the necessary petition paperwork. More information is available [here](http://www.ter.ps/ResClass) (www.ter.ps/ResClass).

Probation and dismissal

As indicated in the contract letter signed by every graduate assistant, failure to perform assigned duties satisfactorily is grounds for a loss of funding. When possible, a student will be put on probation for one term and will receive a letter clearly stating the grounds for the probation and what actions must be taken by the end of the probationary period. Funding will continue for as long as the terms of the probation are met. This is not required, however, if the faculty determines that the student's continuation as an assistant would have negative consequences for other students in the program. In such cases the loss of funding will be immediate.

Students who fail to make adequate progress towards the degree or who have not maintained a "B" average can be put on a semester- or year-long **academic probation** and will receive a letter clearly stating the grounds for the academic probation and what **specific** actions must be taken by the end of the probationary period. Such probation can lead to a non-renewal of funding and/or to a recommendation that the student leave the program. Should the terms of the probation not be met, the student will be withdrawn from the program.

In accordance with university guidelines, the faculty reserves the right to request, at any time, the withdrawal of a student who cannot or does not maintain the required standard of scholarship, or whose continuance in the university would be detrimental to their health or the health of others, or whose conduct is not satisfactory to the authorities of the university. Additional information about the dismissal of students may be found in the [Code of Student Conduct](#) (www.ter.ps/code).

Grievances

If you would like to appeal or file a grievance, please follow the [special appeals process](#) or [the grievance procedure](#) in the Graduate School Catalog.

Advisors

Graduate Students in the MFA Design program will be assigned as an advisee to a faculty in costume, lighting, projections, or scenic design. This advisor, with the Head of the MFA in Design and the Director of Graduate Studies will guide your successful progress and growth to mastery and your MFA degree.

Course & Credit Requirements-

Mandatory coursework

Scenic Design Emphasis

Costume Design Emphasis

Lighting Design Emphasis

Projections Design Emphasis

Additional coursework

Incompletes

Students are expected to complete all courses they take. Exceptional circumstances may lead a student to request an incomplete (“I”) in a course. Incompletes are governed by the [Graduate School Incomplete Contract](#) (www.ter.ps/incomplete), which must be signed by both the student and the instructor and filed with the CGS and the Director of the PhD Program. Students are expected to finish all related coursework by the end of the following term: for fall semester incompletes, students have until the end of the spring semester; for spring semester incompletes, students have until the start of the next fall semester. Under exceptional circumstances, students may request one additional semester/term to clear the “I” grade, which will be considered by the faculty on a case-by-case basis.

Failure to clear an “I” grade within the required period will result in a failing grade, which constitutes a failure to make adequate progress towards the degree; along with other factors, this may add to the grounds for a loss of funding or removal from the program. Any student with an incomplete must check in with their advisor and the instructor of the course on a regular basis to detail what actions are being taken to finish the incomplete course requirements. Their advisor will report on the student’s progress to the Director of the PhD Program.

Production/Performance Requirement

PORTFOLIOS

Successful completion of the Spring portfolio review will result in the assignment of pre-thesis (after the first year) and thesis (after the second year) projects. Upon completion of each portfolio review, the candidate will receive a formal letter indicating a grade of pass, conditional pass, or fail. In the event of a conditional pass or fail, the faculty may require the candidate to complete additional projects or coursework, or a student may be placed on probation

First year portfolio will include:

- A current resume
- Projects from primary and secondary design emphasis courses
- Craft projects from foundation component courses
- Production photographs illustrating realized craft or design work for projects produced by the School or by professional theatres
- Supporting materials, drawings, and photographs that demonstrate effective and productive work as a design assistant (academic or professional projects)

Second year portfolio will include:

- A current resume
- Projects from primary and secondary design emphasis courses

- Production photographs illustrating realized craft or design work for projects produced by the School or professional theaters
- Supporting materials, drawings, and photographs that demonstrate effective and productive work as a design assistant (academic or professional projects)
- A written design analysis and supporting research material for the pre-thesis project that should follow the form of the first chapter of the written component of the thesis project

MFA PORTFOLIO REVIEWS

- is the annual public portfolio exhibit and review is an exciting feature of the MFA in Design program in the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies. Each year the 3rd Floor of WDC's Studio Theatre is transformed into a gallery where MFA Design students display their set, costume, and lighting designs.
- A full day affair is open to the general public and professional designers and directors from the Washington, DC theatre community, allowing students to make important professional contacts for their future careers. The day also includes longer one-on-one critique sessions with the nation's leading designers and directors who are invited as external evaluators.

THESIS

For their thesis, M.F.A. design students create and realize a scenery, costume, or lighting design for a major production. Each student must meet all deadlines for that production and the design and execution must be acceptable to all members of her/his thesis committee. The written component of the thesis includes all relevant visual material, including research images, drawings, renderings, and production photographs.

THESIS COMMITTEE

1. Minimum of three voting members of the Graduate Faculty, including two Full Members.
2. Chair should be the student's advisor and a Full Member of the Graduate Faculty.
3. Faculty that leave UMD (except Emeriti) are Grad Faculty for one year and are then nominated as Special Members.

Note: By special permission this person can be from outside the University of Maryland. Outside faculty must have special expertise in the defense's subject area that is not available among the UMD faculty. They must be nominated and approved for Special Membership in the Graduate Faculty of the University of Maryland and must either be physically present at the defense or virtually present by way of a Graduate School- approved teleconferencing technology (Skype, Google Hangouts, etc. do NOT qualify). There are generally expenses related to having outside faculty members present at a dissertation defense and this funding must be approved before any invitation to join the dissertation committee is extended.

Defending the Thesis

The student is responsible for arranging the date, time, and location at their committee's convenience. The student is also **responsible** for reserving a space with the appropriate TDPS staff, and for notifying both the Director of Graduate Studies and the Coordinator of Graduate Studies once the details have been set. The defense should be scheduled for two hours.

Once successfully defended, the student is responsible for completing the [Thesis and Dissertation Electronic Submission Form](#) (www.ter.ps/PubForm) and uploading the dissertation to ProQuest [here](#) (www.ter.ps/ProQuest). See the [University of Maryland Electronic Thesis and Dissertation website](#) (www.ter.ps/UMDETD) or the [University of Maryland Thesis and Dissertation Style Guide](#) (www.ter.ps/filing) for additional information on these procedures. The student is responsible for checking the Graduate School [website](#) (www.ter.ps/deadlines) for all deadlines related to the submission of their dissertation.

III. Assistantships and Research Funding

TDPS offers teaching and research assistantships; the university also provides a limited number of fellowships to augment these assistantships. Financial support is typically provided for four academic years to a student who remains in good standing and successfully completes their assigned duties. Tuition remission is included in most assistantships and fellowships:

- Assistants receive tuition remission for 10 Credit Hours every fall and spring semester, and 4 Credit Hour in the short winter term. There is no tuition remission for summer terms. Any hours above those covered by the assistantship assignment must be paid for by the student.
- Those who are on fellowship or are funded from external sources can take up to 12 Credit Hours a semester.

Limited funding is also available to support student research, travel, and conference attendance. Those who need funding should email the Director of Graduate Studies and the Head of the Design Area with a description that includes the purpose, outcome, and an anticipated budget for the research/travel. Priority is given to students in their third year in the program.

Admissions

The University of Maryland's Graduate School accepts applications through its [ApplyYourself/Hobsons](#) application system. Before completing the application, applicants are asked to check the [Admissions Requirements](#) site for specific instructions.

As required by the Graduate School, all application materials are to be submitted electronically:

- [Graduate application](#)
- Transcripts
- Statement of purpose

- Letters of recommendation
- Program/Department supporting documents ([as applicable](#))
- Non-refundable application fee (\$75) for each program to which an applicant applies

The electronic submission of application materials helps expedite the review of an application. Completed applications are reviewed by an admissions committee in each graduate degree program. The recommendations of the committees are submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School, who will make the final admission decision. Students seeking to complete graduate work at the University of Maryland for degree purposes must be formally admitted to the Graduate School by the Dean. To ensure the integrity of the application process, the University of Maryland authenticates submitted materials through [TurnItIn for Admissions](#).

Information for International Graduate Students

The University of Maryland is dedicated to maintaining a vibrant international graduate student community. The office of [International Students and Scholars Services](#) (ISSS) is a valuable resource of information and assistance for prospective and current international students. International applicants are encouraged to explore the services they offer, and contact them with related questions.

The University of Maryland Graduate School offers admission to international students based on academic information; it is not a guarantee of attendance. Admitted international students will then receive instructions about obtaining the appropriate visa to study at the University of Maryland which will require submission of additional documents. Please see the [Graduate Admissions Process for International applicants](#) for more information.

Contact

Applicants are encouraged to contact the Hobsons online application's helpdesk for any technical issues. For questions related to the admissions process, prospective students may contact the [Graduate School](#).

Application dates and deadlines: (The program only starts in Fall of each year)

For domestic students, the best consideration deadline is March 7; regular deadline is May 16. The deadline for international students is March 7. (Deadlines are subject to change. Please check the website for most current deadlines.)

The design MFA program at UMD encourages applications by the end of January of each year. Offers are sent out by May of each year. Later applications are considered when space and funding is available for the program.

MFA Design application requirements:

- You must have earned a 4-year baccalaureate degree from a regionally-accredited U.S. institution, or an equivalent degree earned at a non-U.S. institution with at least a 3.0 GPA.

- The MFA in Design program does not require the GRE but does require an audition/portfolio review and interview. MFA design faculty participate in the University/Resident Theatre Association (URTA), National Unified Auditions & Interviews held in January and February. Invited portfolio reviews occur after the U/RTA dates.
- All International students must show evidence of acceptable scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). See information on the International Educational Services website for specific admissions requirements, including minimum TOEFL score. See information on the International Educational Services website for specific admissions requirements, including minimum TOEFL score.

Please be sure to include the following in your application

- A link to your portfolio.
- Your statement of goals, research interests, and experience. Please have this in a Word or pdf file that can be easily uploaded.
- 3 recommenders and their email addresses for the electronic recommendation forms to be sent to them

Official transcripts from all universities attended will need to be sent to:

University of Maryland College Park
Enrollment Services Operation – Attn: Graduate Admissions
Room 0130 Mitchell Building
College Park, MD 20742

MFAT is the program code for the MFA in Design. Be sure to indicate which concentration for which you are applying. (If you are interested in projections, please select lighting and indicate projections in your statement of goals.)

IV. Graduate Student Activity Report

This information will be collected every spring and will not receive your renewal contract until the form is received.

Return to **First semester and year-end reviews**

Due ____

For all information that is right justified, enter data after colon.

For all information that is left justified, enter data below line.

Email this form back to Dr. Lee at eklee@umd.edu & Crystal Gaston at cgaston@umd.edu Please save

a copy of this form so you can just add updates each year. .

Name:

Program MA, MFA, PhD:

Advisor:

Years in program as of May 31 of this year.

Years of funding remaining after May 31 of this year.

TA Assignment (this year):

Fellowship (this year):

Professional production work: (Title, company, your position -----i.e. costume designer, choreographer, dancer, actor, dramaturge, etc.----- dates. Include those professional assignments accepted but not yet undertaken.)

Publications: (use correct bibliographic form. Include those in press.)

Non---professional production work: (same details as above.)

Conference presentations: (Paper title, conference, location, date.)

Conferences attended without giving papers:

Grants (including travel grants), awards, honors:

Service and community activities: (Professional, university wide, TDPS, other.)

Courses taught while at the University of Maryland. (include courses taught at other institutions.)

Requirements of program still to be met and dates by which you expect to meet them.

If you have been hired for a job for next year, please provided name of institution/organization, job title and starting date.

MAAs only:

Thesis title or topic:

Date prospectus approved: Date of thesis defense:

Thesis committee members (chair first):

MFAs only:

Pre---thesis production/area/date:

Thesis production/area/date:

Thesis committee members (chair first):

PhDs only:

Dissertation title or topic:

Date admitted to candidacy:

Expected dates for taking comprehensive examinations:

Date prospectus approved by committee:

Date of dissertation defense:

Dissertation committee members (chair first):

Notes and queries: (anything you want to add. Anything you want to ask about.)