

POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR PTP (ACTING AND DIRECTING PROGRAMS)

The Professional Training Programs at U.W. School of Drama consists of the “Professional Actor Training Program”, the “UW MFA Directing Program” and the “UW MFA Design Program”. In the past the programs existed largely independent of each other. Now two are combined under the new designation, the "Performance Training Program" which serves as an umbrella for both Acting and Directing. The designations of PTP, PATP, MFA Directing Program and MFA Design Program are useful for various purposes and audiences. Both the "PATP" and the "MFA Directing Program" have respected legacies that we want to preserve and improve. The UW Performance Training Program (PTP) is one of the top ranked in the nation for training actors and directors. It has achieved this distinction because the program is rigorous, the standards of excellence are very high and the faculty is made up of deeply rooted professionals who are inspired to teach.

The PATP/MFA Directing program admits students with demonstrated talent and the perceived determination to complete a challenging three-year course of training and are expected to be exceptionally focused, disciplined and motivated. The rigors of the three years of intensive training are challenging so it might be that some individuals, for varying reasons, find it impossible for the training to continue satisfactorily. The natural expectation is that actors and directors will do well during the three years of their training and graduate with distinction. Students receive careful attention and support and should assume that they will make the hoped-for progress, but should also be aware that this is not always the case. Even though the policy in some professional training programs assumes that several entering students will be cut from the program before the conclusion of their training, this is definitely not the case at the University of Washington. While we are under no obligation to retain all students accepted into the PTP, the program is designed to successfully graduate all who are admitted. Any decision to retain a student or to recommend another action is made with consideration of the entire full-time PTP faculty. The final decision to recommend a Drop action to the Graduate School is the responsibility of the Head of the program.

ATTENDANCE

Part of the rigor of the program rests on the assumption that the carefully selected actors and directors are adult, responsible and dedicated. Further, the faculty assumes that taking advantage of the total program will be the first priority of the students' time and efforts. The PTP is based on an ensemble model. Every actor and director is to a considerable degree dependent on every other actor and director being present, responsible and similarly dedicated as their fellows.

The most concrete and obvious indication of a student's dedication is punctuality and attendance. Therefore, we enforce a studio, class, and rehearsal attendance policy based on professional standards; one that is *modeled* on the Actors Equity Association rehearsal attendance rules. In brief, all actors and directors in the program are expected to be in attendance, on time and ready to work for all classes, costume fittings, TA and GSA assignments and called rehearsals.

Attendance is kept for each class. *Any* absences will be considered unacceptable unless under the most extraordinary circumstances and cleared by the Head beforehand. If an actor becomes too ill to attend classes or rehearsal they are expected to promptly call the Head and leave a message of explanation with the office. If a student is seriously ill or contagious to others, he/she will not be expected to participate in classes or rehearsals. Such decisions are made in conjunction with the Head and on a case-by-case basis. Some proof of an illness-absence *may* be requested. Routine doctor's appointments are to be arranged outside of class and rehearsal times. Additionally, any individually arranged outside meetings or obligations must take place other than during class and rehearsal time

Health, stamina and motivational issues

The faculty has no interest in nor a legal right to pry into any student's life or health issues. We do expect and depend on the students to make productive and mature judgments concerning their own health and life issues so that they are able give their all to their training and don't put themselves, their fellow actors or the ensemble at disadvantage or into jeopardy.

The following guidelines are a basis for action on such issues that may come up from time to time.

It is each student's responsibility to maintain and nurture his/her health, strength and motivation for the challenges of the program. If these standards become compromised for whatever reason, the student is encouraged to disclose enough information to the Head or, if preferred, to Sarah Nash Gates (the Executive Director/Graduate Program Coordinator) so together they can determine the best course of action for the benefit of the student and for the program as a whole. If a student decides not to, or is unable to disclose deteriorating health, stamina or motivation issues and is perceived to not be meeting the requirements put forth, the student can expect a "meeting of concern" with the Head and perhaps other members of the faculty to assess the problem and the best course of action. If a meeting does not succeed in solving the perceived issues, the student can be expected to be put on probation for a quarter, during which time he/she will need to meet the basic expectations for the program.

CASTING POLICY

The faculty is committed to the growth of each actor and director in the program in all aspects of their development. As much as is possible we provide opportunities for actors to be cast in a variety of plays and roles. These same opportunities do not necessarily translate into equitable results. Every effort is made to give each actor in the program opportunities to play a wide range and size of roles. However, it is unrealistic to assume everyone will get to play a lead role while in the program. No casting process exists that can be regarded as fair or desirable to everyone in the casting pool. There is often disappointment, sometimes extremely so, in not getting a desired role or a role of a certain size or significance. This has always been an unfortunate fact of life in the theatre and even though the PATP continues to create more casting opportunities, there can be no guarantees about the size or nature of a role any actor will play while enrolled in the program.

The casting process in any given production is subject to many variables and decisions are made in the context of several plays being cast at the same time, some directed by faculty, some by outside directors and some by student directors. Also, the casting pool changes depending on what year or quarter is current. Casting is based on a variety of considerations all in the service of balancing several intangible and subjective factors including:

- < pedagogical considerations
- < the director's vision for the play
- < an actor's enthusiasm (or lack thereof) for a role
- < the perceived quality or skill level of audition or previous work of any given actor
- < maintaining standards of excellence in all UW productions

While the students' desires for roles will continue to be taken into account in casting, once final decisions are made it will be the obligation of the actor to accept the assigned role.

An up to date casting history file on each student is kept in the Head's office of each play, role (or roles), director, and theatre space.

The faculty, with student input, continually and forthrightly, in the context of evolving sensibilities, examines these issues. We strive for diversity and inclusion in all such matters. It is the intent of the Program to enable that diversity to flourish. The School of Drama adheres to the University of Washington's policy of equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam era veteran.

This policy conforms to the policies of the other leading programs around the country.

ADDITIONAL CASTING POLICY FOR PTP DIRECTING STUDENTS

Directing students cast their Workshop and Thesis productions in conjunction with faculty and outside directors. In Directing Workshops the MFA directors will work primarily with undergraduates, sometimes PATP actors and, on occasion, with non-matriculated, community actors. Casting "outside" actors must be made in conjunction with and approved in advance by both the Head of Undergraduate Programs and the PTP Head.

DIRECTING ASSIGNMENTS

During their first quarter, incoming directing students will Assistant Direct for the School of Drama to familiarize themselves with the SoD. In every quarter thereafter, directing students direct one-act or full-length projects in Hutchinson 218 or other suitable venues *except* a second year "workshop" production and a third year thesis project which are produced on the main stages in the subscription season. As scheduling allows, second-year directing students can also receive credit for directing outside of the School of Drama in such venues as the Ethnic Cultural Theatre or the Seattle Fringe Festival. Choice of material for all projects and productions is made in conjunction with and approval of the directing faculty. Selection of PTP student-directed plays produced in the subscription season, are suggested by the director, the directing faculty and ultimately determined by the Season Selection Committee. The Season Selection

Committee is made up of the Director of the SoD, the Head of the PTP, BA program, and MFA Design Program. Also involved during the process are the General Manager for Production, the Director of Communications and the Technical Director.

Directing students are required to assist a faculty or guest professional director in the role of “Assistant Director” at least once during their course of study at the School of Drama. The duties may include research, dramaturgical tasks as well as assignments during rehearsals.

ADVISING

Every MFA Directing program production or project in the School of Drama involves two advisors - a **production advisor** and a **performance advisor** (see Academic Policy Memo No. 9). The role of production advisor for second year directors’ workshops is normally filled by a local professional director. Students are encouraged to seek advice from any member of the faculty at any time. For further information about Directing advising procedures, see Academic Policy Memo No. 9.

OUTSIDE WORK FOR ACTORS

The PTP provides irreplaceable training experiences that are time-sensitive. The training is challenging, comprehensive and intricate enough that the faculty agrees it should not be interrupted, even by professional work. The acting and directing programs are particularly concentrated endeavors, ones which offer a series of coordinated and overlapping training activities to give actors and directors the basis to acquire essential (and complex) skills that can only be grasped through trial and error, practiced with rigor and reinforced through repetition. The PTP training cannot be ingested casually or intermittently. Our program provides the expertise and somewhat cloistered structure for this necessary and undistracted activity to take place. Further, valuable learning from other students’ efforts goes on due to the interdependence among fellow students working together consistently on class projects, rehearsals and assignments. We feel it is in best interest of the students to be part of an ensemble.

Therefore, the students in the program will be available for outside work during the periods from the end of May to the middle of September each year and during the third year “Professional Quarter (approx. Dec. 15-March 8).” The rest of the year is to be devoted to the training program only. The exclusion of outside theatre work for actors and directors extends to film, television, commercials, industrials, etc. In addition students are not allowed to miss class or rehearsals for auditions/meetings with agents, casting directors, producers or directors. This is a standard policy for the top 10 professional training programs around the country.

On the other hand, we do very much support students pursuing summer work and doing significant projects during the professional-quarter in the third year. The faculty endorses bringing directors and casting people to campus from Seattle and around the country to hold auditions for summer theatre festivals and for professional-quarter work. We will do what we can to help students facilitate casting sessions for theatres who come to campus. When no other times are available, the Head may choose to interrupt classes for such auditions. If summer festival employment begins before the end of the school year, permission will be granted by the

Head, on a case-by-case basis, to make it possible for a student to accept summer work.

Actors who, on their own, arrange out of town auditions for professional-quarter work may be granted permission, on a case-by-case basis, to miss a small number classes or rehearsals.

POLICY FOR OUTSIDE WORK FOR DIRECTORS

Directing students may, in exceptional circumstances, and with prior permission of the PTP Head, accept outside work that does not conflict with class, rehearsal, production or GSA work schedules. These exceptional circumstances generally occur in quarters when GSA funding is not available. The student's first responsibility is to his/her course work, directing and production assignments within the School of Drama.

Whenever a director from the Program is engaged in an outside production by permission, an attempt will be made for someone on the PTP faculty to see and evaluate the work. It is the obligation of the individual director to provide information regarding schedules and ticket access.

MFA Directing students spend one "professional" or internship quarter away from UW at a professional venue such as Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Alabama Shakespeare Festival or at a Seattle based theatre such as Seattle Rep, Empty Space, etc.

FINANCIAL AID FOR PTP DIRECTORS

Graduate directors who receive financial aid (GSA awards) will generally assume duties in publicity, department administration, production, building and equipment supervision and maintenance.

For the purposes of financial aid, a distinction is made between work for credit - i.e., production assignments undertaken in fulfillment of a course requirement - and work for pay. In general, directing, assistant directing and other major supervisory and creative responsibilities relate to graded work for credit while paid tasks are usually administrative, production office work and maintenance assignments. Quarterly evaluations will be completed by the student's GSA staff advisor and submitted to the Head of Performance. An unsatisfactory evaluation by the student's GSA advisor is considered unacceptable and must be corrected without delay. Failure to do so could result in probationary status during the following quarter and/or loss of financial assistance.

GRADING

At the end of every quarter, each acting and directing student will meet with the faculty for an evaluation of his/her work. Due to its intensive nature, and in accordance with Graduate School practice, the PTP is regarded by the faculty as an honors program. Students receiving a B" (3.0) (3.0) should consider this as an indication that their work in the program is not satisfactory, and that immediate improvement must be made.

NOTIFICATION OF PROBATIONARY STATUS

If a student's work falls below acceptable standards, in the judgment of the faculty, the student will receive a notice at midterm. The Head of the PTP, and perhaps other faculty, will meet with the student and discuss the relevant problems. The student will receive a formal letter from the School of Drama also outlining the substandard work, and advising the student of his/her probationary status.

The student may be placed on "Warning," "Probation," or "Final Probation." A student on Final Probation may not register for SoD courses in the following quarter without the written consent of the program. If lack of improvement by the end of the current quarter warrants termination from the program, the student will be so advised by the PTP Head within forty-eight (48) hours after the final examination period, and the Graduate Program Coordinator will immediately notify the Graduate School of the Head's recommendation that the student be dropped from the program. Students making satisfactory progress after being placed on Warning or Probation will be advised of their new status by the Program Head after their quarterly evaluation conference at the end of the quarter.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A student who takes a temporary leave of absence from the program may be readmitted only with prior approval of the Head of the Program. A student who has missed two or more years of the program due to leave of absence must also seek admission to the program at the first-year level, thus starting over again.

PM 8211/REV3-2004

Academic Policy Memo Number 11 (PM8211), first established May 95

Subsequent revisions: Sept. 1997

Executive Committee approval: March 10, 2004

Faculty approval: March 15, 2004