

# **USU THEATRE GRADUATE STUDENT CODE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Utah State University Graduate Program in Theatre Design is a source of pride and great value to Utah State Theatre. Your development as students is at the forefront of our efforts and your future professional success in a very competitive and challenging industry is our number one goal. It is in this spirit that we have developed the Utah State Theatre Graduate Student Code. As educators and mentors it is our obligation to provide clear expectations regarding your efforts in the program. This description of the Graduate Student experience aims to help guide you in your academic and artistic development. Please consider the following and apply this information to your daily approach to academic, artistic, and professional growth while here at Utah State Theatre.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The USU Master of Fine Arts Program in Theatre Design is a professional training program intended to teach the crafts, motivate the creativity and inspire the artistic vision necessary for our graduates to begin successful and livable careers in the theatre arts. Furthermore, this program emphasizes the commercial theatre model including industry standards, current artistic and technical practices, quality and diversity of portfolio, visual and oral communication skills, and professional self-promotion. For students who, upon graduation, choose careers in academic theatre, it is this professional model that will afford them the abilities to succeed in the dual commercial/academic profession that is the standard for theatre faculty. Most important is our commitment to guiding each individual towards their unique personal approach to theatre, based on original thought, creative vision, and effective expression. As a result, students should leave Utah State University as leaders, prepared to enter the professional world with skill, confidence, and a clear understanding of the path ahead.

## **GRAD STUDENTS EXPECTATIONS AND OBLIGATIONS**

### **I. SELF-MANAGEMENT**

Once you reach the graduate level, you have entered a transitional phase of your development. At this time, Graduate Students are simultaneously students and professionals. This combination requires a great deal of goal-setting, planning and general self-management. To succeed as a Graduate Student, you must do the following:

- A. Take personal responsibility for planning and assessing your own development.
- B. Seek and accept guidance from your faculty mentors and take action to advance your academic, artistic and professional goals.
- C. Establish a Graduate Thesis Committee by the end of your first semester.
- D. Participate in a group experience with the other graduate students providing support, feedback and a sense of community.

## **II. ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

Graduate students must be held to the highest academic standards at all times. An approach to development must be embraced that includes a personal drive to achieve the highest level in every aspect of learning. To hold a position as a Graduate Student, you are expected to do the following:

- A. Maintain “A” level work. An earned “B” grade suggests performance below the expectations of a UST Graduate Student. Grades of “C” or below are not acceptable at any time and may result in the termination of your candidacy.
- B. Attend all classes and arrive in a timely manner unless absolutely impossible. Skipping classes for production work, other class-work, outside jobs, recreation, or other personal reasons is not acceptable at the graduate level. Only extreme exceptions may be requested from the faculty, in advance.
- C. Express your artistic/creative ideas clearly. Open dialogue must always exist. Use good communication to allow the faculty to help you achieve *your* vision.
- D. Follow the guidance of your instructors. Although the artistic vision and final products must be your own, it is important that you explore the full range of creative options and processes. Faculty members will often direct you to do so.
- E. Strive to achieve levels of accomplishment over and above the minimum requirements for grading.

## **III. PRODUCTION STANDARDS**

Production work is important to the success of Graduate Students. Whether designing, leading a technical/craft department or simply providing assistance in the production process, your contributions are vital and reflect your abilities as a professional. As a Graduate Student, you are expected to do the following:

- A. Apply for and accept production/design positions on ALL productions.
- B. In coordination with all relevant parties, complete and sign a design/production contract. Follow this contract faithfully by planning far in advance, budgeting your time and seeking guidance from your advisor(s).
- C. Respect the integrity of the art form. Maintain quality control at all times by honoring the design or communicating necessary changes, expressing concerns and remedying flaws in the product.
- D. Maintain the highest level of collaboration with open communication and a commitment to group success. A positive and supportive group process is the best way to accomplish this.
- E. Accept personal ownership/responsibility for the production. As a Graduate Student your contributions are often the most important driving force behind the achievement of goals. Recognize your role as a leader and become personally dedicated to seeing the project to successful completion.

#### **IV. ASSISTANTSHIPS/STIPENDS/LEADERSHIP POSITIONS**

Graduate Students will hold assistantships or leadership roles within the department. These are professional in practice, but also serve as important learning opportunities. Your duties must meet or exceed professional as well as academic standards. Upon the weekly completion of your required hours, or if you do not have a paid assistantship, your roles as a supervisor, artist, and technician continue as part of your academic process. You are expected to do the following:

- A. Discuss the expectations of your position with your direct faculty supervisor until you are clear on every detail. Positions may include:
  - a. Assistant Costume Shop Supervisor/Resident Costumer
    - i. Execute costumes for season productions
    - ii. Lead/mentor undergrad practicum students
    - iii. Schedule work-calls and personnel as needed
    - iv. Collaborate with designers and Costume Shop Supervisor to maintain the artistic integrity of the productions
    - v. Maintain area facilities, equipment, and supplies
  - b. Assistant Technical Director/Master Carpenter
    - i. Build and rig sets for season productions
    - ii. Lead/mentor undergrad practicum students
    - iii. Schedule work-calls and personnel as needed
    - iv. Collaborate with designers and Technical Director to maintain the artistic integrity of the productions
    - v. Maintain area facilities, equipment, and supplies
  - c. Resident Scenic Charge
    - i. Paint and carve scenery for season productions
    - ii. Lead/mentor undergrad practicum students
    - iii. Schedule work-calls and personnel as needed
    - iv. Collaborate with designers and Technical Director to maintain the artistic integrity of the productions.
    - v. Maintain area facilities, equipment, and supplies.
  - d. Resident Propmaster
    - i. Acquire and/or build props for season productions
    - ii. Lead/mentor undergrad practicum students
    - iii. Schedule work-calls and personnel as needed
    - iv. Organize props and props crew for rehearsals and productions
    - v. Collaborate with designers and Technical Director to maintain the artistic integrity of the productions.
    - vi. Maintain area facilities, equipment, and supplies.
  - e. Resident Master Electrician
    - i. Hang and focus lights for season productions
    - ii. Lead/mentor undergrad practicum students
    - iii. Schedule work-calls and personnel as needed
    - iv. Organize lighting crew for tech/dress rehearsals and productions
    - v. Collaborate to maintain the artistic integrity of the productions.
    - vi. Maintain area facilities, equipment, and supplies.
- B. Work the minimum number of weekly hours (usually 20) as established by your contract, and more as part of your educational development.
- C. Maintain personal responsibility on every level for your area of supervision. The quality-control of each production usually falls on you. You are in charge so this will involve a great deal of self-management and creativity and may require extra hours during busy production periods.

- D. Attend all production work calls so as to provide guidance for work crews in your area.
- E. Recognize that although you are serving in a professional capacity, you are also maintaining your status as a student and therefore should solicit and accept guidance from the faculty and staff.

#### **V. PROFESSIONALISM /LEADERSHIP**

In order to succeed at creating a professional atmosphere at Utah State Theatre, we all must approach the experience with integrity. To maintain the highest level of professionalism, Graduate Students should do the following:

- A. Maintain positive communication while addressing problems and seeking solutions. Recognize possible negative situations, discussions or attitudes that may hinder the overall achievement of goals. Be proactive in correcting these.
- B. Consider yourself and everyone else as professionals. Treat others as such. Always strive to maintain professional standards of quality, communication and industry protocol.
- C. Your role as a Graduate Student does not only serve your needs. As one who is in the process of transitioning from student to professional, your contributions are expected to reflect this advanced status. Provide guidance and leadership for less experienced students at all times and set an exceptional example

#### **VI. DEPARTMENT COMMUNITY/LEADERSHIP**

Your role as a Graduate Student does not only serve your needs. As one who is in the process of transitioning from student to professional, your contributions are expected to reflect this advanced status. Provide guidance and leadership for less experienced students at all times and set an exceptional example.

#### **VII. FINAL/MAJOR PROJECTS & DOCUMENTATION**

You will be required to complete the following in order to graduate:

- A. At least three Major Projects of fully-staged productions, based upon your primary (sets, lights, costume) and secondary (sets, lights, costume, sound, props, scenic art, technical production) areas of specialization. These projects are assigned by the MFA Faculty.
- B. A written “Plan-B Report” documenting each project. This book must include all relevant goals, design visions, research, execution, design processes, rough designs, final designs, and processes of execution and implementation as well as reflective assessment of each project. If approved by your MFA Committee, Department Head, and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, based on the highest academic standards, this document will be bound, published, and added as part of the University’s permanent collection.
- C. A Final Examination in the form of a MFA Defense, focusing on your Plan-B report and the projects described within. This examination presented by all members of your MFA Committee includes your justification of your work and the corresponding adjudication from the faculty. The faculty will conclude the defense with a vote to either award you the MFA or to require specific adjustments, improvements, or additions to your Plan-B Report or other relevant degree requirements.

**VIII. STUDENT CONTINUANCE IN THE PROGRAM**

The successful completion of the USU Theatre MFA Program in Theatre Design is a great challenge and must be earned. It is in no way stated or implied that admission into the program guarantees continued participation or eventual conferment of the Master of Fine Arts or any other degree. MFA Candidates must be aware of the following:

- A. In addition to the standard grading system established by the University and the Department, students are evaluated at the end of each semester by the Design/Technical Theatre Faculty of UST through a process termed “Continuance Evaluations”.
- B. These evaluations will determine whether each student may continue in the program. Grades alone do not guarantee continuance. Continuance Evaluations may result in one of the following:
  - 1. Confirmation of successful performance to-date and an invitation to continue in the program
  - 2. Establishment of a one-semester probationary status after which the student will return to good standing or be dismissed from the program
  - 3. Immediate dismissal from the MFA program altogether
- C. These evaluations will also present feedback regarding the progress and goals for each student in the program. They will serve to guide your educational processes while providing an incentive for success.
- D. Lastly, the Graduate Faculty can dismiss a student from the program for any reason that they deem appropriate including but not limited to quality of work, professionalism, collaboration, insufficient progress, ethics, and so forth.

**I have read and understood the UST Graduate Student Code and will abide by it in all aspects of my tenure as a Graduate Student. I have been aware of these policies and standards since the first semester of my tenure as a graduate student at USU.**

**Student Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Faculty Advisor(s) Signature(s)**

**Major Professor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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