

# Everything You Need to Know About Your MFA Thesis/Creative Project

The definitive guideline for the processes and procedures governing the publication of the written thesis portion of the MFA Creative Project

## **MFA Thesis/Creative Project Guidelines for Acting**

### **Pre-Proposal**

1. Thesis roles for each year will be assigned by the Department of Theatre Arts faculty and will be announced by the end of each spring semester for the following year.
2. Every attempt will be made to assign each student a role that is challenging and yet reasonable to expect the student will be successful in their portrayal.
3. Every attempt will be made to supply each third year MFA Acting student with said role during the fall semester of their third year. However, it is possible that the student may be assigned a role in the first production of the spring semester. This will still leave adequate time to complete the written portion of the thesis and defend the document.

### **Thesis Proposal**

(Due on or before June 1 of year before graduation)

This section should contain the following:

#### **1. Thesis Proposal Form**

This form can be found on the SCA website and includes:

- Production title
- Role(s) that will be performed
- Dates/location of the performances
- Director Name
- Proposed Table of Contents detailing the major sections and/or chapters of the thesis.

Form must be submitted no later than June 1<sup>st</sup>, the Summer before the role is to be performed.

The Thesis Proposal Form may be found on the "[Student Forms](#)" page linked to the Department of Theatre Arts home page.

#### **2. Committee Member Designation**

Thesis Committees will be composed of one Chairperson and one Member, assigned by the Theatre Faculty. Once the student has acquired their committee members, he/she should then fill out the MFA Thesis/Creative Project Proposal form and submit it to the committee Chairperson.

If at all possible, confer with the director of the production before writing your thesis proposal. The director may, even at this early stage, offer you information that may impact upon how you structure your proposal. Submit proposal to your Thesis Chair for approval.

### 3. Registration

The following steps must be met before registration can take place:

- a.) The student has formulated their MFA committee;
- b.) The student has filled out the “Thesis Proposal” form and submitted it to their committee chair;
- c.) When the committee chair and student have arrived at a consensus as to the scope of the document, the proposal will then be disseminated to the other committee members for commentary, requested adjustments, and final approval;
- d.) Once the committee has approved the proposal, both members of the committee must sign the Thesis Proposal form;
- e.) The student should then make a copy for their records and submit the signed original to the Dean’s Office to be filed away in the student’s departmental file. Once all of the above has occurred, the student must reach out to your Academic Advisor to get registered for the class (THE 799 Thesis/Creative Project; 3 credits). The student is then free to begin writing their thesis.

### Preparation

(Due on or before the first day of regularly scheduled rehearsals)

This section should contain the following:

1. **Introduction:** The Introduction will present the “problem.” In this instance, the problem is the particular role you have been assigned in a specific play. You should articulate what you believe the specific challenges of the role to be (your thesis statement), and your plans and strategies for addressing them.
2. **Chapter 1: Research relevant to the proposed project.** This may include such subheadings as historical overview of the play or role, research on the genre of the play, relevant commentary on noteworthy past performances, and interviews with artists whose work is related in some way to the project (i.e., writers, actors, directors, etc.), scholarly analysis and critical commentary, viewings of media presentations or adaptations, etc. Students should guard against “padding” their document with superfluous information tangential to the actual performing of the role. This research should be framed in the context of what the actor believes relevant to their individual development of the role.

3. **Chapter 2: A detailed textual analysis of the play.** This chapter examines the play from an objective perspective and should include commentary on how the text reflects its genre, what the playwright's controlling idea/unifying principle is, the major thematic elements present in the text (universal truths), a concise summary of structural progression (e.g. exposition, the inciting incident, rising action, significant crisis moments, the play's climax, and subsequent falling action and/or resolution); a concise statement on the super objective of each major character making note of the primary obstacles for that character; the functionality of language in the piece. The purpose of this chapter is, within the context of an objective view of the play, to understand what the playwright is attempting to say through piece, and how he/she does so.
4. **Chapter 3: A detailed written analysis of the specific character you will be portraying.** This analysis should address specific detailed questions regarding character biography and back-story; within each scene discuss the character's primary objective, significant obstacles that inhibit the character from realizing his/her objective and potential tactics or actions for overcoming those obstacles. Confer with your committee chair in determining the essential parameters of your analysis. This chapter should also include commentary on any specific physical or vocal characteristics/challenges the actor will face in performing the role. Special note: it is expected that the student will present his working script for review by his/her committee. In this script, every scene the student appears in should reflect detailed beat work, including beat demarcations, transitive verbs, and blocking notation. This need not be published in your final document but is required to successfully complete the process.

## **Process**

(Due no later than **one week** following the final performance)

This section should contain the following:

1. **Chapter 4: A detailed journal/diary** addressing major work done at each stage of the rehearsal process. It is expected that this journal will document personal reflections regarding character development and artistic choices for each rehearsal. This should address activities performed within formal rehearsals as well as your personal reflections and all private preparations you have done to further enhance and develop the performance of your role.
2. Your journal should also address specific vocal and physical work as it evolves during the process. This should include an explanation of your character's vocal and physical presence and how these are modified or altered at different points throughout the play. Unique or special vocal or physical requirements such as dialects, playing a musical instrument, choreographed sequences (fights, dancing, precisely timed blocking, etc.), working with particular props or costume pieces, or any other type of differentiated performance task should each be addressed separately and with detailed explanations of the processes involved.
3. This is the appropriate portion of the thesis to discuss how the director's concept (and relevant notes given in rehearsal) and the actual rehearsal process may have necessitated

adjustments to your preparation and performance. Although you will be writing after each rehearsal, it is expected that you will ultimately edit your entries to reflect the most pertinent information relevant to preparing and performing the role before submitting this chapter to your committee for approval.

## **Product**

(Due no later than **four weeks** after the final performance)

1. **Chapter 5: Conclusion.** This is a personal “critique” of the project. This critique should reflect upon the major facets of your performance journey. This may include discoveries you made during the production process both personally and as an artist. Your response should address specific challenges and/or breakthroughs you experienced in terms of preparation and the portrayal of your character. Additionally, this chapter should include your reaction to various published and non-published criticism of your work. Conclude your critique with comments regarding what types of things you would encourage others to repeat, avoid, or change if they were required to do a similar project. Similarly, if you were to play the role again, what adjustments would you make to your process?

## **Supplemental Information**

(Due when you turn in Chapter 5)

All print publications, personal interviews, correspondence, media and internet resources cited should appear according to MLA standards.

## **Appendices**

The following should be included and listed alphabetically (e.g. Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C, etc.). Appendix titles and title pages may be adjusted as the student and/or his or her committee deems necessary. Example of an appendix title page:

### **Appendix X Production Schedule**

Example appendices:

1. **Appendix A:** A detailed schedule of all rehearsals and performances.
2. **Appendix B:** A list of costumes and personal props used in performance. This appendix should include (when available) copies of costume renderings and make-up plots.
3. **Appendix C:** Photo-copies of the “Playbill,” promotional materials such as flyers advertising mailers, newspapers ads, etc.
4. **Appendix D:** Copies of all published reviews and critiques. This includes local newspaper reviews and, when available, any invited responses from outside theatre organizations such as KCACTF, etc.

## **What to do once the written thesis is complete...**

**The student should submit the completed thesis electronically to his/her Thesis Committee Chair. The document should include a formal title page, an abstract of 150 words or less, dedication, acknowledgments, table of contents, any appendices or lists of any tables or figures, followed by a complete reference section or bibliography, using style approved by the MLA manual.**

1. The student and his/her Committee Chair will then engage, as required, in making adjustments to the document in preparation for disseminating it to the remainder of the student's Thesis Committee. Once the Chair believes the document ready for committee input, the thesis will be disseminated to the remainder of the committee for additional feedback.
2. Upon submission of the document to the student's thesis committee, the student should request a time and date be set for the Oral Defense of their Thesis and Creative Project. The date set for the student's Oral Defense should be sometime after the student's committee has had ample opportunity to offer feedback yet prior to the School's published deadline. This date should be determined by the Committee Chair in consultation with the student's Thesis Committee.
3. Should a committee member require a hard copy of the document for review, the committee member will make that request known, at which time the student is responsible for providing said hard copy. This copy may be on standard printer paper and need not be of archival quality.
4. Upon successfully passing of the Oral Defense of his/her Thesis, the student should request that his/her Committee Chair submit the signed Thesis/Portfolio Final Defense Form to the Dean's Office.
5. The student is then responsible for submitting his/her completed Thesis (with any final adjustments required by his/her committee) to a University approved proofreader. A list can be found on the [SCA website](#).
6. Once the proofreader has approved the thesis, it can then be submitted to ProQuest.

## **Submission to University Library**

1. Make changes/corrections in the manuscript as indicated by the proofreader.
2. Create a ProQuest Account (<http://libguides.regent.edu/submitting>) and submit your PDF version of your thesis. If you would like personal copies, you will be able to order it while you are going through the submission process.
3. You will receive a confirmation email once your project has been approved.

\*Students are required to discuss their ADP with their advisor and inform the advisor of the semester they're choosing to graduate. Students must meet deadlines noted on the [SCA website](#) as well as deadlines provided by their chair. Once their proposal is accepted, students must immediately begin their research in order to meet deadlines above. If student is not able to complete their thesis within the given time constraints, they will be allowed one additional semester to complete it with an IP entered as their grade prior to completion.