

# DRAMA

## PhD Performance Studies Handbook

Revised August 2023



**PhD Coordinator:** Dr. Selena Couture | [couture2@ualberta.ca](mailto:couture2@ualberta.ca)

**Graduate Student Advisors:** Dawn Hunter & Rebecca Anderson | [dramags@ualberta.ca](mailto:dramags@ualberta.ca)

# Table of Contents

<b>Message from the Chair</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledging Territory</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Our Program</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>PhD Committee</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>General Information</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Registration and Course Selection</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Funding</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Library And Archival Facilities</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Course Requirements and Timeline</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Special Projects Courses .....	5
<b>Choosing a Supervisor / Supervisory Committee:</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Preparing your Thesis</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Language Requirement</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Ethics and Academic Citizenship Requirement</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Independent Development Plan &amp; Professional Development Requirement</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Examinations</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>General Examination</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Short Thesis Proposal</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Dissertation Prospectus &amp; Candidacy Exam</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Final Examination</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Closing Remarks</b> .....	<b>11</b>

For other useful content such as the Student Code of Behaviour, Mental Health and Wellness Resources and Quality of Graduate Supervision Recognition / Awards see the [Graduate Handbook](#).

See here for a [list of continuing Faculty](#).

# Address from the Chair

Dear Students,

On behalf of the faculty and staff of Drama, I offer you a warm welcome to the department! You are each embarking on a new year full of anticipation and promise. Congratulations on making the choice to study here in the Department of Drama at the University of Alberta. Many have travelled this path before but none have been you in your present moment. You will bring new insight and lively interaction to our classrooms, studios, and creative atmosphere. You will engage in research and making in ways you have never dreamed. You will astound us and challenge yourself. I hope you have hours of enjoyment in pursuing your studies!

The most important element in the alchemy of a Drama Department is its community. Building a culture of care is a priority because we have hard work to do. We look to challenge norms, to ask questions that provoke thought and action, and to contemplate deeply the human condition today in our post-truth, eco-challenged, and tumultuous times. But first, we must build a community that is respectful and open-minded. As students, you are instrumental in building a community in which we can be our best selves and be our most responsive and creative. In every program, we are all students of Drama. We are one department and one university. You belong. Welcome!!!

April Viczko  
Chair, Department of Drama  
Professor, Theatre Design  
e: [aviczko@ualberta.ca](mailto:aviczko@ualberta.ca)

## Acknowledging Territory

The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respects the histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

This statement is the [officially endorsed](#) U of A acknowledgement of Indigenous territory developed through the Provost Office in a broader consultation process with the Council on Aboriginal Initiatives, Town Halls and review by Indigenous faculty and staff.

In the Drama department, we are learning what it means to go beyond acknowledging territory to develop respectful, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous people and lands. We hope you can contribute to this process in your graduate studies.

# Our Program

U of A's PhD in Performance Studies was introduced in 2012 and is one of only a few such study programs in Canada. No longer limiting the study of theatre to the written script or conventional stage, Performance Studies is an expanding field that analyzes performance on a continuum of cultural discourse and expression, covering such topics as rituals and rites, every day ceremonies and practices, gestural behavior, dance, movement, new media and digital technologies as well as large scale, public and theatrical spectacles. The program pursues rigorous critical reflection and investigation, combined with creative engagement with the discipline. Our goal is to challenge our students to think independently, to develop their innate qualities of resourcefulness, innovation and imagination.

The doctoral program in Performance Studies is a small-intake, four-to-five year program, requiring one year of course-work, followed by a general field exam, critical and practice-based research, and a doctoral thesis. The University of Alberta Calendar description can be found at this link: [Graduate Programs Drama \(PhD in Performance Studies\)](#)

## PhD Committee

The role of the PhD Committee is to: evaluate applications, support doctoral students in their research and career development, adjudicate the General Examination and Short Thesis Proposal and to regularly revise the program in order to safeguard its quality and depth.

The current PhD Committee:

Dr. Selena Couture, Dr. Piet Defraeye, Dr. Melanie Dreyer-Lude (on administrative leave 2023-2024), Dr. Donia Mounsef, Dr. Stefano Muneroni (on sabbatical 2023-2024), Dr. Jean O'Hara.

## General Information

### REGISTRATION AND COURSE SELECTION

The PhD is a F/T program. Students must be F/T registered. Students normally complete all course requirements by the end of their 2nd or 3rd term in the program. A list of Drama courses and descriptions will be sent to you by email and posted on the Drama website in early spring. The PhD coordinator must approve your selection of courses in writing (over email, cc [dramags@ualberta.ca](mailto:dramags@ualberta.ca)) and then you can register yourself in Bear Track. FGSR will register you automatically in F/T credits in spring and summer terms to maintain your full time registration.

### FUNDING

The Department considers PhD students year 1 to 4 for scholarships, Awards, research (GRA) and teaching assistantships (GTA). Funding in 5th year is discretionary and depends on budget.

- Funding depends on budgets handed down to the department from other levels of university administration. Individual professors also often get research grants that may fund Research Assistantships.

- There are a limited number of teaching opportunities – whether as a Teaching Assistant or as a Principal Instructor (P.I.)– and the department certainly appreciates the importance of teaching opportunities for PhD students.
- As per your funding letter, all students must actively pursue any and all scholarship opportunities, particularly SSHRC and Killam. For more information on scholarships and awards see these webpages:
  - » The [FGSR website on funding](#)
  - » The [Drama database](#)
- Students are welcome to pursue UofA funding opportunities outside of the department (eg. Leadership College, other departments and Faculties)
- See also the general Graduate Handbook for further resources on funding opportunities.

## LIBRARY AND ARCHIVAL FACILITIES

- Hours of operation among the University’s numerous libraries vary depending on the time of year and the specific library. The information about hours of operation is on the U of A Libraries homepage.
- The [Drama Subject Guide](#) is a good resource put together by our Drama Librarian with shortcuts to an abundance of ways to find what you need.
- The library also provides links and instruction on using the vast collection of [Audio and Video resources](#) for instruction and research.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND TIMELINE

PhD students must fulfill 15\* CW or 5 courses and a practical course requirement (DR 777). DR 608 and DR 609 are compulsory courses, unless waived and replaced by other equivalencies by the PhD Coordinator. As the PhD Performance Studies is by definition an interdisciplinary program, students must take a course outside the department which suits their particular research focus.

DR 601 can be taken by PhD students but will not count towards the 15\*CW, including those cases where it is part of a conditional admittance.

- DR 777 can be taken as of term two, and must be fulfilled before submission of thesis.
- Specific course offerings for each year are posted in the department by the end of the spring term for the upcoming fall term.
- Speak to the PhD Coordinator or your Supervisor for advice regarding a course outside the department.

### Special Projects Courses

- Drama 605: Independent Study course. Working with a faculty member, you may co-design an Independent Study course. To register you must fill out a Drama 605 form and have it signed by the course instructor, program coordinator and Chair. Give your signed form to the drama grad administrators, Dawn Hunter or Rebecca Anderson and they will register you.
- Drama 606: If you wish to take an undergraduate course at the graduate level, you need to register for Drama 606. You must fill out a Drama 606 form with the course instructor explaining how the course expectations will be elevated to the grad level. This form must be

signed by the course instructor, your program coordinator, and the Chair. Give your signed form to the drama grad administrators, Dawn Hunter or Rebecca Anderson and they will register you.

**Timeline:** The following is meant as a guide, and indicates goals achieved by end of each term:

Yr1T1	Yr1T2	Y2T1	Y2T2	Y3T1	Yr3T2	Yr4T1	Yr4T2	Yr5
Courses	Courses (including FGSR Academic Citizenship and Ethics courses)	Remaining Course (if needed) FGSR IDP	Language Requirement		FGSR PD			
		Gen. Exam	STP	Cand.			Defense	?
	Topic Chosen		Research	Research	Research	Research		
		DR 777 Practical course anytime after this term →		Writing	Writing	Writing	Writing	
	Supervisor in place	Supervisory Committee formed						

## CHOOSING A SUPERVISOR / SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Students are encouraged to scout the department during their first two terms in the program for a possible supervisor. The supervisor has a PhD degree (or equivalent), or the student will opt to work with two co-supervisors, one of which has a PhD. The supervisor (or at least one of the co-supervisors) belongs to the Drama Dept. As per FGSR rules, the supervisor **MUST** be appointed by the end of the first 12 months of the student's program, and until that moment, the Graduate Coordinator will function as the student's default supervisor.

It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to constitute a Supervisory Committee, in consultation with the student candidate, and the PhD Coordinator. We encourage students to be actively involved in this process and scout for expertise in their field. This process is normally to be completed by the end of term 3. The Student must have a supervisory committee in place before the Candidacy Examination. The Supervisory Committee has minimally three members (at least two of which – or 50% of the members – have a PhD degree.) We also encourage at least one of the committee members to be from outside the department. The Committee **MUST** meet regularly, and have a formal meeting at least once per year, as long as the student is in the program.

Final authority for the approval of supervisors and committees rests with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts (and more specifically the Assoc. Dean Grad. Studies in Arts).



## PREPARING YOUR THESIS

Please familiarize yourself with [FGSR's guidelines for preparing your thesis](#) .

It is customary for all students to provide a printed bound copy of their thesis to the department to be made available through the Guberman library.

See the [General Department Handbook](#) for information on the Guberman (also known as the Gube). Many students find it useful to look at past theses for inspiration!

## LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

All PhD students must demonstrate passive knowledge (reading/understanding) of a language other than English. This should be a language relevant for your research focus. This can be fulfilled in several ways. (Contact the PhD Coordinator and / or your Supervisor for more information.)

- You may have taken the Language Proficiency Exam during your Masters (not completed more than three years ago by the time you start your PhD).
- Sit for a written exam, typically organized by MLCS: [Graduate Language Proficiency Exam](#) .
- You may demonstrate proficiency through an appropriate language course either taken during your grad. studies, or in your senior years of undergrad (not longer than three years ago by the time you start your PhD) or you are a native speaker of a language relevant for your research, other than English.

## ETHICS AND ACADEMIC CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT

FGSR expects all graduate students to fulfill the [Academic Citizenship and Ethics Requirement](#). You are automatically enrolled in INTD 710 and INTD 720 on BearTracks on August 1st of your first year. This requirement must be met by the end of your first year.

## INDEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENT

All graduate students must complete their [Independent Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) within the first 18 months of the program and the [Professional Development \(PD\)](#) requirement by the end of their third year. Please see the Graduate handbook for more details.

## Examinations

During their second and/or third year, students prepare for and undertake their departmental examination. This examination has three written components, followed by an oral candidacy examination. Note that term references take into account only Fall and Winter Terms.

See also [section 8 of FGSR's Graduate Program Manual](#) for overall regulations.

At least half of the examiners on every examining committee must have a degree which is equivalent to, or higher than, the degree being examined.

# GENERAL EXAMINATION

**Students normally sit the general exam during term 3 and no later than term 4.**

## The purpose of this examination is for students to:

- demonstrate a solid understanding of the interdisciplinary field of Performance Studies (PS)
- select appropriate sources based on the scope of their chosen topic in response to the larger field of PS
- formulate two viable research questions which include articulations of a critical methodology
- write a cogent insightful research paper responsive to the field of PS and their own specific research and showcasing an effective argument supported by rigorous evidence
- engage in a scholarly dialogue in an oral setting with experts in the field

## Process:

- Students will craft and submit two essay questions and a reading list of 20 texts (maximum 10 articles). The PhD Committee must approve the reading list and questions. They can ask for a revisions.
- The final reading list will include a total of 30 texts (books + articles) comprising 20 texts chosen by the student and 10 (only books) chosen by the PhD faculty. The faculty's reading list will be given to the student after they submit their two questions and reading list.
- All 30 books/articles will be about performance theory, but the student will also be encouraged to engage with plays, video recordings of performances, reviews, etc. These sources will be considered extra to the 30 books/articles.
- Students will be given one question out of the two they submitted. They will answer the question in 15-20 pages and submit their final paper within approximately one month of receiving the question.
- The committee will come together to discuss the written response during the oral defense (normally 3 weeks after the submission of the exam). The second question the student submitted may also be part of the oral defense.
- After the meeting, the supervisor provides the student with detailed feedback about the oral defense.
- The General Exam is a departmental event organized and administered by the PhD committee, but an External Examiner may be invited if the PhD committee deems it necessary to support the student's progress and future research.

## Note

PhD faculty will provide a list of 50-60 books in PS that students can consult as they select their 20 sources. This list will reflect both an historical outlook of PS and current critical inquiries in PS (ecological, Indigenous, gender, object-oriented, intermediality, postdramatic, etc.). While students will be free to choose their own texts, the list will provide them with some guidance in selecting their reading list.



## SHORT THESIS PROPOSAL

**Students normally complete the Short Thesis Proposal (STP) before the end of term 3.** The STP is a 5 to 10 double-spaced pages statement of research plan. The document is finalized in consultation with the student's Supervisor and Supervisory Committee, and submitted to the Drama PhD Program Committee for feedback and approval. This document is a record of the student's thinking about their project at this stage in the program.

## DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS & CANDIDACY EXAM

**Normally in term 4**, the candidate tables a well-structured and researched doctoral thesis proposal/prospectus, including primary and secondary bibliography. The candidate will also have consulted with the supervisory committee to establish a reading list, and receive guidance on the proposal's structure, and content.

We are looking for a 35-40 page document, that presents the material the student must know in order to begin writing the dissertation and to position themselves in relation to the critical debates in which the project intervenes. Often, this document will already have the seeds for a chapter (eg: introduction) or parts thereof in the thesis.

In addition to the Supervisory Committee, the Candidacy Examination Committee consists of 2 External Examiners (Drama/Non-Drama) + a Chair.

### Candidacy Examination (Oral):

The proposal document is distributed among the student's Thesis Supervisory Committee + External Examiners at least three weeks before the Oral Candidacy Committee

This is a two-hour long oral examination held by the supervisory committee and an external examiner on concerns, issues and topics arising from the long-Dissertation proposal. In some cases, the student's Performance Project (DR 777) will also be referred to and considered.

The oral examination follows FGSR regulations and requirements, according to which students must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the examining committee, that they possess an adequate knowledge of the discipline and of the subject matter relevant to the thesis, and the ability to pursue and complete original research at an advanced level.

Candidacy Examinations (along with all other requirements) should be completed before the end of the third year, after which the student must apply for an extension to FGSR.

The oral examination follows FGSR regulations and requirements, according to which students must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the examining committee, that they possess an adequate knowledge of the discipline and of the subject matter relevant to the thesis, and the ability to pursue and complete original research at an advanced level.

See Guidelines in the Calendar for Conduct of Examinations: [FGSR Conduct of Examinations](#)

The Candidacy Examination committee consists of a chair (preferably from the Drama Department), the supervisory committee + TWO arm's length examiner, one of which is from outside the department. For

doctoral candidacy, the minimum size of the examining committee is five (max. 7), excluding the non-examining Chair.

The candidacy examination may result in one of the following outcomes:

- Adjourned
- Pass
- Conditional Pass
- Fail and Repeat the Candidacy
- Fail with a recommendation to terminate the doctoral program or for a change of category to a Master's program.

## FINAL EXAMINATION

The Final Examination (or PhD Defense) is to be scheduled at least four weeks after completion of the thesis, and the examination is largely on the thesis itself.

The minimum size of the examining committee is five, excluding the non-examining Chair. It consists of the Supervisor(s), the Supervisory Committee and at least TWO arm's length examiners. One of these is from outside the university, and can either be an External Reader or an External Examiner. It is the Graduate Coordinator (or alternatively the Chair) that proposes names for External Examiner to the Assoc. Dean Arts (Graduate). The so-called internal/external Examiner is determined in concert with the Supervisor, though must be contacted by the Grad. Coordinator re. availability etc.

Before the thesis is forwarded to the Externals, all supervisory committee members must declare in writing to the supervisor(s) either that the thesis is of adequate substance and quality to warrant that the student proceed to the final examination or that the thesis is unsatisfactory and the student should not be advised to proceed to the final examination. The Supervisor will inform the Graduate Coordinator (or Chair) of this decision, at least five weeks before the scheduled exam.

Provided the Oral Examination receives a go-ahead from the Committee, the student will provide copies of the thesis to the UofA examiners four weeks before the final examination; The Grad. Coordinator will send a copy of the thesis at least five weeks ahead of the scheduled examination to the External (non UofA) Examiner.

See FGSR [Supervision and Examination Regulations](#) for procedures for External Readers and Examiners.

The External Report is confidential and must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies at least one week ahead of the scheduled exam. It can only be released to the student with permission of the External Examiner/Reader after the defense.

The final examination may result in one of the following outcomes: (The examining committee may agree unanimously or with no more than one dissenting vote.)

- Adjourned
- Pass (All or all but one of the examiners must agree to an outcome of Pass)
- Pass subject to revisions
- Fail

There is no provision for a final examination to be "passed subject to major revisions".

Note that after successful examination, the student shall make any required and appropriate revisions where necessary and submit the approved thesis to the FGSR within six months of the date of the final examination.

## **Closing Remarks**

Undertaking doctoral studies is a mountainous task with many peaks and valleys. The PhD committee eager to guide you through the significant challenges you will face. Please remember that the staff and faculty members of the Drama department are available to help you make these into learning opportunities while you continue on your path. By the end of your degree, you will have made an significant contribution to the field of Performance Studies and, we hope, will be on your way to a fulfilling career.

We're excited to see what you will do here with us.