

Major Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Department of Drama
Master's Program in Drama
AY2008-09 through AY2012-13

Assessment Measures

The Department of Drama uses the following measures to assess student learning outcomes:

MATE: DR 951 (Supervised project), written comprehensive exams.
MA: DR 995 (Thesis Guidance) or two seminars approved by the head of the program, written comprehensive exams.
MFA in Directing: DR 850 (Thesis production workshop), DR 997 (Thesis production guidance), written comprehensive exams.
MFA Acting: DR 939 (Monographs), written comprehensive exams.
MFA Playwriting: DR 860 (playwriting internship), DR 996 (playwriting thesis guidance), written comprehensive exams.

Indirect measures:

Grades in all courses
Student evaluations of all courses
Student participation in production work
Alumni feedback
On-going faculty review of individual student's degree progress
On-going faculty review of comparable programs

Assessment Findings

M.A.T.E.: One student failed the comprehensive exams in the summer of 2011. That student passed the comprehensive exams in the fall of 2011. Three M.A.T.E. students earned a High Pass during the period between AY 2008-2009 and AY 2012-2013.

M.A.: All students who have taken the comprehensive exams in the past five years have successfully passed them. Three M.A. students earned a High Pass during the period between AY 2008-2009 and AY 2012-2013.

M.F.A. in Directing: All students who have taken comprehensive exams in the past five years have successfully passed them. Three M.F.A. in Directing students earned a High Pass during the period between AY 2008-2009 and AY 2012-2013.

M.F.A. in Acting: All students who have taken comprehensive exams in the past five years have successfully passed them. Five M.F.A. in Acting students earned a High Pass during the period between AY 2008-2009 and AY 2012-2013.

M.F.A. in Playwriting: All students who have taken comprehensive exams in the past five years have successfully passed them. Five M.F.A. in Playwriting students earned a High Pass during the period between AY 2008-2009 and AY 2012-2013.

Progression Data

Comment on Enrollment: (see Attachment C)

The department admits graduate directors and actors once every three years in order to offer better scholarships to a more talented group. The department adopted this approach and changed the curricula for all of its graduate programs in 2006. The plan has been successful. All of the M.F.A. students follow three-year tracks. The department admits M.F.A. playwrights and M.A. students in the Theatre Education and Theatre History programs every year. These students follow separate tracks, but they have the opportunity to take classes with the actors and directors while they study in the department. A consequence of the different admittance policies and academic tracks for each program is that the number of graduate students enrolled in a particular class varies depending on whether or not the company of actors and directors join that course. However, the varying enrollment does not negatively impact the development of individual students or their experience. In addition to taking classes in each program, students must participate in production work. These practicum experiences allow students in one program to interact with and learn from the work of other graduate and undergraduate students.

Comment on Passage of Comprehensive Exams: (see Attachments A and B)

In the past five years one student failed to pass the comprehensive exams on the first attempt. The student's advisor helped her identify why she did not pass the exam. This feedback helped the student pass the exams the following semester. Though the student failed initially, the process worked. This success rate is due, in part, to the format that we developed for the graduate exams and casebooks. Though the department follows a carefully delineated format (see Attachments D and E), its faculty develop different questions for different students. In this respect the exams are an extension of the dialogue between the student and the faculty as that student develops his or her research or creative process. This approach allows the department to keep the rigor of the exam as an assessment mechanism while also addressing the needs and interests of individual students. This flexibility has helped us to challenge students to critically analyze their work and better monitor their progress.

Comment on Time to Degrees/ Graduation Rates: (see Attachment C)

The M.F.A. programs in Acting, Directing, and Playwriting require full-time participation for two years and part-time participation for a third year. Most M.F.A. students complete an internship at a professional theatre as a required course during their third year. All M.F.A. students complete their tracks in three years. M.A. students in Theatre History and Criticism and Theatre Education study part-time, usually taking two courses per semester for a total of four courses each year. They do not have a limit dictating when they should complete their programs. The M.A. students have limited financial support through scholarships and tuition discounts, and many work as teachers, teaching artists, and in other full-time positions in order to pay for their tuition. Unlike the M.F.A. students, M.A. students can enter their programs at any time. Therefore, many of the M.A. students take three to four years to complete their track and earn their degree.

Curricular Improvements

Between 2004 and 2005, the department engaged in a planning process in order to redesign its graduate curricula. The faculty and staff were motivated to strengthen each program. They identified key courses that all graduate students should take as a group. This allowed the department's different graduate programs to share its limited number of spaces and faculty. The programs grew stronger as a result of these changes, and the department limited the number of lecturers needed for track. In the fall of 2006 the department accepted two playwrights, two directors, and seven actors into the M.F.A. programs. Under the new plan the department admits M.A., M.A.TE, and M.F.A. playwriting students every year and M.F.A. students in Acting and Directing every three years. We have closely monitored all of these programs for how well they work in conjunction with each other, and how the courses progress within each discipline.

These curricular changes forced the department to rethink how it assesses the work of its different graduate students. The faculty running each program evaluated the exams their students complete. After much deliberation, the department as a whole agreed to slightly modify the comprehensive exams it uses to assess the progress of the graduate students in each program. In addition, the department has made the format and process that it uses to administer the exams and evaluate the casebooks more transparent for the students. This information is now available in the Department of Drama's Student Handbook. The handbook has been completely revised, formatted, and published with a clear index. The Student Handbook is now available on the department's website in a PDF document. I have attached abbreviated descriptions in the Student Handbook for the different procedures for the comprehensive exams and casebooks (Attachments D and E).

Milestone Data (Attachment A)

GRADUATE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION RESULTS
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA
AY2008-2009 to AY2012-2013

Master's Comprehensive Exam

	Fail		Pass		High Pass		Pass w/Honors		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
AY2008-2009	1	8.00%	8	67.00%		0.00%	3	25.00%	12
AY2009-2010		0.00%	5	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	5
AY2010-2011		0.00%	7	78.00%		0.00%	2	22.00%	9
AY2011-2012	2	8.00%	23	92.00%		0.00%		0.00%	25
AY2012-2013	1	9.00%	5	45.00%	5	45.00%		0.00%	11
TOTAL	4	6.45%	48	77.42%	5	8.06%	5	8.06%	62

Note:

- 1) Milestone outcomes were included in the categories High Pass and Pass with Honors if these designations were explicitly indicated in the students' milestone record.
- 2) Category "High Pass" includes both "High Pass" and "Pass with distinction".
- 3) The count in this table is based on the exam outcomes of all attempts in an academic year.
- 4) Level of the comps, i.e. Master's, is based on the milestone activities; if there is no specification of the level in the record, students' degree level is used to determine the level.

Graduate Comprehensive Examination Results from the Department of Drama

The records in the Department of Drama differ from those listed above. The following table includes the results the department has on file (Attachment B):

Year	Fail	Pass	High Pass	Pass w/ Honors	Total
AY2008-2009	0	7	6	0	14
AY2009-2010	0	4	0	0	4
AY2010-2011	1	7	1	0	9
AY2011-2012	0	12	7	0	19
AY2012-2013	0	4	5	0	9
Total	1	34	19	0	55

Progression Data (Attachment C)

**GRADUATE PROGRESSION AND GRADUATION
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA
Graduate Cohort Fall 2008 through 2012**

Master's Program

	Graduate Cohort Size	Returned To CUA in Fall 2009		Returned To CUA in Fall 2010		Returned To CUA in Fall 2011		Returned To CUA in Fall 2012		Returned To CUA in Fall 2013		Graduated in One Year		Graduated in Two Years*		Graduated in Three Years*		Graduated in Four Years*		Graduated in Five Years*	
		No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.								
Fall 2008	11	8	72.7%	7	63.6%	0	0.0%	1	9.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	9.0%	7	64.0%	7	64.0%	8	72.7%
Fall 2009	18			15	83.3%	14	77.8%	1	5.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	11.1%	16	88.9%	17	94.4%		
Fall 2010	10					8	80.0%	3	30.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	40.0%	8	80.0%				
Fall 2011	7							6	85.7%	6	85.7%	0	0.0%	1	14.3%						
Fall 2012	17									16	94.1%	0	0.0%								

*Two to five years of graduation rates are cumulative.

Note: A particular cohort is defined as the combination of the students first enrolled in consecutive sessions of one year: the summer session or the fall semester. For example, cohort 2008 consists of students first enrolled in summer 2008 or fall 2008.

Directions for Graduate Comprehensive Examinations from the Department of Drama's Student Handbook (Attachment E)

I. Procedures for the M.A. Comprehensive Exams: (Attachment D)

The comprehensive exams for the M.A. in Theatre Education follow the format the department created for the M.A. in Theatre History and Criticism. To be eligible to take comprehensives, all M.A. students must have completed or be in the process of completing all course requirements and practicum requirements. For the M.A.T.E. students this includes DR 951. Students in the M.A. Program in Theatre History and Criticism must pass a reading comprehension exam in an approved language before they can take their comprehensive exams. All M.A. students complete two essays based on questions written by the head of their program. These questions come from the courses in their track and their research or practical teaching experience.

II. Procedures for M.F.A Comprehensive Exams:

The graduate comprehensive examination is intended to assess the student's historical, theoretical, and practical knowledge of his/her field and the ability to put some of that knowledge into play independently. Normally the examination is given in the final semester of the degree program, in the spring semester around mid-March. To be eligible to take comprehensives, students must have completed or be in the process of completing all course requirements and practicum requirements. The Associate Chair provides students in the M.F.A. Acting, Directing, and Playwriting programs essay questions relating to production/performance projects of their choosing. The critical studies faculty and the appropriate M.A./M.F.A. program directors devise the questions.

- a. Students in the Acting and Directing Programs are expected to answer two essay questions that are integral to the casebook process. These questions tie the comprehensive exams to the process that the students undergo in preparation for their performances/productions.
- b. Playwrights are expected to answer two questions designed to be integral to their own original plays (or play).

Each student is to propose the performance/production project(s) on which he/she wishes to write, initiating the process by informing the faculty of his/her choices. The answers to the questions should demonstrate the student's ability to write intelligent, well-organized, essays on substantive issues arising out of:

1. The independent research and critical analysis done in support of his/her work on particular performance/production/play
2. Assessments of both the process and the results of his/her work. (The actor assesses his/her performance in the selected role[s] and the relation of the performance[s] to the production as a whole. The director assesses those aspects of hi/her directing that the questions address, which may range from translation choices to characterization choices to set, costumes, lighting, and sound design.)

The intention is that the M.F.A. comprehensive examination be the logical culmination for the student of the dialogue between the critical studies and the performance-production work throughout the program. The questions will be provided by the faculty of the department's critical studies courses in conjunction with the student's program director and, when feasible, with a production dramaturg. The essay answers are evaluated by two members of the critical studies faculty and the program director.

The design of the questions should conform to the general objectives above. One question might have several parts. In some way, the question should:

1. Engage the results of the student's casebook research and reading on his/her project that has nourished the performance/production/playwriting process.
2. Require the student to retrospectively address the process and results of the performance/production/play. (These are also considered in each student's casebook.)

Questions for actors and directors might be about the play and the culture from which it issues, about particular characterization choices, or about actor/director choices in matters ranging from translations to interpretations of key scenes. Questions might be about any of those choices in relation to the production history of a particular play. Questions should require students to engage issues relevant to the production/play as a whole. To further specify criteria for the design seems unwise in light of the wide variety of roles and plays in which students may be involved.

Questions for playwrights might address the cultural resonance of the issues of the play or might ask for a discussion of the work(s) of a playwright with whom the writer has some kinship or style or theme. Questions might ask for a discussion of the author's use of sources in which he/she has drawn and for a critical appraisal of the changes made in the rehearsal process rewrites. Students must initiate the process. Actors and directors may request questions from the faculty on any productions/performances on which they have prepared or are preparing casebooks.

In keeping with University policy on comprehensive failures, students are permitted one "retake," that is, one revision of a failed essay or essays after a mandatory waiting period.

Directions for Graduate Casebooks from the Department of Drama's Student Handbook (Attachment E)

I. MFA Directing Thesis Casebooks:

The function of the MFA Directing thesis casebook is to provide an in-depth and comprehensive record of the directorial process followed by the thesis student in the preparation, creation, and assessment of their individual project. The purpose of the casebook is also to provide the student with an accurate record of the creative and production processes, provide valuable information necessary for the evaluation of that project and to provide, to the extent possible, a research document that may be used for future reference.

This outline is to be used as a guide only. Each director may find a specific method or approach to the material that is more applicable to his or her particular project. Whatever the final format of the casebook, this outline will list all of the material that should be included in the final product. The student should be discussing the casebook with his/her advisor and submitting it to the advisor for periodic review *throughout* the life of the project. This will ensure that the student does not vary too far from the suggested format, that the research remains on track and ongoing throughout the project, and that the student has completed the required work required for each step of the process. The student is also required to maintain and submit a journal of the entire experience. The journal is part of the casebook presentation and should accurately reflect the student's thoughts and experiences throughout the entire process as well as their thoughts on the final product.

The casebook reflects the three main aspects of the directorial process: preparation, execution, and evaluation. The casebook should also contain appendices of relevant additional information.

Preparation

The casebook contains all information regarding the preparation of the project prior to auditions. This section should include the following:

1. Journal entries that provide a clear description of the selection process from the initial works under consideration to the final approved choice.
2. Records of all discussions with the thesis committee or mentor regarding directorial concepts, aesthetics, and practical concerns.
3. All research (visual, aural, and literary) and dramaturgical notes completed in preparation for the production process.

Execution

This section must include the following:

1. Ongoing typed journal entries describing the directorial process from auditions to the final performance.
2. Notes and reflections on the developing aesthetic of the production and how the diverse production elements are succeeding in supporting the thematic concept of the work.
3. Practical notes on the rehearsal and technical processes.

Evaluation

This section should include a formal evaluation and self-analysis of the final product. Was the student successful in achieving their directorial goals? Why or why not? What did and did not work? Given the opportunity what would the director change? Keep the same? What lessons were learned that would be applied to future projects? What, if any, areas were found that could use further development of focus?

Appendices

1. A proposal with three works submitted for final consideration.
2. The play analysis/production worksheet.
3. A complete production calendar.
4. An audition form
5. Notes from all production meetings, dailies, and ancillary notes created during the process.
6. All research notes and visuals.
7. Copies of all technical information and design visuals.
8. The production book.
9. Any reviews or other formal responses to the production.
10. Comprehensive bibliography of all sources used in the research and execution of the project

A comprehensive calendar is to be included as a part of the appendices of the casebook. The calendar should contain all relevant information regarding the entire process including all meetings, rehearsals, and performance notations.

II. MFA Actor's Post-Production Casebook

Following the successful completion of each production role and due at the same time as the academic comp questions, the actor/actress should submit to his/her faculty mentor a case book on his/her work.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

I. Actor's Analysis of the Character Paper

The actor should provide an analysis of his/her artistic approach to his/her character in context with the production (what is the vision), including a discussion of central themes and ideas explored in the production, the main actions, and their character's specifics (character bios, objectives, lines of action, conflicts etc.).

II. Production Analysis and Evaluation

The actor should discuss his/her process working with the director and the other actors in the production, as well as the designers-- what happened and how did that happen in the process of the rehearsals. The rehearsal process should be reviewed and evaluated as well as off-rehearsal research conducted to inform the actor's work on the character.

III. Self-Evaluation and Reflection

Finally, a self-evaluation and reflection should be performed by the actor/actress. Were goals met? Was the character as described in Part I successfully portrayed on stage? Were there any obstacles that prevented goals and objectives from being achieved? What affected the process?

Supporting materials I, II, & III should equal up to 12-15 pages double spaced.

IV. Supporting Appendices

In addition to the Actor's Analysis, Production and Self-Evaluation paper, actors should also include the following supporting materials as appendices in their casebooks:

1. Journal entries as kept through the rehearsal process
2. Copies of any research collected in preparation
 - a. Dramaturgical, literary, historical, psychological, etc.
 - b. Internet entries should be sorted by date
 - c. Bibliography should be in MLA format
3. Other materials the actor feels would be appropriate for review

The casebook is due to the mentor for grading at the same time as the comp questions are delivered, unless otherwise arranged with the Associate Chair and Head of MFA Acting.