

**Guide for Actors in the Professional Actor Training Program**  
**Theater Department**  
**Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University**  
**Academic Year 2014-2015**

*These guidelines shall cover every facet of the program including the third year at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London.*

**Student Responsibility to Keep Informed**

The Department of Theater makes special demands on students enrolled in the Actor training program because of the professional nature of the programs and the demands of the profession. Specific rules and policies are published in the *Guide for Actors in the Theater Department*. Students are responsible for understanding and following all rules and policies set forth in this document, as well as those in the graduate or undergraduate university catalog.

**Requirements for the degree:**

Consult the curriculum document for the term you entered for course requirements.

**Advising:**

All Acting students are advised by their principal acting teacher.

**Expectations of the program:**

You have entered an intense program that is dedicated to the proposition that Acting is a creative art and that true excellence in its practice requires mastery of technical craft. We are concerned with the development of complete actors, that is, actors who are able to acquit themselves well in all mediums (film, television, and stage) and in contemporary, realistic, and classical texts. This is a tall order that requires tremendous commitment to these goals and the requisite talent to achieve them.

**YEAR 1-** Your first year is spent exploring and mastering the fundamental concepts of developing or further developing a background in theater, and establishing the work ethic of the profession. You begin intensive training in the Meisner technique and develop a truthful and spontaneous instrument. Beginning voice, speech, movement, Performance Ensemble, and a two-semester theater history class along with liberal arts classes for BFA's and Aesthetics of Space for MFA's round out the program. As is consistent in most conservatory training, you will not perform in your first year.

**Year 2-** Your second year is spent immersed in the advanced Meisner training, focusing on textual analysis, objectives, actions and beginning character work. The guided practice of speech and movement continues and is integrated into the acting work. Other classes include Scene Study, Global Theater, script analysis for the actor, Avant-Garde for the MFA's, special workshops in disciplines such as The Chekhov Techniques, mask, Viewpoints, etc. and liberal arts. Students are granted multiple performance opportunities, including the Performance Ensemble production, in the second year.

**Year 3-** Your entire junior year is spent studying abroad at Rutgers Conservatory at Shakespeare's Globe in London. You undertake a rigorous conservatory training program consisting of acting, voice, and movement (based on the Alexander Technique) speech and period dance. There is a continuation of textual analysis, objective, actions, and character work with particular attention given to the classical texts and traditions. This training allows you to capably handle a wide variety of texts with confidence. British Art and Culture and Shakespeare's Plays fulfill your liberal arts credits

**Year 3.5 or IV-** During the rigorous final year or semester, class time is spent in the refinement of the actor's craft, integrating all aspects of the training program. Particular emphasis is placed upon the "business of the business." Besides your core classes, classes include audition techniques, acting for the camera, and meeting with agents and casting directors. Performance opportunities include eligibility for all departmental productions. Students are expected to balance class work

## **Guide for Actors in the Professional Actor Training Program Theater Department**

and performance demands equally. The year culminates in the Rutgers Actor's Presentation in New York City for invited members of the profession.

In all your work, throughout your 3.5 or four years of training, our constant questions will be: Who is going to hire you to do what? Where and when you gain professional employment, what will your contribution be? Are we convinced that you have the requisite tools, personality, professional comportment, work ethic, and ability to compete in the highly competitive world of professional acting, as it exists in this country?

As faculty, we will constantly be responding to you and your work, as master teachers, mentors, and also artists-- testing your work against our perceptions and beliefs about the art form and its requirements. Art is by nature subjective and so must some of our responses be to you as a developing artist.

### **Actor Presentation (Showcase)**

Showcase is not guaranteed. No actors may appear in the New York Showcase unless they have completed all requirements for graduation. The showcase is entirely produced by the Head of Acting, who is solely responsible for its content and presentation. The Head of Acting Program must approve all choices of material, partners, running time, costumes, make up, etc. Any student whose behavior disrupts the rehearsal process will be excused from participation. The Head of Acting retains the right to withhold from Showcase any student who fails to maintain the standards through to and including their 3.5 or fourth year.

### **Rehearsal Etiquette**

Creativity exists because you are in a safe space which must be maintained by faculty and students alike. Physically or psychologically endangering another in rehearsal or classes is prohibited.

Actors are expected to behave professionally at all times. The theater is a collaborative art form and so it is expected that all members of the program will be good collaborators with their fellow actors as well as with their directors, stage managers, designers, costume and scene shop personnel, etc. If actors violate the following or behave in ways that impede the orderly progress of rehearsals and do not contribute wholeheartedly to a proper artistic and creative atmosphere at rehearsals they will be warned and/or dismissed from the program.

- Actors must be punctual for all rehearsals as well as classes.
- They may not miss calls or leave before being dismissed by the stage manager.
- They are responsible to be within earshot or let the stage manager know their whereabouts at all times and do their best to realize all notes given by the director or stage manager.
- Actors are expected to treat props and costumes with a professional's care and appear promptly for photo calls, costume fittings, etc.
- The Department will not condone any behavior which involves physical or verbal abuse of faculty, fellow actors or any other member of the collaborative team.
- Students' behavior must conform at all times to the university regulations regarding sexual harassment and racial discrimination.

### **In Direct Regard to Morning Warm-up**

Morning warm-up class is covered by the following attendance policy.

## **Guide for Actors in the Professional Actor Training Program Theater Department**

### **Attendance in MFA and BFA Theater Classes**

Absence from any Theater class is problematic. In the event that an absence is unavoidable, the student must advise the faculty member in advance of the absence. In addition, it is the student's responsibility to discuss the absence with the instructor to determine whether the absence is excused. In some cases, the department may require documentation before excusing an absence. Absences due to illness or family emergency are generally excused. Students are responsible for making up any missed work and being properly prepared for the next class. In the Department of Theater, unexcused absences are not permitted in any class. One unexcused absence will result in a drop of grade for the final grade. Three late arrivals are equal to one unexcused absence. Excessive absences, even if excused, may result in the student being withdrawn from class.

Students may use the University Absence Reporting Website:

<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>. This will generate an email to the instructor informing him/her of the absence. It is the student's responsibility to discuss absences with the instructor, before the absence when feasible, but no later than the next class session in attendance.

### **Core Curriculum**

As a company students will take "core" curricular classes. *Core Curriculum* refers to the courses designed to reinforce or challenge assumptions about theater and theater-making and expand understanding. Core Curriculum has been tailored to a company of students serious about becoming well-rounded, culturally aware theater artists. They have a direct and important relationship to Core Training and to the work we put on stage.

Though grades received in core courses are not weighed equally with student's studio training in questions of dismissal; students' work in these courses is just as essential to overall standing in the program and a student's path towards graduation.

### **Casting and Production Assignment Policy**

Students must accept roles in which they are cast and production positions that are assigned to them.

The Theater Program at Mason Gross School of the Arts prepares students for the wide variety of roles they will encounter in the professional entertainment industry: theater, film and television. The goal is to develop highly skilled and versatile theater artists.

Theater, film and television encompass the full range of human behavior and experience and there will be times when students may be asked to perform in roles or work on plays that may contain language and describe situations distasteful to some. Students in the Mason Gross School of the Arts Department of Theater must be able to portray characters and work on plays even if the values and beliefs there in may be at significant odds with their own.

Students in the program are not at liberty to choose the assignments or roles they are cast in according to how congruent they are with their personal belief systems. In addition, altering a text or changing the language of a play in order to sanitize language or character behavior creates an inauthentic performance of the play that falsifies the artistic integrity of the playwright's work. It also cheats the audience who came to see a legitimate performance of the play. Altering the text of a play is unacceptable in our program and will result in a failing grade for the work in question. Failure of any core course can result in artistic dismissal.

Actors are required to attend all auditions for which they are called. If a student wishes to audition for a role for which they have not been called, the student may request an audition. At the discretion of the Chair/Vice Chair, the student may be granted the audition.

## **Guide for Actors in the Professional Actor Training Program Theater Department**

All issues of nudity or smoking in rehearsals and performances (including special effects) must be approved by the Executive Committee in order to make sure departmental policies are followed. The Stage Manager or Director prepares a photocopy of the relevant pages in the script, highlighting necessary nudity or smoking and provides the Executive Committee with a copy as well as an explanation of the request.

Nudity during a performance may be permitted if it is essential to the logic of the play, but it may not be gratuitous. Actors cannot be required to perform in the nude. During casting, only the student's primary acting teacher may discuss performing in the nude with the actor. The director cannot have this conversation with the actor. The Chair/Vice Chair is the final arbiter of taste and adherence to the Executive Committee policy. An actor's refusal to perform nude will be individually negotiated by the primary acting teacher and will not affect the student's status in the program. If nudity is to occur, the Department will post a sign in the theater lobby and box office window so that patrons with sensitivity to nudity may be apprised.

Smoking during a performance is only permitted within strict limits if it is essential to the action and logic of the play. Electronic cigarettes will be used wherever possible and a sign will be posted for the audience advising of their use. If real smoking is to occur, the Department will post a sign in the theater lobby and box office window so that patrons with sensitivity to smoking may be apprised. If smoking is approved the ventilation systems will be run during those scenes and during intermissions to dilute the concentration of smoke in the atmosphere. This may cause noise which would affect the audience's ability to hear some of the scene. An actor's refusal to smoke onstage will be individually negotiated by the primary acting teacher and will not affect the student's status in the program. Non-tobacco products will be used if the materials are lit.

### **Production Practice / Rutgers Theater Company**

The Rutgers Theater Company is a resident company of student actors, designers, directors, playwrights, stage managers, and technicians whose work is guided by master teachers and other accomplished professionals. Production practice is fully integrated with the curriculum of the Department of Theater. Theatrical productions are tightly organized and collaborative events that require each participant to fulfill his or her responsibilities.

### **Rehearsal and Production Conflict Policy**

MFA and BFA students' presence is required for evening and weekend work throughout the production process. Some productions require commitments during holidays, vacation periods, and/or religious holidays. Students are not excused from any responsibilities, rehearsals or performances for any reason unless specifically approved in advance and in writing by the Department of Theater Executive Committee. Under no circumstances will students be released from a technical rehearsal, dress rehearsal or performance. Should a potential conflict not be approved, the student will need to clear that conflict, and their presence will be required.

### **Outside Employment**

During the academic year (including Thanksgiving, winter and spring break production periods for students required during those periods) MFA and BFA students may not accept paid or unpaid outside theatrical or entertainment industry employment without written consent from the student's head of program. Violation of the outside work policy may result in dismissal from the program.

### **Departmental Scholarships**

Students are expected to be in good artistic and academic standing to receive departmental scholarship or other financial support. Artistic Probation will put a student's departmental support in jeopardy.

## **Guide for Actors in the Professional Actor Training Program Theater Department**

### **Governance:**

The Department is governed by the Chair and the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee makes most of the major decisions regarding academic and production policy. The committee consists of the Heads of the various programs.

### **ARTISTIC AND ACADEMIC EVALUATION OF THEATER STUDENTS**

All students are expected to meet a professional standard of work, skill, and discipline. Punctuality and class attendance are mandatory. The faculty, and where appropriate supervisory staff, is responsible for setting standards and for guiding and evaluating each student's development. The faculty, will continue to assess professional growth and consistency of application to work through the third and fourth years.

The Theater program faculties and, where appropriate supervisory staff, formally meets twice a semester to evaluate the progress of each student in the program. Decisions to continue students in the program are not dependent solely on completion of course requirements or grades. The faculty assesses matters of artistic vision, leadership, initiative, work ethic and discipline, ability to collaborate, ability to accept criticism, a satisfactory rate of development, and overall suitability for a professional career. This assessment is conducted according to the standards of the profession and can serve as the basis for Artistic Probation or Dismissal.

### **Definitions of Artistic Warning, Probation and Dismissal:**

In the Theater Program there are Training Core Courses and Curricular Core courses.

- Training Core Courses are an essential component of the student's professional training.
- Curricular Core Courses are those which all or most students in a discipline or the department take to enhance the understanding of theater's place in history or society. These are Theater History, Global Theater, Who's Who and What's What, and Homeroom for all theater students; and Clothing and Culture, Aesthetics of Space, and Avant-Garde for particular groups.

Overall academic performance is reflected in the student's G. P. A. Artistic standing is reflected in the student's performance in Theater Department Training Core and Curricular Core courses.

Artistic Warning is a preliminary step to Artistic Probation. It will be issued at any time when a student's work in a class (or classes) does not meet expected results. The student will be advised what steps to take to clear this warning by the end of the semester.

Artistic Probation is a preliminary step to Artistic Dismissal. If, in accordance with the grading policies of the Department, a student earns an unacceptable grade or if their artistic development still fails to meet expected results after the Artistic Warning, Artistic Probation will be recommended.

Artistic Dismissal will be recommended if a student earns unacceptable grades that warrant dismissal according to the grading policies of the Department or if their artistic development still fails to meet expected results after Artistic Probation.

Because advanced concepts are often introduced in the second semester in most studio courses, it is necessary to allow for late faculty assessment. On occasion, a student may do well in early exercise work but struggle late in the training. In these cases a student may be placed directly on Artistic Probation.

### **Curricular and Training Core Grades**

Each discipline identifies what are to be considered Training Core and Curricular Core courses. For Theater majors, a grade of "F" in a Training Core course is grounds for dismissal. The first "C" in a Training Core course may result in Artistic Warning or Artistic Probation; the second "C" in a Training Core course is grounds for Artistic Dismissal.

## **Guide for Actors in the Professional Actor Training Program Theater Department**

Additionally, multiple “C” grades in Training Core courses within a semester is grounds for Artistic Dismissal. There are no grades of “D” in the Training Core courses. .

In the Curricular Core theater requirements, any “F” may result in dismissal. A Curricular Core theater requirement in which a “D” or “F” is received must be retaken and a grade of “C” or better must be achieved. A course may only be retaken once.

### **Evaluations:**

Evaluation meetings are normally scheduled during the seventh week of classes and during the exam week. Each student receives written notification of the result of the evaluation:

- the student is in good standing
- the student is being placed on Artistic Warning
- a student currently on Artistic Warning or Probation is advised whether the Artistic Warning or Probation will be continued or rescinded
- a student on Artistic Probation is dismissed from the program

The faculty is not required to use each step of this process in every case. If a student’s work shows a sudden, significant decline outside the normal review parameters, the faculty may put a student on probation without having issued a warning. In such cases, the faculty will advise the student of concerns and ways to address those concerns. In particularly severe cases, the faculty may recommend artistic dismissal. In such cases, the faculty will meet with the student and provide written notification of the concerns behind the recommendation. Artistic dismissal is subject to review by the Dean of the school.

### **Face-to-face Evaluations**

- At mid semester, students whose work warrants Artistic Warning will have a face-to-face evaluation with at least one faculty member to identify the program faculty’s concerns and advise the student on ways to improve their performance.
- At mid semester students whose work warrants Artistic Probation will have a face-to-face evaluation with the head of program and at least one other faculty representative
- At the end of the semester all students have a face-to-face evaluation.
  - A student being continued or placed on Artistic Warning or Probation will meet with the head of program and at least one representative of the faculty.
  - A student whose work warrants Artistic Dismissal will meet with their head of program and at least one representative of the faculty. They will advise the student of the faculty’s recommendation to dismiss.
  - A student whose progress warrants being removed from Artistic Warning or Artistic Probation will be notified

### **Advising the Student of Artistic Probation or Dismissal.**

If a student is being placed on Artistic Probation or is recommended for Artistic Dismissal, the student will be so advised by the Mason Gross Dean of Students based on a letter received from the Chairman of the Department of Theater. The Department Chairman’s recommendation is based on the recommendation of the faculty and head of program. Artistic Dismissal is subject to review by the Dean of the school.

## **Guide for Actors in the Professional Actor Training Program Theater Department**

### **BFA ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

If a student fails to achieve a minimum G.P.A., he/she is subject to Academic Dismissal.

BFA students dismissed for artistic reasons may request transfer to other departments of the Mason Gross School of the Arts or any other school at Rutgers whose admission requirements they meet. No guarantee of admission to another division or program can be given to students who have received an Artistic Dismissal, but the dean's office will assist students in completing the necessary transfer forms.

**Academic Review.** At the end of each semester, the school's Scholastic Standing Committee, composed of elected faculty and the dean of students, reviews the academic records of all students.

**Academic Probation.** Any student, including first-semester, first-year students, whose semester average is lower than 1.8 is placed on academic probation. Students are notified in writing of probationary status before the start of the next semester. While on academic probation, students must maintain full-time academic status and must successfully complete at least 12 credits per semester. (See also guidelines for Academic Dismissal.)

**Academic Dismissal.** There are no automatic dismissals for first-semester, first-year students. Students ordinarily are dismissed when their semester average is 1.4 or less, regardless of their cumulative grade-point average or preceding semester average. Students may also be dismissed if their semester average falls below probationary level in any three semesters or in any two consecutive semesters, or if their cumulative grade-point average at any time is less than the following: first year, 1.6; sophomore year, 1.8; junior year, 2.0; senior year 2.0.

**Appeal.** Students placed on academic probationary status may appeal in writing to the dean of students within one week of the date of the letter of probation. Grounds for appeal include technical error and/or changes in temporary grades. Letters of appeal must state the reasons for appeal and must be written by the student, although advice from others may be sought in formulating the appeal.

Students dismissed from the Mason Gross School of the Arts by the school's Scholastic Standing Committee for academic reasons may appeal by letter to the Office of the Dean within one week of notification of the decision. Grounds for appeal include technical error, extenuating circumstances, and/or additional information not previously available to the committee. The letter of appeal must state the reasons for the appeal and must be written by the student, although advice from others may be sought in formulating the appeal.

The Scholastic Standing Committee may determine that the student has presented evidence not previously available and sufficient to require the Scholastic Standing Committee to reconsider the academic case, or that insufficient evidence has been presented to justify further consideration of the appeal. At the student's and/or committee's request, a student may be present at the meeting of reconsideration, unaccompanied by advisor or attorney, to amplify upon his or her appeal request. The committee may reinstate the student who was dismissed for academic reasons, with or without conditions, or may deny the appeal. Some of the conditions for reinstatement include a term average of 2.0 or better and no incomplete grades. The committee also may define future courses to be completed. The committee notifies the student of its decision and any conditions within one week of reconsideration. Action by the committee is final.

**Readmission.** BFA students who have been dismissed from the school for academic reasons are not considered for readmission until they have given satisfactory evidence that they can further pursue academic work satisfactorily. Mason Gross School of the Arts normally requires that students improve their semester or cumulative grade-point average to a level that would have precluded dismissal action. This can be accomplished through work in the Rutgers Summer Session or by earning 12 to 15 credits at another accredited college or university. Each case is considered on its own merit. Students are not usually readmitted after a second dismissal action. Readmission is not automatic.

## **Guide for Actors in the Professional Actor Training Program Theater Department**

### **PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR IS AT ALL TIMES EXPECTED AND IS VITAL TO THE STANDARDS OF THIS PROGRAM.**

These standards include:

- Professional courtesy to instructors, directors, fellow students and technical crews.
- No disruptive behavior in class, i.e., talking out of turn, calling attention to yourself in inappropriate ways, making yourself more important than the company, or generally not contributing to the class in positive ways.
- Rehearsal and performance commitments must be kept without exception. This especially includes *rehearsals with exercise and scene partners for classroom work*.

Failure to achieve these standards is grounds for dismissal from the program at the discretion of the faculty.

Absences, lateness, lack of interest, unpreparedness, or lack of seriousness of purpose, as well as poor quality of work in classes or rehearsals, are grounds for dismissal. Dismissal is normally preceded by a probationary period. The faculty will notify the Dean of the specific problems that have led to the recommendation of probation, and specify the guidelines for improvement and the criteria for rescinding the probation. The Dean, after reviewing the case, will, if he is in agreement with the recommendation, notify the student that if the criteria rescinding the probation have not been met by the end of the specified period, the probation will be extended or the student will be dismissed.

In order to establish standards in the Professional Actor Training Program a system of written evaluations and grades will be used to reflect the standing of each student. Normally, a grade of “B” or better is required in all course work. Students who earn a grade of “C” in a core course are placed on artistic probation. A second grade of “C” in a core course is grounds for dismissal. A failing grade in any course results in academic dismissal.

MFA students may not graduate with more than 9 credits for courses in which “C” grades are earned.

The faculty reviews grades each term. Students may be required to terminate their studies and withdraw from MGSA if satisfactory academic or professional standards are not maintained in **any** phase of the program. Academic dismissal only may be appealed in writing to the Scholastic Committee of the Theater Arts Department.

There are three criteria by which the student is evaluated for grading purposes:

1. Application-commitment to the work; professional discipline regarding attendance at all classes, all rehearsals, tutorials, and conferences; quality of participation and presence in classes, rehearsals, tutorials, conferences, etc.
2. Improvement-the degree to which the student has progressed over time of evaluation.
3. Achievement-how the student’s work measures up to the high and demanding standards of the Conservatory.

**Grades in the “A” Group** (“A+”, “A”) would be given to reflect that the student is working hard, demonstrating commitment and showing excellent improvement; producing work that is among the best in the class.

**Grades in the “B” Group** (“B+”, “B”) would be given to reflect that the student is working hard, showing good improvement and producing work that demonstrates commitment, comprehension, and skills that are acceptable to the standards of the program.

**Grades in the “C” Group** (“C+”, “C”) would be given to reflect the range when the student is: (1) applying himself/herself and showing some improvement (C+), or (2) either fully applying himself/herself or not fully applying himself/herself and showing only minimal improvement; producing work that does not measure up to the high standards of the Conservatory (C).



**Guide for Actors in the Professional Actor Training Program  
Theater Department**

**Grade of “D”** There is no grade of D at Mason Gross School of the Arts

**Grade of “F”** would be given to reflect that the student is not attending classes regularly and/or is producing work that shows no improvement and that does not measure up to the standards of the Conservatory.

**Important Note:**

Students are not permitted to leave campus at the end of any semester until completion of all work and a face-to-face evaluation with his/her primary Acting teacher.

**A Note about the London Program:**

Students in good academic standing and not on Artistic Probation are invited to attend the Rutgers Conservatory at Shakespeare’s Globe. The basic policies, procedures and requirements cited in the Rutgers Catalogue apply to the London Program as well. A student who commits an infraction of the policies and/or fails to live up to the academic, artistic and attendance requirements will be dismissed from the program and flown home.

**All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to behave in an ethical and moral fashion, respecting the human dignity of all members of the community and resisting behavior that may cause danger or harm to others through violence, theft or bigotry. All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to adhere to the civil and criminal laws of whichever local community, state and nation they find themselves in, and to all regulations promulgated by Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF GUIDE IS ON A SEPARATE PAGE.**