

# MA HANDBOOK

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**Department of Drama**  
University of Alberta

# THE MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM

## Department of Drama

Since its approval in 1967, the Master of Arts program has provided a strong introduction to Theatre Research within the lively performance context of the Department's other professional programs. Its graduates have gone on to make substantial contributions to the academic and professional theatre environment and to the community at large by doing doctoral work and/or becoming teachers, directors, actors, dramaturges, critics, arts administrators, communications and publicity directors, etc.

### Objectives

The overall purpose of the program is to familiarize you with the research methodology and critical discourse of the field, lead you to focus on a chosen area of study, and guide you in conducting independent thesis research in that area. At the core of the program are a series of seminars, some of which you will share with students from the directing and design programs, in which students present and discuss the results of their own research. The program is flexible enough to allow special projects courses to serve the needs of individual students. Throughout the entire course of study, you will be expected to approach theatre and drama as a dynamic performance-oriented art form and to complement your research with an understanding of the creative process.

The MA program looks at theatre and performance from a critical perspective. For this purpose, we combine research in theatre history, dramaturgy, and dramatic criticism and theory, and we expect our students to approach the discipline integrating all three. MA Thesis proposals may prioritize one of them.

Dramaturgy will prepare you to work as a dramaturge in the professional theatre or to continue for a PhD in Dramaturgy. You will learn the methods of dramaturgical analysis as applied to the new play as well as classical drama and may acquire experience in working both with a playwright in the development of a new script and with a director on a specific production when opportunity presents itself. In the latter case you will conduct the analysis and research necessary or produce a performance text. Should you wish to work as a dramaturge in Canada you are strongly advised to develop fluency in French. In addition, all MA students are encouraged to begin developing broad backgrounds in languages, the other Fine Arts, the Social Sciences (History, Anthropology, Sociology), Literature and Philosophy. The department offers training in both New Play Development Dramaturgy, as well as Production Dramaturgy.

Theatre History will prepare you to be a theatre historian or archivist, university or college educator, and/or continue with PhD research. You will focus on the history of theatrical production: the styles of acting, theatre architecture, the audience response to and involvement in production, the evolution of set, costume and lighting design, the concepts and practices of the director, etc. You will normally specialize in one particular period and culture/country and will be expected to work with primary materials such as promptbooks, diaries, letters and papers, and contemporary photographs or sketches, whenever possible. The editing, collecting and/or translating of such materials when they are not widely available is particularly encouraged.

Dramatic Theory and Criticism will prepare you as a future critic, reviewer, or university or college teacher, and will provide the necessary background to undertake study towards the PhD. You will learn the methods of dramaturgical analysis; study theatre Aesthetics, the history and philosophy of theatre as a form from the classical period to the present postmodern period; and become conversant in current developments in critical theory. You will be encouraged to pursue comparatively traditional research such as the editing of plays for performance and contemporary critical approaches in areas such as audience reception, feminist/gender criticism, semiotics, post-structural theory, and cultural studies.

**Course-based MA students** take an additional course, and engage in theatre research during the course of their studies. Their study program is capped with a public presentation of an aspect of this research during a colloquium.

### **Program Requirements**

In addition to general graduate requirements, you must demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one approved language other than English. (See “The Language Requirement”).

Although the thesis-based program normally involves three academic terms of course work, applicants with degrees in disciplines other than Drama or Theatre, and/or without sufficient preparation in Theatre History and Criticism may be asked to take a qualifying year to improve their background before applying for admission to the MA program, or may be required to complete an additional term of course work.

### **The Courses**

#### **•Thesis-Based MA**

Because MA enrolment is kept relatively low, our courses are small enough to allow students to get to know each other well and to receive good guidance and supervision from faculty. All students must complete 24 units of course weight (8 courses), which must include both Historical (DR 608) and Contemporary (DR 609) Theory courses. All MA students must complete the Research Methods course (Drama 601 worth 3 units of course weight) which prepares you for critical research and writing, including the thesis proposal.

Through its Special Projects option (Drama 605) the Department also allows you to pursue independent study in areas outside of its usual course offerings. The availability of special projects courses however, is dependent on the willingness of qualified faculty who must agree to teach these courses as an overload. DRAMA 605 is normally only taken in your second year, and you must develop your proposal in conjunction with a supervisor before registering in order to complete your registrations as a full-time student.

DRAMA 605 may be used to attain greater knowledge or expertise in an area related to your thesis. Students are normally allowed to take only ONE 605 class during the course of this program.

Over the two year program, a typical MA (thesis) course plan will look as follows:

<u>Year 1 Term 1</u> DRAMA 601 (3 credits) One of DRAMA 608/609 (3 credits) DRAMA 6** (3 credits)	<u>Year 1 Term 2</u> DRAMA 6** (3 credits) DRAMA 6** (3 credits) DRAMA 6** (3 credits)
<u>Year 2 Term 1</u> One of DRAMA 608/609 (3 credits) DRAMA 6** (3 credits)	<u>Year 2 Term 2</u> Thesis

Finally, because theatre by its very nature is both international and interdisciplinary, you may consider taking a course in another department or program such as History, Music, Art and Design, Classics, English, Romance or Germanic Languages, Film Studies, Women’s Studies, Canadian Studies or Slavic and East European Studies, Sociology, Anthropology, or Comparative Literature. Only graduate-level courses may count towards the MA degree, but undergraduate courses may be completed on an audit or non-credit basis. For special arrangements, see the MA Coordinator.

•**Course-Based MA** (see above for description of seminars)

Students take \*27 of graduate-level courses, including:

- \* Drama 601 (\*3)
- \* one of Drama 608 (\*3) and/or Drama 609 (\*3)
- \* an additional \*12 of graduate-level (600-level) seminars offered by the Department of Drama

\* an additional \*9 of graduate-level seminars offered by the Department of Drama, or another Department within the Faculty of Arts or Faculty of Education.

\* The extended paper for the course based MA should be 35-40 pages in length. There will be two readers.

- The final presentation of the student’s research must be given to an audience of peers and faculty and should be 20-30 minutes in length.

The course-based MA does not require full-time residency. Course-based students shall normally not take DR 605.

**The Language Requirement**

All MA students must have reading proficiency in a language other than English. You will choose a language which is relevant for your thesis research. (For example, if you want to write on Polish theatre, we would want you to be able to read Polish. For Canadian theatre research, we normally expect you to learn French.)

Depending on their thesis topic, students who are native speakers in a language other than English may have this requirement waived by the MA or Graduate Coordinator.

The language requirement may be satisfied in one of two ways:

- by obtaining a grade of 6 or better in appropriate courses. Some language departments accept the grade as satisfying the language requirement. The student should consult directly with the language department to determine the specific course; or
- by passing a language proficiency exam administered by the relevant language department (see Modern Languages)

If you choose the latter option, you may wish to complete the 500-level courses (it may be a different number) as a refresher until you feel ready to take the exam, which is usually given at set times twice each term. Information about the language proficiency exam and dates are posted on this website: [http://www.humanities.ualberta.ca/mlcs/lang\\_proficiency.htm](http://www.humanities.ualberta.ca/mlcs/lang_proficiency.htm). Students must make an appointment and arrange a time for the examination at least two weeks before the examination (call 492-3273).

For the exam, you must bring two works that have been approved by the MA or Grad Coordinator (a Form is available in language department offices) and by the Language Examiner, and from which you will be asked to translate one or more passages with the aid of a dictionary.

For more information, link to the Modern Languages and Cultural Studies webpage addressing the different ways of meeting the language requirement:  
[http://www.humanities.ualberta.ca/mlcs/lang\\_proficiency.htm](http://www.humanities.ualberta.ca/mlcs/lang_proficiency.htm)

### **The MA Thesis**

During the first term of the program you should think about research topics which you might wish to pursue within the scope of your MA thesis. Drama 601 will help you with the preparation of your thesis proposal. After discussion with the MA Coordinator, other students and faculty, you should draw up a brief description of the thesis idea which can then be discussed with potential thesis supervisors. Once a full-time continuing faculty member has agreed to be your supervisor you must briefly outline:

- the thesis topic,
- its importance and scope,
- its relationship to previous research,
- the research procedure(s),
- major primary and secondary materials to be consulted and their availability,
- the anticipated organization of the thesis, and
- the tentative timetable for completion.

By your first year, the proposal should be submitted to the Graduate Committee with the signatures of both you and your supervisor. (See Graduate Deadlines for other important dates).

A bibliography is customarily appended to the proposal for reference purposes.

As soon as you have the proposal approved by the Graduate Committee, you should begin work on your thesis. If your topic requires, you may wish to take advantage of travel money available through the Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research (\$600 maximum). The Thesis Committee, which typically consists of your supervisor, a full time Drama faculty member, and a non-Drama Arts faculty member, is composed by your supervisor in dialogue with the student.

### **An MA thesis should not exceed 75 pages.**

When the members of the Graduate Committee feel that your thesis is ready to go forward to the oral defense, your supervisor will schedule it, in consultation with the GradCoordinator.

Following a successful defense, you have the option of submitting your thesis in electronic form to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. The thesis must be prepared according to the required format to be found at

<<http://www.gradstudies.ualberta.ca/degreesuperv/thesis/step1format.htm>> The Drama Department requires that you submit one bound copy to the Once Guberman Reading Room, In addition, it is customary for you to offer a copy of your thesis to your supervisor.

### **The context**

All MA students have at least one course (Drama 601) in common with their colleagues in the Master of Fine Arts Directing and Voice Pedagogy programs, and will also share other courses with MFA students during their program. Many of our faculty and students have combined interest and expertise in both scholarly research and performance. While MA students are not required to participate in department productions, such participation is in the spirit of the program, and involvement with performance is seen as an important complement to course and thesis work. You are consequently encouraged to become as involved as your academic and research commitments allow. You are also strongly encouraged to take full advantage of the lively and varied theatrical environment made available by Edmonton's theatre community.

### **Timetable**

#### **Year 1**

- Late August: Before the start of classes, determine program in consultation with the MA Coordinator.
- November 30: Supervisor has been chosen.
- January: Thesis proposal submitted to supervisor \*
- : Submit thesis proposal to Graduate Committee.
- First Summer: Initial reading and research toward thesis.

#### **Year 2**

- End of 3<sup>rd</sup> term: Language requirements must be satisfied.
- December: Course work has been completed
- March 15: Final draft of thesis has been completed
- April 15 Oral thesis defense
- April 30: Thesis corrections/changes have been completed and approved and unbound thesis submitted to FGSR.

\* Students wishing to be considered for MA SSHRC awards will complete draft thesis proposals earlier. Consult your academic advisor (MA Coordinator) for this fall deadline.

### **Performance Opportunities**

The MA program normally provides opportunities for practical engagement with performance through dramaturgy. With the exception of the dramaturgy courses, the program does not require practical training in aspects of performance. However, it is self-evident that in order to study the culture of performance, inside knowledge of its practice can often be a bonus. We therefore support students that pursue practical opportunities, be it as actors, directors, dramaturges, designers, producers or in technical support. Many of these will be offered within the department (ABBADAM, New Play Festival, Media Room shows, ...). **We do caution, however, not to let these engagements stand in the way of timely conclusion of thesis research and writing.**

### **Funding**

Unlike many other MA (Drama) programs, we try to fund our students as best as we can, though priority is given to thesis-based (f/t) students. A unique feature of the program is that thesis-based students may be given the opportunity to teach during the course of their two-year residency, **though we caution that teaching can occupy a good chunk of your available time for study, research and writing.** Funding sources include Assistantships (GRA) and Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA), Tuition differentials, national, provincial and institutional scholarships. Course-based MA students will not normally be awarded GRAs and GTAs, but fully qualify for all other graduate funding. We encourage applicants and students to fervently pursue their own funding opportunities.

## Department of Drama -- MA Checklist

### Year 1:

Initial meeting with MA Coordinator [**before beginning of term**]

Courses:

<u>Year 1 Term 1</u>	<u>Year 1 Term 2</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> DRAMA 601	<input type="checkbox"/> DRAMA 6__ __
<input type="checkbox"/> One of DRAMA 608/609	<input type="checkbox"/> DRAMA 6__ __
<input type="checkbox"/> DRAMA 6__ __	<input type="checkbox"/> DRAMA 6__ __
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER, specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER, specify: _____

Thesis Supervisor chosen [**end of November**]

Decision to switch to Course-based MA declared / approved [**Mid-January**]

Thesis or extended paper proposal submitted to Supervisor [**End of January**]

Thesis or extended paper proposal submitted to Graduate committee [**Mid-February**]

Reading list for thesis or extended paper research submitted to supervisor [**May**]

### Strongly Recommended:

SSHRC application [**CHECK DEADLINES IN EARLY FALL**]

Participation in performance projects. Please list:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Participation in conferences, seminars, colloquia. Please list:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Participation in teaching and learning workshops. Please list:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Signatures:

MA Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

MA Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis / Ext. Paper Supervisor : \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **MA Checklist -- Year 2:**

Courses\*:

<u>Year 2 Term 1</u>	<u>Year 2 Term 2</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> One of DRAMA 608/609	<input type="checkbox"/> Thesis or Extended Paper
<input type="checkbox"/> DRAMA 6__ __	
<input type="checkbox"/> * Course-based MA additional 3 credit course: _____	

- Course work completed [**end of 3<sup>rd</sup> term**]
- Language requirement completed [**end of 3<sup>rd</sup> term**]
- Draft of thesis (or draft of extended paper) completed and approved by Supervisor [**end of February**]
- Final draft of thesis (or extended paper) completed and submitted to committee (or to second reader) [**March 15**]
- Oral thesis defense (or Course-Based final presentation) [**April 15**]
- Thesis or extended paper corrections completed/ submitted to FGSR or Dept. [**April 30**]

### **Strongly Recommended:**

Participation in performance projects. Please list:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Participation in conferences, seminars, colloquia. Please list:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Participation in teaching and learning workshops. Please list:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Signatures:**

MA Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

MA Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis / Ext. Paper Supervisor : \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dept. Chair : \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_