

# KENT STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THEATRE AND DANCE MFA IN DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT GUIDELINES

2025

## Table of Contents

<b>GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MFA PROGRAM.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>PLAN OF STUDY FOR MFA in THEATRE DESIGN/TECHNOLOGY.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DEGREE REQUIREMENTS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
GENERAL REQUIREMENTS .....	3
ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS.....	4
PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND PROBATION PROCESS .....	5
RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT .....	6
CULMINATING PROJECT .....	6
<b>GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS (APPOINTMENT, EXPECTATIONS, AND REVIEW) .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>TEACHING RELATED INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Mandatory Reporting .....	8
Office Hours, Grading, Cancellation, and Main Office Policies .....	8
Disputes .....	9
<b>THEATRE GRADUATE STUDENT FORUM.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
A Code of Ethics for Theatre Professionals .....	10
A Few Words Regarding Criticism .....	11
Discrimination and Harassment .....	11

This document supplements Kent State University’s [Academic Policies](#) and the [University Policy Register](#). All MFA Design and Technology students are expected to comply with these university-wide policies in addition to the specific guidelines outlined by the School of Theatre and Dance, which can be found at <https://www.kent.edu/theatredance>.

## MISSION OF THE SCHOOL OF THEATRE AND DANCE

We foster an environment where passion and opportunity meet, training students to enter the dynamic disciplines of theatre and dance.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MFA PROGRAM

The **Master of Fine Arts in Design and Technology (with Concentrations in Costume Design and Production, Lighting Design, Scene Design, and Technical Direction)** prepares students who are interested in achieving the artistry and skills necessary to qualify as practicing professionals in the entertainment industry and/or professional theatre educators. In addition to meeting all admission requirements for graduate study at Kent State University, applicants are required to pass portfolio reviews conducted by the Design and Technology faculty.

### THE **MASTER OF FINE ARTS** DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY FULL DESCRIPTION:

The Master of Fine Arts degree in Theatre Design and Technology is a terminal degree designed for those who are interested in achieving the artistry and skills necessary to qualify as practicing professionals in the entertainment industry and/or professional theatre educators. The program is a three-year course of study with a flexible curriculum for students to explore areas of special interest.

The Theatre Design and Technology major comprises the following concentrations:

- The **Costume Design and Production** concentration prepares students for careers in the entertainment industry, professional theatre or theatre education. Students study both design and production, including related areas such as dye techniques, costume crafts, and wigs and makeup. Students also design costumes for main-stage departmental productions. The curriculum includes core classes in theatre history, dramatic theory, and historical periods.
- The **Lighting Design** concentration balances instruction and experience in lighting design with instruction and experience in lighting technology. Studies include digital rendering, CAD, lighting technology, and automated lighting. Students research and study all aspects of theatrical lighting, including the design process from concept to execution, communication skills, integration of technology into design, documentation of the work, and critical evaluation of the work.
- The **Scene Design** concentration balances focused classroom instruction with practical design and production experience. Students also study related artisan areas such as digital and traditional rendering techniques, 3D CAD, props, fabrication, scene painting and presentation techniques with particular emphasis on integrating contemporary digital techniques into the design process. The curriculum contains courses in construction theory, rigging, costume crafts, and projection/media design.
- The **Technical Direction** concentration provides students with training and practical experiences in planning main stage productions for the School of Theatre and Dance. Studies focus on safety and all logistics of production assembly, including touring and

dance. Technical directors have the opportunity work in four different theatre spaces: black box, large proscenium, thrust and open outdoor.

## PLAN OF STUDY FOR MFA in THEATRE DESIGN/TECHNOLOGY

The Design and Technology degree is an intensive, three-year, professional training program requiring the completion of 60 hours of graduate credit depending on the area of concentration.

Students follow the catalog in effect during their first semester unless they elect to transition to a newer catalog and meet all associated requirements.

MFA Design and Technology candidates are expected to follow the plan of study made by their Faculty Advisor.

Students will be advised of their course registrations by the end of the previous semester. Permissions must be granted at the College level for all course enrollments via the Graduate Coordinator of the School. Students will be notified when they have been cleared to register.

Graduation applications are submitted via FlashLine by the published deadlines. See: [Application for Graduation Processing Dates and Procedures](#)

## DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

### GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

MFA Design and Technology candidates are expected to matriculate in the MFA program by completing program requirements and following a Faculty Advisor-approved plan of study.

MFA Design and Technology candidates must comply with the university attendance policy 3-01.2: <https://www.kent.edu/policyreg/administrative-policy-regarding-class-attendance-and-class-absence>.

MFA Design and Technology candidates are required to be involved in at least two significant assignments per semester approved by Design Technology and Production faculty and staff.

Only third-year MFA Design and Technology students are allowed to take classes outside the School of Theatre and Dance. This must be approved by the Design, Technology, and Production area faculty.

MFA Design and Technology candidates who wish to participate in job fairs at SETC, USITT, or similar conferences must share their portfolio with faculty and staff and incorporate feedback before participating in the job fair.

MFA Design and Technology candidates must demonstrate professional behavior at all times. Professional behavior is defined as behavior that supports the creative process. Any behavior that detracts from the creative process can lead to immediate probation and/or dismissal from the MFA Design and Technology program.

MFA Design and Technology candidates must demonstrate respect for their peers, instructors, and for themselves before, during and after classes, rehearsals, and performances.

If an MFA Design and Technology Candidate is unable to attend class due to illness, then the candidate will be unable to attend shop work calls, rehearsal, tech, or performances. Failure to attend work calls, rehearsals, tech or performances may lead to dismissal from a production.

In order to maintain a safe and professional working environment, MFA Design and Technology candidates are expected to attend classes, shop work, rehearsals, and performances with a clear, sober and focused mind and body. Students suspected to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs shall be reported to the Student Conduct Board as well as the Kent City Police Department. They are also subject to immediate program probation or dismissal from the program.

## ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

### Progress Toward Degree Completion

MFA Design and Technology candidates must successfully complete all course work as determined by the course instructors and as outlined in the course syllabi.

All graduate students are expected to meet university and program requirements, and to make systematic progress toward completion of their degree. This progress includes satisfying the conditions listed below and achieving the requirements set by the individual degree program. Students who fail to satisfy the requirements of their degree program and/or the conditions outlined below may be dismissed from the program.

Students must maintain their status as degree-seeking student by registering for at least 1 graduate credit hour that contributes to their degree requirements as determined by their graduate program each year (defined as three consecutive terms, including summer as one term) or by taking an approved leave of absence. Courses taken for audit and course withdrawals will not be counted as fulfilling the minimum enrollment requirements.

Students are expected to maintain a minimum 3.000 grade point average (GPA). A graduate student who receives more than 8 credit hours of grades lower than B or more than 4 credit hours of grades lower than C is subject to dismissal. Some programs impose higher standards.

Students must comply with the time limits for graduation (six years from first enrollment for master's students).

Grades below C are not counted toward completion of requirements for any graduate degree, but are counted in the graduate GPA. Credit hours earned in undergraduate courses are not counted toward completion of any graduate degree and are not counted in the graduate GPA.

A change by a graduate student from one department or program to another does not remove from the student's GPA the grades that were earned in the first enrollment. Refer to the Grading Policies and Procedures in the University Catalog for information on grades and administrative marks and their application to the GPA.

Only work of high quality is approved for graduate credit. To be considered "in good standing," graduate students must maintain a 3.0 average or better in all course work undertaken at Kent State University. In order to qualify for graduation, the student must have a 3.0 average in all graduate courses attempted.

If an MFA Design and Technology candidate earns a grade of "C" or lower in a required MFA Design and Technology class, the candidate will automatically be placed on probation. Failure of any course requires candidates to repeat courses and may interfere with program matriculation, which may result in academic or program probation.

A written warning concerning grades of "C" or lower in graduate coursework and/or grade point averages below 3.00 will come from the Graduate Coordinator of the School.

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND PROBATION PROCESS

MFA Design and Technology candidates must demonstrate continuous skill development and growth in ALL areas of the MFA Design and Technology program (including, but not limited to academic, production, and assistantship areas). This progress will be evaluated each semester during the Graduate Portfolio Review process as delineated in the course syllabus (THEA 61051).

The Design, Technology and Production Faculty of the School of Theatre and Dance reserves the right to put on Program Probation or to dismiss any student who, through assessment measures beyond academic evaluations, is not demonstrating sufficient progress toward becoming a competent designer and technologist, even despite their academic performance. A student separated from the program has the right to appeal the decision. Information on the process of appeal is available in the office of the dean, appropriate academic offices, and student services offices upon request.

Evaluations concerning performance and progress come from the faculty and may extend to warning, probation, or dismissal.

Should an MFA Design and Technology candidate be given a warning for probation, or placed on program probation, the Design Technology and Production Faculty will provide a written list of conditions, an explanation of what constitutes meeting said conditions, and a time frame for addressing the conditions. Failure to meet conditions in the time frame specified could lead to dismissal from the MFA Design and Technology Program.

Students are subject to dismissal from the MFA Design and Technology program without being placed on program probation.

## RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

Students are required to remain in residence for three years to complete the program (excluding, if appropriate, the internship).

At a minimum, design/technology students must complete at least one significant production assignment and work on one other production each semester.

Students may not undertake any work outside the School of Theatre and Dance without petitioning the appropriate area faculty and receiving written permission prior to interviewing.

## CULMINATING PROJECT

The topic of each MFA candidate's Culminating Project may be proposed by the candidate and will be determined based on faculty feedback from yearly portfolio and academic assessments. The culminating project must be approved by the faculty advisor.

The Culminating Project requirements for the Design and Technology concentrations include: documentation, portfolio presentation, and an exit interview. Documentation consists of a design analysis, process journal, relevant research and other supporting materials (photos, links to the candidate's website, etc.). The scope of work may include but not necessarily be limited to: evidence of research, drawing and drafting, rendering and associated digital image, video or audio files, which will be presented at their final presentation.

The student will present their Culminating Project in person to the Design, Technology, and Production Faculty and Staff. Additional attendees for this presentation can include other members of the School, College, University, or external collaborators. Attendees must be approved by the student's faculty advisor.

The student will register for THEA 61310 during the semester in which they plan to present their Culminating Project.

## GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS (APPOINTMENT, EXPECTATIONS, AND REVIEW)

The School of Theatre and Dance awards Graduate Assistantships (with tuition remission) to students demonstrating excellence in the field (tuition remission without a stipend may also be available). Excellence is measured by a combination of academic performance, creative/scholarly work outside the classroom, demonstrated success and promise for future achievement in the field, the ability to take and give instruction and guidance and to execute assignments, and the collegial behavior appropriate to a learning environment.

Only full-time students maintaining at least an eight-hour load of graduate credits each semester and a 3.00 grade point average are eligible to be considered for graduate assistantships. (See also the regulations specified in the [Graduate Studies Catalog](#).)

All new graduate assistants are required to attend and participate in the University's Graduate Orientation and training program the week prior to the beginning of fall semester classes. In addition to the University's workshop, the School schedules meetings for incoming graduate students during orientation week to explain School procedures and to provide guidance for graduate students who will be teaching. Assistants are also registered for Introduction to Graduate Study in Theatre (THEA 62000) during their initial term of appointment.

As the appointment contract specifies, assistantship duties begin with orientation week. They also carry through finals weeks and may begin before classes commence in January.

Assistantships carry an expectation of 20 hours of service per week, consisting of teaching or shop assignments. This may include serving as instructor of record, appointment as a Teaching Assistant, or work in production shops (which includes the expectation of mentorship of undergraduate students). The School Director will determine the appropriate allocation of hours and share a workload statement prior to the beginning of the assistantship contract.

Independent classroom teaching (Fundamentals of Production, Practicum, etc.) is evaluated through observation by supervisory faculty and via the University's standardized S.S.I. questionnaire, given to all students. Laboratory and assistant teaching is supervised and evaluated by the instructor/staff of record and through administration of the University's standardized S.S.I. questionnaire, where appropriate. Service assignments (publicity, box office, administrative, research) are evaluated by the supervisory faculty or staff.

The Design, Technology, and Production Faculty issue a single, written evaluation of the student's total performance at the end of each semester. A successful evaluation is required for the continuation of the assistantship.

## TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS

Graduate assistants are expected to teach sections of Introductory Practicum, following a syllabus drawn up by the course supervisor. Students may be assigned as Teaching Assistants for various courses offered in the School. The course/section supervisor will monitor

performance and provide out-of-class counseling for graduate teachers seeking advice or encountering problems.

In some cases, graduate students have opportunities to teach other design/tech related classes. The course/section supervisor will visit classes during the semester to monitor performance and provide out-of-class counseling for graduate teachers seeking advice or encountering problems.

## TEACHING RELATED INFORMATION

### Mandatory Reporting

All Kent State University employees (including Graduate Assistants) are REQUIRED to disclose any instance of alleged sexual harassment, including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking to the Title IX Coordinator at [titleix@kent.edu](mailto:titleix@kent.edu) and in the cases of sexual assault, to the police (911 or 330-672-3070).

Per university policy, you may choose to notify the Center for Sexual and Relationship Violence Support Services (SRVSS), Campus Police or the Title IX Coordinator of the incident. NOTE: In the case of sexual assault, you may be required by law to notify the police.

### Office Hours, Grading, Cancellation, and Main Office Policies

All faculty at Kent State University are required to post and maintain at least one hour per assigned class per week of office hours (e.g. if you are teaching two sections of AOT, you must maintain at least two office hours per week). There is a graduate office with a phone (330-672-5978), shared desks and printing capacity. Shared facilities require consideration for other occupants, with respect to quiet, privacy, security, and hygiene, and consideration for the office as a professional space for meeting with students. The School also maintains a secure CAD Lab for use by Theatre students doing class and school-related design work. Protocols for the CAD Lab will be explained to graduate students by the School Director or the Coordinator of the Design and Technology area during orientation week.

The course syllabus for a class should explain University plagiarism and disability policies. It should also make clear how classwork and behavior will be evaluated. Grading at Kent State University is done electronically through Flashline ([www.login.kent.edu](http://www.login.kent.edu)). Go to Flashline, then type your username and password. Click on Faculty and Advisor tools. From the site, you are able to retrieve course roster and submit grades. Those teaching 10000 or 20000-level courses will also need to submit mid-semester grades. In the beginning of the semester, you are required to submit a copy of your syllabi to School administrative personnel.

**Class Cancellation Policy:** Classes must be held every day that the University is in session. If you are ill and must miss class, it is your responsibility to find a colleague to cover your class.

Faculty, as well as peers, may cover for you. You must notify your area supervisor and School Director in writing (e-mail) when you cannot teach class. The notification must be in advance, and you must include a plan for covering the class. If it is an extreme emergency, then we will assist you in finding someone to cover for you.

Teaching Assistants and students with service or production responsibilities will be given access to copiers. The copier is for official business only (classroom materials, schedules, stage manager's notes, etc.). For personal copying, please use the KSU Libraries. The current copy machine has a scanning capability thus we encourage you to scan documents to enjoy a paper-free environment. Please do not wait until the last minute to do classroom copying, since the machine may be busy or broken.

The supply room has a to-be-shredded box, and other equipment and supplies (paper, grade books, pens, pencils, paperclips, and the like) for the conduct of School business. Supply cabinets are kept locked (see administrative staff) and the copy room itself is locked after hours (5:30PM - 7:30AM). Please do not bring personal documents from home to be shredded.

All Teaching Assistants are issued keys appropriate to their duties. The School does not have keys to other buildings or to the classrooms in the CPA that are under the control of other departments. Assistants teaching in other buildings should seek out the nearest departmental office to their teaching spaces, in the event they find their classrooms locked.

Textbooks for the courses Teaching Assistants teach are ordered by the course supervisor (desk copies may be provided by the supervisor). KSU students and faculty are entitled to a discount at the bookstore in the Student Center on merchandise they purchase. Ask about protocols before you go through the cashier.

Teaching Assistants must have paychecks electronically deposited. To arrange direct deposit, go to your Flashline and find the "Employee Dashboard" to set up direct deposit to your financial institution. Payment is issued on the 15th and on the last working day of the month.

## EMAIL

The University assigns all students an e-mail address. The School, the University, faculty, and students will communicate with you electronically (if you have difficulty with your e-address, call the HELP desk at 672-2031).

## Disputes

Disputes between students and instructors, whether over grades or other matters, should be handled so as to discourage escalation. Should intervention be required in a dispute or situation which has not been resolved (after trying) between you and your student, consult the course supervisor. Intervention works up the academic chain of command, always with the intention of resolving a dispute at the lowest level possible.

In the same way, graduate students should seek to solve their own academic disputes through honest, face-to-face conversation. Attempts to go "over the head" of your professors and supervisors when you have not attempted to solve the matter with them will negatively affect the academic environment as well as professional relationships with your professors.

## THEATRE GRADUATE STUDENT FORUM

All graduate students in Theatre are members of the Graduate Forum, a recognized student organization with five officers and a bank account, and the Coordinator of Graduate Studies as its Advisor. Forum exists to provide graduate students with a place to meet and discuss issues of common concern, to learn policy, protocol, and customs, and to present matters they would like their fellow students or the faculty to consider. Forum was created by students to further open discourse, discourage complaining, and to socialize. It is the representative body to which the Director and faculty go for information and to hear the views and concerns of graduate students. Forum also elects representatives to School Committees, including the Graduate Studies Committee, the School Faculty and Staff meeting, the Student Production Board, the Curriculum Committee, and the like. Forum also selects a representative to the University Graduate Student Senate and to Roundtable, its undergraduate counterpart in the School and the sponsor of student productions.

## PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

### A Code of Ethics for Theatre Professionals

- I will meet all deadlines and responsibilities as assigned.
- I will accept artistic responsibility and will never blame my co-workers or inanimate objects for my own failure.
- I will be patient and avoid temperamental outbursts, for they create tension and serve no useful purpose.
- I will never engage in caustic criticism of another's work.
- I will not speak from jealousy or an urge to increase my own prestige.
- I will communicate regularly with my advisor, faculty and student colleagues and keep them apprised of my work progress.
- I will earn respect for my craft, and myself, through my gracious acceptance of both praise and constructive criticism.
- I will direct my efforts in such a manner that, when I leave, the theatre will stand as a better place for my having labored there.
- I will avoid behavior that is detrimental to the well-being and reputation of myself or others.
- I will accept the director's advice in the spirit in which it is given, for they are able to view the production as a whole. My role or position—regardless of its size or importance—is only a portion of that whole.

- I will look upon the production as a collective effort that demands my utmost cooperation.
- I will forego the gratification of my ego for the demands of the play.
- I will forego social activities that interfere with, or in any way compromise, my ability to participate in rehearsals and work calls.
- I will observe backstage courtesy and will adhere to the rules of the theatre in which I work.
- I will always be on time and always endeavor to keep my own work on or ahead of the established production schedule.
- I will notify my advisor in a timely manner if I encounter any problems in completing my work.

### A Few Words Regarding Criticism

- I understand that public criticism of my work is necessary as theatre is created in a public forum.
- I understand that criticism is a part of my education as an artist and professional.
- I will give and take criticism in a positive manner.
- I understand that criticism from directors and faculty is of my work as an artist and a professional is not to be taken as personal.
- I understand the role of my faculty is to further my development as an artist and professional. I further understand that faculty are also responsible for upholding the artistic standards of the School of Theatre and Dance.
- I understand the director's role in creating a unified production. I will support the director's vision with my artistry. My own vision is in support of the director's.
- I understand that a "note" from a director or faculty member is not personal criticism.
- I will not engage in temperamental outbursts or defensive or argumentative behavior.
- I understand that the best and most respectful way to deal with problems is by direct communication with my faculty and my student colleagues.

### Discrimination and Harassment

It is essential for all graduate students to understand the University's position with respect to discrimination and harassment, which applies to them both as teachers and as students. In addition to complying with state and federal law with respect to these matters, the Kent State University Administrative Code specifies that "there shall be no unlawful discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, age, or identity as a disabled veteran or veteran of the Vietnam era, [and] this policy sets forth the expectations and responsibilities for maintaining an educational and employment environment free of unlawful discrimination. It is the policy of the university to consider harassment directed toward an individual based on any of these categories as a form of unlawful discrimination."

### Discrimination

Discrimination can also express itself in terms of 'attitude,' whether challenges to your authority in the classroom based upon race, gender, age, sexual orientation, or the other conditions specified above, or discrimination against you as a student, which "includes intimidation, ridicule or insults that unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or educational performance, creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working and/or learning environment, or otherwise adversely affects an individual's work or learning opportunities. This type of discriminatory harassment applies to such conduct, which is based on an individual's religion, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other legally protected characteristic." "The university encourages an atmosphere in which the diversity of its members is understood and appreciated; an atmosphere that is free of discrimination and harassment based on the above categories. Thus, all members of the university are expected to join in creating a positive atmosphere in which individuals can learn and work, an environment that is sympathetic, respectful and supportive."

## Harassment

It is important for you to know, both as an artist and as a student, that Kent State has a harassment policy which protects both students and employees from any type of harassment. This policy applies to ALL faculty, staff, students, and visitors to the University, and it covers both on-campus and off-campus activities, including those of any student organizations. The policy states that speech or other means of expression are considered to be harassing if they intentionally:

- are directed to an individual(s) based upon that person's race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, identity as a veteran with a disability, a veteran of the Vietnam era, gender, sexual orientation, or any other basis.
- tend to incite an immediate breach of peace by making use of insulting or "fighting" words, nonverbal symbols, or threats of violence.
- are sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent so as to interfere with or limit the employment, educational, or residential opportunities at Kent State University.

## Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome gender bias, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or academic performance.
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions affecting the individual.
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's employment or academic performance or creates an intimidating hostile or offensive employment, academic or living environment.

Verbal and/or physical behavior which constitutes sexual harassment includes but is not limited to: Sexually oriented jokes, insults, taunts, obscene gestures, embracing, touching, pictorial communications such as pinups, posters, and cartoons.

#### Reporting Discrimination and Harassment

If you think you are or have been a subject or a witness to harassment by another student, a faculty member, or an employee of the university, you should immediately contact the Office of Affirmative Action (330-672-2038). It is against the law to file or threaten to file false allegations of harassment to seek gain, advancement, or consideration.

#### Social Distance

The School of Theatre and Dance wants to be sure you understand that romantic and sexual behavior of any kind between faculty/teaching assistants/ supervisory personnel and students/employees/others is prohibited and that we enforce that prohibition. Flirtatious or suggestive behavior, dating, unwelcome advances, off-color jokes, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature are all forbidden and inappropriate, even if the student/employee/other freely consents to a romantic or sexual relationship.