



Admission Requirements

The Theatre Arts Department seeks highly creative students who bring a special vision to their work. For this reason the department welcomes applicants from a variety of fields who are committed to a career in theatre design.

To be admitted to the design program, candidates must show skill and sensitivity in design or related artistic or technical endeavors and provide evidence of growth and development in their work. Candidates must demonstrate competence in the relevant crafts of their chosen specialty, which may include drafting, painting, drawing, pattern making, computer design, stagecraft, sculpture, photography, graphic design and/or media design.

To be considered for admission into the Design Program, you must make sure you are aware of all of the deadlines and that you meet the minimum requirements for entry.

- [Graduate College Deadlines and Requirements](#)
- [International Student Admission Requirements](#)

Application Procedure

1. Submit an application and official transcript clearly indicating a **final GPA of 3.00 or better** to the Graduate College. The GRE exam is not required.
2. Once you have submitted your application, you will receive an email instructing you on how to upload your supporting documents and submit letters of recommendation. These will be uploaded from your Admissions Profile in MyUI, our online service center for applicants and students. You can only access this after you have submitted your application.

Supporting documents that will be uploaded to your Admissions Profile on MyUI:

- a resume of previous theatre training and experience
- three letters of recommendation that speak specifically to the candidate's skill in the areas listed above and to the capacity for growth in design
- a written statement explaining why you are seeking the MFA in design at Iowa, including what your primary and secondary area of focus may be and why

We recommend that prospective students visit Iowa City to see the campus and discuss the design program with our current students and us. The visits need to be coordinated in advance with the design faculty.

All MFA designers receive a full tuition scholarship from the Graduate College (some schools will call this a tuition waiver). General fees are not included in this scholarship. Additionally, most MFA designers hold paid research assistantships or teaching assistantships. Departmental scholarships also may be awarded, with the amounts varying on an annual basis.

Iowa at U/RTA and USITT

Members of the design faculty regularly attend LDI in October, U/RTA in January and USITT in March. If you are interested in applying to the department, please let us know that you will be at one of those events. Note that the USITT conference is well past the annual January 15 deadline.

You can also arrange for a campus visit. For international applicants, contact R. Eric Stone to inquire about having a remote portfolio review online. What do we expect to see in your portfolio? See portfolio requirements below.

Students: check your SPAM folders. Many students have found that emails originating from university email addresses and U/RTA addresses land in the students' spam or junk folders, languishing there for days or weeks. The application process is time sensitive. We encourage students proactively check their email folders and adjust their settings accordingly.

The Application Portfolio

The candidate's portfolio should indicate skill and an artistic sensibility. Demonstrated design or related artistic or technical competency is highly desirable.

This portfolio must illustrate abilities in the relevant crafts of their chosen specialty, which may include drafting, painting, drawing, pattern making, cutting and draping, mask making, stagecraft, sculpture, photography, and graphic design. The following are recommended guidelines for an application portfolio:

The portfolio should include designs appropriate to your intended primary area of specialization: scenery, lighting, or costumes. Project designs may be included along with executed productions. Please include photos of any realized productions. Show your process in the creation of your design, as well as the final product on stage.

Scenery portfolios should include sketching, drafting, model work, and paint elevations: Rough sketches as well as final renderings (include samples of Adobe Photoshop and SketchUp work, if available); samples of drafting packages (hand drafting and vectorworks, if available), prop drawings/sketches; 1/4" rough models, finished 1/4" models; 1/2" and paint elevations. Photographs of designs for projects and executed productions; Samples of scenic art work and construction work in properties or scenery are welcome.

Costume portfolios should include: sketches and or renderings of projects and executed productions, as well as additional materials such as scale pattern drafting, evidence of special construction or techniques, design paperwork, and make-up or hair drawings.

Lighting portfolios should include: light plots and sections of projects and executed productions. Hookups, instrument schedules and photographic prints or slides of executed productions are expected. Sketches can also be included.

In addition to a primary area of specialization, some candidates may wish to include material relating to a second area of specialization.

All portfolios may include additional supporting material in other areas of visual design. These areas might include drawing, painting, and sculpture, fashion design, architecture, photography, and music composition, graphic, computer, or industrial design.

Each piece or group of pieces in the portfolio should be cited; for theatre work citations should include production title, theatre, director, your production title (if not that as designer) and date of execution. Supporting non-theatre work should have parallel information.

Program Requirements & Procedures

MFA Design candidates complete from 69 to 82 hours of course work and 3-4 design assignments. The program faculty must approve substitutions for any course in a student's plan of study. Studio/Related Area: 49-51 credits; Other Studies in Theatre: 11 credits; Electives: 9-12 credits. A typical plan of study in the graduate design program follows.

Typical Plan of Study

First Year Fall

2 of 3 Design I classes (Costume Design I, Lighting Design I, Scenic Design I)

Special Topics: Sewing or Entertainment Design or Media Design or Graphic Design

Design Seminar

Projects in Theatre

Orientation to Graduate Studies

12 sh total

First Year Spring

2 of 3 Design II classes (Costume Design II, Lighting Design II, Scenic Design II)

Scenic Art

Theatrical Analysis

Design Seminar

Projects in Theatre

Electives

12-14 sh total

Second Year Fall

1 or 2 of 3 Design III classes (Costume Design III, Lighting Design III, Scenic Design III)

1 of the Design I classes (Costume Design I, Lighting Design I, Scenic Design I)

Graphic Design

Design Seminar

Projects in Theatre

One of the Media Design offerings

Electives

12-14 sh total

Second Year Spring

Sound Design or Costume Crafts (Mask/Puppets)

Theatrical Analysis

Design Seminar

Projects in Theatre

One of the Media Design offerings

Electives

12-15 sh total

Third Year Fall

1 or 2 of 3 Design III classes (Costume Design III, Lighting Design III, Scenic Design III)

Design Seminar

Projects in Theatre	
One of the Media Design offerings	
Electives or Internship	
	9-12 sh total

Second Year Spring

Period Styles	
Theatrical Analysis	
Design Seminar	
Projects in Theatre	
Electives	
MFA Thesis	
	15 sh total

9 to 15 semester hours each semester. Total semester hours from 72 to 82 hours.

Production Requirements

MFA Design Candidates will be assigned an assistant or design position each semester to fulfill the graduation requirement. Students register for 1 to 3 semester hours under THTR:6691 Projects in Theatre and the section number of their area advisor.

Particularly accomplished students may be awarded additional design opportunities by the program faculty. Students are prohibited from taking on additional design projects during the academic year without consent of the program faculty.