

Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama

Handbook for Students and Advisors

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Part I: General Information

1. MISSION STATEMENT

The Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama is a cross-school program involving faculty from the Performing Arts, and Humanities, Social Sciences. We train outstanding students for lifetime careers both within and beyond the academy, emphasizing the simultaneous development of intellectual excellence in scholarship with pedagogical skills. We seek students with exceptional promise as researchers who may also have backgrounds in theatre, dance, and performance-making in order to examine such performance from multi- and inter-disciplinary perspectives. Each student works with a committee unique to their interests and, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies and advisors, designs a program of study incorporating theatre, dance, or performance research with one or more other fields. “Interdisciplinary research” can involve the use of theoretical tools with previously untried evidence, combinations of methodologies, and intersections of social history with theatrical events spanning a wide range of national, historical, and contemporary contexts. Every student negotiates this uniquely, depending upon their background, academic goals, and the needs of their research projects.

This philosophy is implemented on a practical level by taking course work in various departments, drawing upon faculty and research resources in theatre studies and other areas, and conducting research that utilizes the materials, methods, and theories associated with more than one discipline. Every student negotiates this uniquely, depending upon his/her background, academic goals, and the needs of his/her research projects. Mentoring is integral at all phases of conception and implementation.

2. WHAT IS “INTERDISCIPLINARITY”?

IPTD, housed in the Department of Theatre, is a cross-school program including faculty and course work from the School of Communications and the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. The interdisciplinary nature of the program means that students can choose classes and work with professors from any department in the School of Communication or the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. Early in their studies, students identify the combination of fields best suited to their own research interests and intended dissertation. They are then advised to find appropriate courses and mentors to help them develop corresponding expertise. Sometimes this involves taking courses from an existing department or program at Northwestern (such as Musicology, History, Performance Studies, or Sociology). Other times, it involves a more esoteric or emergent combination (such as anthrozoology, globalization/ circulation theory, or reception studies) that is non-departmental or programmatic. In instances of these more esoteric fields, students may develop independent studies with an appropriate faculty member (see [Section 4.3](#)). Every case is unique, which allows the program to be flexible to the needs of students’ research and responsive to developments in academic study internationally.

Projects that come from this interdisciplinary curriculum vary, and students have combined a range of scholarly inquiries into their work, such as historical studies of popular performance, theorizations of stage presence and liveness, and critical analyses of national and trans-national theatrical traditions. Recent projects include Black Liberation drama; dance scoring in postmodern dance; the politics of gender in the performance modes of North Korean propaganda operas; post-Soviet Russian theatre; nation, race, and community in African-American funerary commemorations; Zimbabwean theatre for development; spatial and labor practices in Toronto theatre; new media adaptations of Shakespeare; and sonic modernity in the theatrical avant-garde. These are just a few indicative instances of the expansive range of scholarship topics emanating from students in this program. Investigative paradigms from traditional literary or theatre historical perspectives are welcome, as are interventions from performance theory, a wide range of critical theory, social science fields, and the whole spectrum of arts and the humanities.

The Graduate School's (TGS) Interdisciplinary Clusters provide additional ways to formally structure and facilitate interdisciplinary work, collaborations, and connections "between doctoral students and faculty who have natural intellectual affinities yet may not be in the same department or program." As the TGS website explains, "clusters exist in a variety of emergent research areas, new disciplinary configurations, and unique synergistic collaborations among scientists, engineers, humanists, and social scientists." Currently, the clusters offered through the humanities and non-quantitative social sciences include African Studies, Asian Studies, British Studies, Classics, Comparative and Historical Social Science, Comparative Race and Diaspora, Critical Studies in Theatre and Performance, Critical Theory, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Global Avant-garde and Modernist Studies, Jewish Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Medieval Studies, Middle East and North African Studies, Poetry and Poetics, Rhetoric and Public Culture, and Social Sciences. As it says on the TGS website:

Humanities and qualitative social science students affiliate with Mellon clusters by two routes: a few receive fellowships upon matriculation, while many more opt into the clusters as their research interests coalesce. Clusters coordinate a three-course requirement which is optional for affiliates. Many clusters also offer five-course [certificates](#) which appear on graduates' transcripts.

All IPTD students are automatically part of the Critical Studies in Theatre & Performance cluster. It is worth noting that while clusters give many students at TGS the opportunity to work with professors and students outside of their discipline, students of the IPTD program will wind up doing this whether they join an additional cluster or not, since the program assumes interdisciplinary coursework and collaboration. More information can be found [here](#).

3. PERSONNEL

3.1 The Director of Graduate Study

The Director is a faculty member appointed by the Deans of the School of Communication and the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. The Director is the students' de facto advisor for their first year. Students meet with the Director regularly to discuss courses, goals, and progress. The Director will also be the students' de facto advisor for the beginning of the second year, as they identify dissertation committees. Once the student selects a dissertation committee chair, that person will replace the Director of Graduate Study as the student's advisor. The Director's other responsibilities include chairing the Executive Committee (see [Section 3.3](#)); liaising with departments and relevant faculty (see [Section 3.2](#)); convening colloquia and professional development workshops (see [Section 7.3](#)); coordinating the review of applicants and recruitment of new students; administering the program's budget; assigning students' teaching and research assistantship responsibilities (see [Section 9](#)); and other routine matters.

3.2 Associate Faculty and Dissertation Committees

Associate Faculty can be chosen from throughout The Graduate School of Northwestern University and are eligible to chair (a.k.a. direct or supervise) dissertations. At least two (of three) dissertation committee members must be on the Associate Faculty. Students are encouraged to think about the widest possible range of suitable faculty for course work, advising, and supervision of research, seeking expertise in their topical area(s), methodology, and theoretical approach. Multi-disciplinary involvement is the norm.

3.3 The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of five to seven Associate Faculty members, inclusive of the Director, who chairs the committee, and two students plus an alternate (see [Section 3.4](#)). Faculty members of the Executive Committee are chosen and invited by the Director annually. The Executive Committee is responsible for review of students' progress; derivation and implementation of policy; admissions; and other routine matters advisory to the Director. Faculty members are drawn equally from the School of Communication and the Weinberg College of Arts and Science, the two oversight bodies for the program, but may also include members from other areas of the university. A range of expertise is ideal. Faculty may serve for multiple years.

3.4 Student Representatives to the Executive Committee

An Executive Committee Policy on Student Representation (passed in December 1997) specifies that each year two student representatives, chosen by vote or consensus from among the current PhD students, will serve on the IPTD Executive Committee. In order to represent the broadest range of graduate experience possible, it is recommended that one student be pre-candidacy and one student be post-candidacy. A third (alternate) representative may also be designated. Nominees will identify themselves and elections will be held via hand-count during IPTD's annual Welcome Week (orientation) meeting.

Student representatives to the Executive Committee will be notified in advance of all Executive Committee meetings by the Director and will attend all pertinent meetings. Each representative will be a full participating and voting member on all matters coming before the committee, except in discussions pertaining to admission, evaluation, and funding recommendations of prospective or current students. Student representatives may contribute items for the Executive Committee's agenda. The student representative alternate attends when other students cannot.

The responsibilities of these students are as follows: to consult with all students registered in the program and report to them on the business of the Executive Committee; to canvas and contribute the views of the graduate students to all relevant discussion; to assist the Director in recruiting new students; to promote student involvement in all aspects of the Program's activities; and to serve in other capacities as the need arises.

Part II: For Students and Applicants

4. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

4.1 The Advising Schedule and Reviews

First- and second-year students must meet with the Director at least once per quarter (or more often, if deemed desirable) to discuss progress, air any concerns, and plan the course of study. Once students have passed their qualifying exams, advising is shared between the Director, chair of the dissertation committee (see [Section 5.2](#)), and other committee members, as needed. However, students are strongly encouraged to meet at least twice per year with the Director to review progress.

4.2 End of Year Reviews

First-year students and any others who have not yet passed the qualifying exam must submit end-of-year review materials for review by the Executive Committee on or before May 15 on the [Graduate Student Tracking System \(GSTS\)](#). This consists of a expository explanation of progress during the past year and goals for the next year. This is reviewed in conjunction with the student's transcript and written or oral evaluations from faculty. The Executive Committee will review the plans of study, grades, quality of work, rationale for course choices, progress toward the dissertation, and graduate assistantship productivity. In some cases, a sample essay from a recent class may be requested. Based on these materials, the Executive Committee can recommend a) continuation in the program, b) conditional continuation in the program, or c) discontinuation from the program. The results of the Executive Committee discussion will be communicated in writing to the student. Students may meet with the Director to discuss these results. Should it become an issue of the student's continuing in the program, the usual appeals procedures apply (see [here](#)).

4.3 Core Courses

There are six required core courses. They emphasize a breadth of historical coverage as well as significant methodological inquiry into historical and theoretical practices. All students take TH&DRAMA 501: Research Methods and Methodologies as soon as possible within the first two years of course work. (The class is typically offered every other year.) In the winter of their second year, students also take TH&DRAMA 502: Research Design and Prospectus, in which they draft the dissertation prospectus. Beyond that, all students are required to take at least one approved 400-level or 500-level course in each of the following areas: European theatre and drama prior to 1650; European theatre and drama after 1650; performance theory; and theatre and drama of the Americas, Africa, and/or Asia. In some cases, the Director may suggest or require additional courses in consultation with individual students.

Courses satisfying these requirements must be taken with the prior approval of the Director, and students should consult with the Director to ensure that their courses meet the requirements. In addition to departmental classes that fulfill these requirements, courses taught in other departments by Associate Faculty members may be taken to satisfy part of this requirement with the Director's prior approval. In recent years this has included such courses as Medieval and Renaissance drama, history of opera, and Greek theatre. Other options include arranging with professors of 300-level classes to adjust the syllabus for you so that you can take it as a graduate-level course, or arranging an independent study project (TH 499) with an appropriate faculty member. All modified 300-level courses and independent studies must be approved by the Director.

4.4 Other Coursework

In addition to core courses, students will take additional coursework to help them prepare for the dissertation. It is to be expected that some courses will be of primary use in honing the skills necessary for advanced graduate study: critical reading, thorough research, and concise and persuasive writing. Further coursework may deepen a student's knowledge of a particular subject, time period, theoretical area, research method, or other component of their research topic. Because of the wide range of topics and multiple disciplinary approaches in which IPTD students engage, it may be uncommon for students to find courses that deal precisely with their area of inquiry. Students are encouraged to look in many departments and to be creative and proactive about finding courses and/or professors engaging in relevant areas of expertise. It may yield useful course options to ask for references from other students and professors, research faculty members online and through their publications, reach out to professors, and even peruse the undergraduate catalog. Another useful site is the Department of English home page, which lists graduate and undergraduate (some of which can be taken for graduate credit) for the full year. See [here](#).

When other alternatives are exhausted, an independent study (TH 499) with an appropriate faculty member may be an option (see [Section 7.2](#))

4.5 Summers

Students are funded through the summer months and are expected to make substantial progress toward the dissertation each summer quarter. This may consist of bibliographic preparation and readings; travel to archives or other research sites; contact with research subjects; participation at conferences; language acquisition; preparation for exams; or writing of the dissertation.

Students must account for their plans annually and report on progress during their first meeting with the Director in the fall during Welcome Week.

5. PROGRESS THROUGH THE PROGRAM

5.1 Year One Milestones

- In year one, students take nine course credits (three per quarter) that explore topical, disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological experience relevant to the anticipated dissertation field(s). This may include TH&DRAMA 501 (if offered) and other Core classes. Satisfactory work in classes must be accompanied by growing clarity about the dissertation topic and approach.
- First-year students should take steps to prepare themselves to teach by attending sessions sponsored by the Searle Center for Teaching Excellence and/or IPTD, observing classes, and reading about pedagogy (the Searle Center maintains an extensive library).
- The first summer is usually devoted to developing bibliographies, reading toward possible exam fields, and, if needed, foreign language acquisition; however field or archival visits are appropriate.
- First-year students serve as Research Assistants to a faculty member, often a member of the Executive Committee, during the winter and spring quarters (by assignment of the Director; these may be different faculty members). This provides experience in some aspect of academic work (e.g. editing, bibliographic research, pedagogical preparation, literature review, data analysis, or writing-up of results) in a close mentorship model with a member of the Associate Faculty. The following table outlines the basic obligations of an RA-ship for both the student and the faculty advisor.

Guidelines for Research Assistants (RAs) and their Advisors in Humanities & Non-Quantitative Social Science Fields

Best Practices to Calibrate Expectations and Responsibilities

(Issued Summer 2013)

<i>The faculty advisor undertakes to...</i>	<i>The student RA undertakes to...</i>
Select a specific project and duties that contribute to the student's education. This may be within any of the academic realms of research (e.g. organization and project management, data gathering and/or analysis, writing and/or publication), teaching (curriculum design or evaluation, pedagogical innovation, exploration of new technology), or service (especially assistance with professional organizations or journals).	Approach the research assistantship as a learning experience, seeking clarification as to the expectations and benefits of engagement with the project and its applicability to academic protocols, roles, and expectations.
Provide an overview of the project at the beginning of the quarter, detailing what is expected of the student, a timeline, how the student will contribute to the project, and how the student's efforts will contribute to her/his professional development.	Manage the assigned responsibilities along with other academic work, keeping to deadlines and problem-solving with the supervisor when adjustments seem necessary.
Meet regularly with the student.	Meet regularly with the faculty supervisor.
Scale the student's contribution to an average of 12-15 hours per week, recognizing academic expectations of the student during the quarter.	Fulfill the commitment of 12-15 hours per week (averaged over the quarter) on this project.
Discuss possibilities for coauthored research with student.	

5.2 Year Two Milestones

- In year two, students take nine course credits (three per quarter), including any Core classes not taken in the first year.
- TA assignments (3 quarters) are geared to give students a wide range of experience—i.e. in different departments, kinds of classes, and pedagogical situations—that prepare them to run small-group discussions and take responsibility for undergraduates' education. Typically, students act as TAs for courses (particularly Theatre 140-1). RA assignments may be substituted, according to departmental needs. In specific cases, second year students may teach a full course, by invitation of the department chair and with the approval of the Director.
- Major activities in year two include planning the dissertation, writing the prospectus (see [Section 6](#)), identifying a dissertation committee, and preparing for the qualifying examination (see Section 7.3).
- Each student will create a plan for reading lists, exam dates, and research needs for the dissertation in consultation with the dissertation committee.

- Students take their qualifying exams (see Section 7) at the end of year two or the beginning of year three for admission to candidacy (see Section 7.5).
- Although not required, students are encouraged to serve as dramaturgs for productions at the [Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts](#). Guidelines can be found on the [IPTD Resources](#) page on Canvas.

Choosing a Chair and Committee

The dissertation chair and committee are chosen in consultation with the Director. The chair is generally chosen early in the year, other committee members should be confirmed well in advance of scheduling exams. If difficulties arise, students may consult with the Director or any member of the Executive Committee (see [IPTD Leadership](#)) for advice. Students should be on the lookout throughout their course work for potential dissertation chairs suited to their research needs and personal temperament. A good working relationship of scholarly rigor, interpersonal trust, and mutual respect is critical. It is inappropriate for faculty to “lobby” students to choose them as chairs or committee members. However, friendly, constructive, and supportive feedback on work may be taken as a sign of confidence from faculty members. In some cases, the student is ready to select a dissertation chair late in year one. When the student is ready, he or she must ask the intended professor to be their Dissertation chair. If the answer is yes, the student must report it to the Director of Graduate Studies.

5.3 Year Three Milestones

- By the end of fall quarter, most students have passed their qualifying exam and advanced to candidacy.
- In the quarter that students take their qualifying exams, the program acknowledges the intense workload of preparing for exams by giving students the option of reducing the total required graduate assistantship hours for that quarter from a maximum of 150 hours to a maximum of 75.
- Students on Graduate Assistantships normally teach for two additional quarters in the third year, depending on departmental needs. The purpose of this assignment is to design and implement a syllabus for a first-year Theatre course.
- Students are expected to make substantial progress on the dissertation, i.e. conducting research, traveling to archives or field sites, and beginning to write up results.
- As the dissertation’s needs are clarified, students determine what funding will be needed to enable the work, identify internal and external fellowships and grants for which they will be eligible, and develop a plan for seeking additional support. This plan may be modified regularly, however it frames some of the activities anticipated in the subsequent years until completion of the dissertation and graduation.
- Normally, students present at conferences by their third year. The timing is dependent upon readiness to present research results.

5.4 Year Four and Five Milestones

- Students normally teach on Graduate Assistantships in years four and five. Typically, this involves greater responsibility than the third year's assignments and may include teaching upper-division Theatre classes. These assignments are meant to serve students as important opportunities towards job placement. Assignments are determined by the Director in consultation with departments.
- Students are afforded a total of 3 non-teaching quarters post-candidacy (in addition to summers). This is usually taken as a fellowship year in year 4 but must be determined in conjunction with the Director and the student's advisor.
- Further progress, and if possible, completion, of the dissertation is expected in the fourth or fifth year (see [Section 8](#)).

Part III: For Students and Advisors

6. DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS

The dissertation prospectus should be no more than 12-15 double-spaced pages, plus a bibliography and reading lists. The prospectus should include the following elements, usually in this order:

TITLE — Emphasize key topics to be addressed.

PREMISE — State in a paragraph the premise or hypothesis of the study.

SCOPE—Explain the parameters of the study and the rationale for these choices or limitations (e.g. temporal, geographical, and topical).

JUSTIFICATION — Argue the significance of the study in light of previous scholarship, including other dissertations.

THEORETICAL APPROACH/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK/METHOD — Explain and justify the proposed methods of research and analysis.

RESOURCES — Describe required resources, their location and accessibility describe any already examined, including other logistical considerations, e.g., “Peter Brook has given me unlimited access to rehearsals (letter attached),” or “the Gulbenkian Foundation has promised funding to support field research in Knossos (letter attached).”

CHAPTER OUTLINE — Indicate the units or steps in the argument or study, with some estimate of the scope and length for each.

DISSERTATION BIBLIOGRAPHY — Provide a working bibliography of relevant sources already consulted and those that will need to be consulted. Do not prepare an unselective bibliography of the sort that is generated by computerized subject searches.

EXAMINATION READING LISTS — Use headings to identify the fields covered by the reading list. In some cases it will be useful to separate primary from secondary literature to be covered in the examination; in others this distinction may be unnecessary or irrelevant. The student and committee will come to an agreement on the appropriate range of the examination, number of texts to appear on the reading lists, specific titles, and scope of the exam’s various parts. Three (or sometimes four) exam fields must be delineated.

Recent examples:

<p>On Devising with Assertive Objects <i>Exam fields:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puppetry, Materiality, Object Agency, and Objects in the Archive • Dance and Circus • Devising, Design, and Scenography 	<p>Technological Wonder: The Theatrical Fashioning of Scientific Knowledge, 1838-1905 <i>Exam fields:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19th Century Theater and History • Aesthetic Theory: Wonder, Magic, and Film • History of Science and Technology
<p>Witnessing Recovery: A Cognitive Perspective on War and Performance in Contemporary American Theatre <i>Exam fields:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Theory and Criticism • Cognitive Science and Learning Sciences • Applied Theatre and Theatre for Social Change 	<p>Buying and Selling Theatrical Dance in a Globalized Marketplace <i>Exam fields:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociology and the Arts • Performing Arts Structures and Economics • Dance Modernism
<p>Performing Democracy: The Gwangju Uprising and the Politics of Mourning in South Korea, 1980-2017 <i>Exam fields:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance and Politics & Korean Theatre and Performance • Theatre and Performance Historiography: Theatre, Performance, Politics, and the Body • Critical Theory on Politics, Memory, Mourning, and Space 	<p>Resituating Past Performance: Choreographic Haunting and The Afterlife of Dance <i>Exam fields:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernism/Post-Modernism Transition/Schism, US Experimental Performance • Performance Theory: Temporality, Historiography, and Spectatorship • Dance Notation, Documentation, and Issues in Choreographic Transmission
<p>Stereotypes at the Mic: Jewish Female Standup Comics and Identity Formation <i>Exam fields:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historiography of 20th Century Jewish American Performance • Humor and Comedy Theory • Jewish Ethnicity/Whiteness in America • Theatre and Social Change 	<p>Choreographing Alternative Africanness: Contemporary Dance in Senegal and Beyond <i>Exam fields:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemporary Dance by African and African Diaspora Choreographers • Postcolonial and Transnational Perspectives of Contemporary African Cultural Production • Theories and Practice of Critical Performance/Dance Ethnography

Disarticulated Bodies: Performing Catalan National Identity (1975-2014)

Exam fields:

- 20th Century Catalan (Theatre) History
- Collective and Collected National Memories
- Puppets, Masks, and Disarticulated Bodies

Entrance Forbidden to the Yiddish Theatre: Performance and Prostitution in Buenos Aires, 1900-1939

Exam fields:

- Jewish and Transnational Theatre Histories, 1900-1939
- Theatre and Sex
- Argentine Culture and History, 1900-1930

7. THE QUALIFYING EXAM

The qualifying exam is normally taken either at the end of spring Quarter in year two or during fall Quarter in year three. Students who have not successfully completed the exam by the end of spring Quarter in year three will be placed on probation. The format of the qualifying examination involves three 3-hour written sessions, followed by a conference (oral exam) with the examining committee (usually the same as the dissertation committee) after they have read the written parts.

Since students in the IPTD often work closely with faculty who may be unfamiliar with the procedures of this program, below is a brief outline of the qualifying examination. Students and faculty should feel free to call the Director of the program with any questions.

7.1 Purpose

The function of the qualifying examination is to test a student's competence in the special areas that frame the dissertation. In IPTD, the examination explores areas that provide relevant contexts for the dissertation, as conceived by the student in consultation with his/her committee. For this reason, the student is required to develop both the dissertation and the areas for the qualifying examination in tandem. Although some departments use the qualifying examination to develop a student's familiarity with broad general fields, the IPTD generally asks that the examination fields be made specifically relevant to the scope of dissertation research and the student's intended teaching fields.

7.2 Timetable

Students who enter IPTD with a master's degree are encouraged to take the qualifying examination during the spring quarter of their second year of study at Northwestern or early in fall quarter of the third year. Students who enter the program with a bachelor's degree only are encouraged to take the examination as soon as possible, preferably either the spring quarter of the second year or the fall quarter of the third year. TGS 500: Advanced Doctoral Study may not be taken until the six quarters of residency requirement has been met and the student has advanced to candidacy; summer coursework does not count toward this requirement.

TH 590 and TH 499

Depending on the circumstances, students may register for TH 499: Independent Study or TH 590: Research (aka “Reading Credit”) to help support writing the prospectus and examination lists. TH 590 is a non-directed, self-supervised reading, whereas TH 499 is an independent study supervised by a faculty member. 499s must have student developed syllabi specifying the course’s objectives, reading assignments, and expectations for evaluation (such as essays, weekly study questions, etc.) approved by the faculty supervisor. 499s receive a grade and usually involve weekly meetings between student and instructor.

TH 590 may be taken for up to three course units per quarter, although students generally register for no more than two units of 590 in any given quarter. Students may take no more than five 590 and 499 units combined before taking their qualifying examination. This is a flexible guideline, however, and students are encouraged to discuss the merits of 590 and 499 registration with the Director of the program. Students may be counseled to register for 590 when they are fully capable of reading and understanding an area critical to their dissertation research, whereas 499 is a more appropriate designation when a specialized interlocutor will be needed for the student to gain a working knowledge of the material.

Note: A student entering IPTD without a Master’s, or a student hoping to earn an additional Master’s degree, cannot take TH 590 prior to advancing to candidacy.

7.3 Procedure and Committee

Students work with their peers and the instructor of the Research Design and Dissertation Prospectus class (TH&DRAMA 502) in the winter quarter of their second year to develop a prospectus draft. Students also determine their dissertation chair and committee in conjunction with the prospectus class. Throughout the class, students share and receive feedback on their prospectus with their peers, the prospectus class instructor, and advisor (either the DGS who serves as students’ default advisor or the student’s dissertation chair once that decision has been made).

Once students have identified the field of dissertation inquiry, they begin to identify members of the faculty with whom to work. Normally three of these faculty members will become the supervising committee. There is also the possibility of additional committee members. The chairperson of the committee must be a member of the IPTD Associate Faculty and a tenured or tenure-track member of the graduate faculty. In general, the two additional members of the committee are invited after consultation between the student, the dissertation chair, and the Director. The two additional members must be tenured or tenure-track faculty, and at least one of them must be an Associate Faculty member of the program. Additional members of the committee from within or without the University may be added. The responsibility for making such arrangements is shared by the chair of the dissertation committee and the Director of the program.

Once a committee chair has been determined, the student works with the chairperson and committee members in further developing the dissertation prospectus, the dissertation bibliography, and the examination reading lists. In some cases, the chair and student will prefer to bring the prospectus and exam lists to a certain level of completion before bringing them to other members of the committee; in other cases, the committee members will all be involved from the beginning.

While the prospectus and bibliography provide a working account of the planned dissertation, the examination reading lists identify relevant contexts for the qualifying examination. Examination fields should be made pertinent to the scope of dissertation research. The examination is given in three sessions, but the student is not limited to three reading lists: the student and committee may decide to devote two exam sessions to one large area and a third session to a third narrower area, or there may be a fourth area that splits time with another exam list. The examination lists will to some extent duplicate the dissertation bibliography; while shorter in length, the examination lists are wider in scope than the dissertation bibliography. Students should consult approved examination lists on the [IPTD Resources](#) page on Canvas.

The dissertation committee will read and approve the dissertation prospectus, dissertation bibliography, and examination reading lists. By May 15, the student will submit a copy of these documents to the Executive Committee for final approval. In many cases the Executive Committee recommends some alterations and revisions. If a dissertation prospectus, dissertation bibliography, and examination reading list has been approved by the dissertation chair but not the dissertation committee at the close of the academic year, the Director may present the materials to the Executive Committee for conditional approval (approval on the condition that any suggested alterations are incorporated and that the revised prospectus, bibliography, and reading lists are approved by the dissertation committee).

Once the prospectus, bibliography, and examination reading lists have been approved by the Executive Committee, the examination may be administered, though exam dates are often scheduled before the prospectus, bibliography, and examination reading lists have been approved. The dissertation committee members submit questions to the dissertation chair, who then compiles the examination and submits a copy to the IPTD Program Assistant. The student may then pick up examination questions from the Program Assistant on each day of the exam.

7.4 Conduct of the Examination

The student and committee agree on when the examination will be taken and on a date for the oral component of the exam, usually 7-10 days following the written portion. The student notifies the IPTD Program Assistant and Director of these dates; the Program Assistant and the student determine where the examination and the oral defense will be given. The student is responsible for booking these spaces and for informing the Director and Program Assistant of the scheduled time and location for the exam. After consulting with the other members of the

committee, the dissertation chair solicits and determines examination questions, and forwards the questions to the Program Assistant in advance of the examination.

The examination is given in three 3-hour units (scheduled over three successive mornings or afternoons). Students who so request may take two parts of the exam on one day, however this is not generally recommended. Students may not consult notes, books, or computer files during the exam, nor may they connect to the web. The University's and Graduate School's Policy on Academic Integrity is strictly applied and contravention will constitute automatic failure of the exam. Students are responsible for arranging use of a space in which to take the exams with the Program Assistant, and for bringing or securing their own computer on which to take the exams. At the end of each exam session, the student emails their answers to the Program Assistant.

After each session, the Program Assistant will email the student's answers to the examination committee: each member of the committee reads the entire examination. At the oral defense, students may be asked to comment further on answers given during the written session as well as to answer other questions arising from the examination lists and the dissertation prospectus.

The qualifying examination committee is responsible for evaluating the student's performance on all areas—written and oral—of the qualifying examination, and for deciding whether the student has passed or failed the examination. In most cases, the committee comes to a consensus on whether the student has passed the examination; in rare cases when consensus cannot be reached, the chair will call for a vote, and the majority will carry. Although it is difficult to specify in the abstract what constitutes a passing or a failing examination, passing examinations generally engage the questions asked, develop a sufficiently sophisticated critical argument in answering the questions, reveal an awareness of important critical or historical or theoretical contexts of the questions, and bring relevant detail to bear in the answers. Part of the committee's conversation about the examination may include discussion of the prospectus, and how well prepared the student seems to be to undertake the work of the dissertation itself.

7.5 Admission to Candidacy

After the prospectus has been officially approved by the dissertation committee and by the Executive Committee, and after successful completion of the qualifying examination at the end of the second or in the third year of study, students are eligible for formal admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree. Procedures are described [here](#).

IPTD students must achieve candidacy by the end of spring Quarter of their third year or will cease to be eligible for financial support and will be placed on academic probation.

7.6 Unsatisfactory Performance on the Qualifying Examination

In the event of failing examination, the examining committee should follow the following procedure.

The examination committee (usually consisting of the same people as the dissertation committee) makes a written report to the Executive Committee and to the student, outlining its evaluation of the student's examination: strengths and weaknesses, reasons for failing the examination, and rationale for permitting or not permitting a retake examination. Examinations are retaken in their entirety; the Executive Committee will also indicate whether the student should be asked to respond to the same questions as on the first examination or whether new questions will be raised. The Executive Committee will consider the examination committee's negative recommendation in light of the student's overall performance in IPTD. It will consult both with the committee and with the student in such a way that all parties can explain and amplify their judgment of the situation. The student will be given ample opportunity to respond to the examining committee's recommendation, and to provide the Executive Committee with any additional information bearing on his/her performance in the examination. In some cases the student may be interviewed by the Director of the program; in others by members of the Executive Committee or by the entire committee. The examining committee, or members of the examining committee, may also be interviewed by the Director and/or the Executive Committee. In cases where the Director and/or member of the Executive Committee are also on the examining committee, The Director will appoint a subcommittee—drawn from the Executive Committee and/or from the Associate Faculty—to consult with the student and with the examining committee, and to report to the Executive Committee. After consulting with the student and with the examining committee, the Executive Committee will vote on whether to extend permission to write a retake examination to the student. Members of the student's examining committee who are also on the Executive Committee are ineligible to vote in this matter.

If the Executive Committee does not approve a retake examination, the student is recorded as having failed the examination in accordance with Graduate School regulations, dismissal from the program will ensue. Appeals may be directed to The Graduate School—see [here](#).

8. WRITING THE DISSERTATION

Once students are admitted to candidacy, progress toward the degree will depend very much on their own pace and initiative. In writing the dissertation, students will be guided by their committee, who will be advisors in the process of research and composition as well as judges of the final product. Students are strongly encouraged to complete their dissertations by the end of their fifth year. Some students will take part or all of an additional year to finish. If the student wishes to request an additional year of funding, they should submit a projected timeline for completion, a narrative of their progress, and an outline of their success at receiving outside funding to the Director by the first day of spring quarter. Sixth-year funding is not typically

granted by TGS unless the student has “banked” funding quarters (up to 4) by being awarded an external fellowship or a TGS [Interdisciplinary Graduate Assistantship](#).

It is useful to think of the prospectus as a memorandum of understanding between the student and the committee about the dissertation. The prospectus is not a contract specifying provisions to be fulfilled. The student will undoubtedly change his or her mind on many aspects as work proceeds, and the committee members will accept this as natural. At the same time, students must seek their committee’s advice and approval if they envision substantial departures from the topic, scope, or method of the original proposal. The committee, at their discretion, may require an amended prospectus. Such formal revision of the prospectus is especially important if the student intends to reduce the scope of the dissertation, delete authors and topics, or make significant changes in data gathering or the coverage and treatment of secondary literature. It is the student’s responsibility to keep the committee informed of what they are doing and to make sure that the dissertation is a realization of plans that the committee has had a chance to ponder and approve.

Formally, the student’s communication with the committee will be through the dissertation advisor, who chairs the committee and has the major responsibility for supervising progress. It is the chair's responsibility to make sure that the parts of the dissertation are presented to the committee in a sufficiently coherent and substantial form to permit evaluation and advice. No member of the committee is required to read any part of the dissertation until it has been reviewed by the chair.

While the dissertation chair has the leading role as advisor, all members of the committee are equal judges of the final product, and each member must certify by his or her signature that he or she is willing to accept work as meeting the standards for a doctoral dissertation in the program.

Within this framework, it will be up to the student to develop a relationship with the committee that will work best for the dissertation. Some candidates will work mainly with the chair, and other members of the committee will serve primarily in a review function. There may be other cases in which interests and expertise on the committee are balanced in such a way that all members are actively involved at all stages of the dissertation. Whatever particular relationship develop, it will be important for students to solicit the committee's criticism and advice on the bulk of the dissertation sufficiently early to take full advantage of it.

8.1 Changes in the Supervising Committee

A student who is dissatisfied with their dissertation advisor or a reader has the right to request a change from the Executive Committee. Similarly, an advisor or reader may request to be released from this obligation.

If a member of the committee leaves the University or resigns from a committee, the Director will appoint a replacement after consultation, subject to the approval of the Executive

Committee. If a student would like a faculty member who has left the University to continue on their committee and the faculty member is willing, the Executive Committee will normally comply with the request if the dissertation is well underway. In exceptional circumstances, a student may also be permitted to continue working with a dissertation chair who has left the University. Such a decision requires the explicit consent of the Dean of The Graduate School.

8.2 Expectations for Completing the Dissertation

Committee members have an obligation to read chapters or sections of the dissertation within three weeks of receipt. Students can make it easier for faculty to do so if they give them advance warning. If a student plans to hand in an entire dissertation at once, they must give allow committee members a month to read; advance notice of pending submission is appreciated.

Committee members also have an obligation to read a dissertation while they are on leave (with appropriate allowances in extending the three-week rule for those who are out of the country). Faculty members are under no obligation to do any reading or other supervisory work during the summer months.

The Graduate School regulations concerning formatting and electronic submission of dissertations are stated in [dissertation formatting guidebook](#) and the [Northwestern ETD Administrator](#), and must be adhered to.

It is hoped that students will never have a need to worry about The Graduate School regulations concerning time limits for the PhD, let alone the provision for an extension. Students should be aware, however, that these rules are firmly administered. The maximum time limit for completion of the degree is nine years from matriculation into the program. More information can be found [here](#).

8.3 Oral Defense of the Dissertation

A student's last act as a degree candidate will be the defense of the dissertation at an oral examination. This is a 2-3 hour exam where the committee raises questions and concerns, which students must satisfactorily answer (see [Section 8.4](#)). Students are responsible for scheduling a room in which to conduct the defense, under the advisement of their committee, and for notifying the Program Assistant and Director in advance of the defense date and time. Following a successful defense, the dissertation is submitted to The Graduate School in conformity with the guidelines stipulated [here](#).

8.4 Timing and the Dissertation

Students finishing the PhD sometimes do not understand what is involved in completion and how much time the last stages take. This is an attempt to explain the last steps. This section should be reviewed in conjunction with The Graduate School's [written guidelines](#).

While writing the dissertation

Normally, one's dissertation advisor reads each chapter as it is completed and gives feedback directly to the student. When additional expertise is needed, other members of the committee may be consulted, but the chair is the primary contact throughout the writing phase.

When the entire dissertation is drafted

Once the dissertation is fully drafted, the student submit will the full document to their advisor. The advisor will then review it as a self-contained document, to evaluate whether it fits together as a whole, refers to the entire range of pertinent literature, maintains consistent writing style, and develops a cohesive argument. Advisors will generally return feedback by the end of three weeks, though extraneous circumstances may lengthen that period. It is best to alert faculty before sending them a major amount to read, so that they can anticipate it in their schedule.

Getting ready for the defense

Once the advisor has read the entire dissertation, and agrees it is substantially defensible, the student will submit the full draft to their other committee members. Once the student receives advisor approval, the student may contact the other members of the committee to let them know that they are ready to send them the dissertation draft.

It will generally take one month for the members of the committee to read and comment on the full draft. It is important at this stage that the committee members communicate to the advisor regarding their comments. Though the student may converse with other committee members, it is paramount that the advisor be the primary point of contact for dissertation feedback.

If at this point committee members have reservations about the draft, the dissertation committee may meet with the candidate in order to review the work. (NB: this is not a defense.) When the chair and members of the committee agree that the dissertation is ready, the student files an electronic [Final Exam Form](#) (which the student then prints and brings to the defense) with The Graduate School. This form is filed three weeks before the defense.

The oral examination

The oral defense is attended only by the committee and the candidate. The student should be ready to verbally defend the dissertation, especially its central argument and the appropriateness of its methodology and expression. Faculty may challenge any aspect of the dissertation, and the student is expected to be able to satisfactorily respond. In general, the defense functions as a face-to-face meeting about the dissertation, a chance for the candidate to discuss the process of doing the research and writing and what was learned, to evaluate the work, and to discuss future professional work. Though there should be no surprises at the defense, it sometimes reveals certain questions or problems that require additional research, writing or rewriting. In these cases, committee members may not approve the dissertation until they review the revised draft.

In most cases, at least some additional refinement is needed, so it is best if the candidate schedules the defense at least four weeks before the final version must be turned in to The Graduate School to meet their deadline (typically early May and December).

After the defense

Normally, dissertation revisions specified at the defense must be reviewed by the advisor. This procedure may take several days. Only then it is ready to send to The Graduate School. Typically, it takes about one quarter or ten weeks to go from final draft of the dissertation to actually having everything turned in and approved.

Whether or not to embargo the dissertation is a decision to be made by the student in consultation with the dissertation committee. It should be noted that humanities publishers generally do not have concerns about the online availability of dissertations, however, as humanities dissertations are always significantly revised before publication as books.

To graduate in June, students should submit a full draft of their dissertation to their advisor by late February or early March. To graduate in December, students should do so by late August or early September.

For more information on the Graduate School graduation policies see [here](#).

Part IV: Other

9. FUNDING: RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS, TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

All students admitted to the IPTD receive a full tuition scholarship and five full years of funding including summers (subject to satisfactory progress, assessed annually by the Executive Committee). Support comes from a combination of assistantships and fellowship quarters. Three non-teaching quarters are allotted post-candidacy; their distribution is determined in consultation with the Director. In addition, summer fellowships are geared to intensive preparation for qualifying exams, language acquisition, travel to archives or research sites, and writing. Students on graduate assistantships are required to be in residence.

The progression is intended to optimize students' ability to complete course work, identify a dissertation topic and prepare a prospectus in the second year, and advance to candidacy by the end of the second year or beginning of the third year while also undertaking supervised experiences that prepare them to excel both as researchers and pedagogues. In years two through four or five, teaching assignments are in circumstances of graduated responsibility and autonomy (see [Section 5](#)), usually involving the Department of Theatre and at least one other department appropriate to the student's interdisciplinary focus and intended teaching fields post-graduation.

Students entering with or without an MA receive five-year funding offers (five academic years and five summers of funding). Students are strongly encouraged to apply for competitive outside (non-programmatic) resources, especially non-Northwestern grants and fellowships. TGS provides financial incentives for students who receive and accept external fellowships within their first five years of study that include up to four quarters of extended funding and stipend supplements. For more information, see the TGS [External Award Policy](#). Consistent participation in workshops for grant writing skills as well as booking appointments at the Office of Fellowships will help equip students for this challenge.

The Graduate School requires that teaching assistants agree to “refrain from all additional remunerative work, unless specifically approved in advance by your program director,” and in this spirit, IPTD expects students to make graduate assistantship responsibilities a priority. Students who seek permission to work concurrently with their studies under conditions listed [here](#) must complete the [TGS Permission to Work Form](#) in consultation with the Director and their advisor.

10. ADDITIONAL FUNDING

In view of the likelihood that students may require additional funding to complete their dissertations, they should actively seek funding from outside agencies as well as Northwestern-based sources. The following policy was passed by the Executive Committee (effective September 1999, revised June 2008):

As soon as possible after completing the qualifying exams (and annually thereafter) students must consult with their advisor and with the Director of the program to strategize about fellowship funding and to report on their activity in seeking support. This includes funding for travel or other costs of research, major fellowship applications, teaching posts, and post-doctoral fellowships.

In preparing applications for additional funding, students should also demonstrate a good faith effort to locate and apply for fellowship and research support outside Northwestern (this recognizes variations in accordance with students’ circumstances).

If the student wishes to request an additional year of funding, they should submit a projected timeline for completion, a narrative of their progress, and an outline of their success at receiving outside funding to the Director by the first day of spring quarter (see Section 8).

11. TRAVEL TO CONFERENCES

To the fullest extent possible, the IPTD program budget will be directed to support student travel to conferences. Priority will be given to students in year 2 or above and to those presenting a paper at a conference; under some circumstances respondents or participants in round tables may also apply. Students are asked to submit IPTD conference funding requests

(see the [IPTD Resources](#) page on Canvas for the necessary form) to the Director at least one month prior to travel and no later than May 1 each academic year. Those not yet in receipt of acceptances may receive provisional approval for funds and submit their proof of acceptance to the conference program before funds are requisitioned. Each student may receive IPTD support for only one conference per year. Requests will be funded on a pro rata basis in a manner equitable to the demand for funds and respective of the needs of the entire group.

Northwestern provides conference funding from a variety of additional sources, including [The Graduate School](#), [the Buffett Institute for Global Studies](#), and the [Mellon Clusters in the Humanities](#). For information on the TGS Graduate Travel Grant see [here](#). (Note that only two of these grants may be awarded to any student during their graduate career.). A full list of internal TGS grants to which students may apply can be found [here](#).

12. MA OPTION

Technically, IPTD is a PhD-only program. However, students who matriculated at Northwestern without an MA, or those with an MA or MFA who have not taken any credits of TH 590, meet the other requirements, and wish to do so, may take a Master's degree along the way to the PhD by completing the requirements and following the steps laid out on the [TGS website for Master's completion](#). Be sure to check with the Program Assistant and Director for any departmental requirements, as well.

The MA in Theatre and Drama consists of 18 course units, including TH&DRAMA 501: Research Methods, and four graduate-level courses: European theatre history or drama prior to 1650; European theatre history or drama after 1650; performance theory; and some aspect of theatre or drama in Asia, Africa, or the Americas. Additional courses are selected in consultation with the program's Director. The MA is fulfilled upon satisfactory completion of a qualifying exam. Note: TH 590 does not count toward the fulfillment of the 18 course units required for a Master's Degree.

Students must be admitted to IPTD in order to participate in the MA.

13. STUDENT-RUN GROUPS

The department supports groups started by student initiative that contribute to professional and academic development. In the past these have included a Post-Candidacy Journal Caucus, Dissertation Reading Groups, Sub-Discipline Specific Reading Groups, and a Play Reading Group. Students should discuss the organization and possible funding support for these groups, or other student initiatives, with the Director of Graduate Studies.

14. IPTD EVENTS

Throughout the academic year, IPTD hosts a number of events that IPTD students are expected (but not required) to attend. These include a book discussion series with the authors,

professional development workshops hosted by the Critical Studies in Theatre and Performance Cluster, the IPTD annual distinguished lecture, an end-of-year social event, and various other opportunities. All students are required to participate in Welcome Week (a full week leading up to the start of fall Quarter classes) and IPTD applicant weekend (typically mid to late February). A calendar of events is distributed in September and modifications are communicated throughout the year.

15. GRADUATE WORK SPACE

IPTD students have access to a shared research and office-hour space in room 205 of 1815 Chicago Ave. This space is open to all IPTD students at any time. To access the space after hours with your Wildcard (before 9 AM, after 6 PM, and on weekends), contact [Rebekah Sigman](#). While desks at 1815 are shared, lockers may be individually claimed, subject to availability.

16. OTHER RESOURCES

A rich variety of additional Northwestern resources are also available to IPTD students:

- [Accessible NU](#)
- [Buffett Institute for Global Studies](#)
- [Child and Family Resources](#)
- [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)
- [International Office](#)
- [Northwestern Recreation](#)
- [Northwestern Religious and Spiritual Life](#)
- [TGS Diversity Peer Mentor Program](#)
- [Office of Fellowships](#)
- [The Writing Place](#)

All administration practices stipulated in this *Handbook* or elsewhere are subject to the policies and procedures of The Graduate School of Northwestern University.