

**THE ASSESSMENT OF
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS IN THEATRE**

National Association of Schools of Theatre

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PREFACE

The document presented herein is designed to assist institutions and individuals making assessments about undergraduate degrees in theatre for the purpose of:

- a. planning for the improvement of current programs
- b. examining the viability of current programs
- c. assessing the need for new programs
- d. planning new programs

The document is also intended to assist the user to develop a holistic view of undergraduate study in theatre both within and among institutions of higher education in the United States.

While this document reflects attention to the accreditation standards of NAST, it is not presented as a policy position of the Association. It is intended only as a resource document for NAST members and others involved with the historic effort of the field to develop and improve the quality of undergraduate education in theatre.

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The Assessment of Undergraduate Programs in Theatre

INTRODUCTION

America's enterprise in the undergraduate education of theatre professionals has produced tremendous cultural benefits. Over the years, the talents and abilities of thousands of individuals have been nurtured. These individuals serve our nation as a major cultural resource.

A number of factors have come together in recent years that pose serious challenges to undergraduate education. Concerns about mission, content, and funding receive significant attention; however, changing cultural patterns, public perceptions about education, and the continuing quest for an even greater degree of excellence are also prominent. It is clear, therefore, that serious questions and often difficult problems will be faced by all undergraduate programs whatever their size, level of resources, or reputation.

The higher education system in the United States thrives on diverse approaches to similar objectives. Accordingly, NAST has devised this document to assist in the maintenance of such diversity. The document poses questions related to the operation and expectations of undergraduate degrees and curricula, but it does not attempt to create answers for the user. The questions suggested for self-assessment may be answered in a variety of ways; correct answers must be found for each local situation, since no institution necessarily shares the same characteristics with another institution.

The document also supports the need for a variety of missions among institutions offering undergraduate degrees in theatre. Its primary thrust is to assist institutions in clarifying goals and in developing an objectives/resources/programs equation appropriate to the results expected from each undergraduate degree being offered.

The primary role of the National Association of Schools of Theatre is the accreditation of academic programs in theatre. NAST maintains accreditation standards concerning undergraduate programs in its [Handbook](#). The *Handbook* is published annually, and is available from the National Office of the Association or accessible from the NAST Web site at <http://nast.arts-accredit.org>. NAST also publishes as part of the suite of *Membership Procedures* documents, [Procedures for Institutions](#), which includes recommended questions for institutional self-studies in preparation for accreditation reviews.

This self-assessment document does not replace the accreditation process. However, the questions posed here should be useful to an institution reviewing its undergraduate offerings in conjunction with the accreditation process. The document also may provide a reference for institutions receiving questions about elements of their undergraduate programs in the course of a review by the NAST Commission on Accreditation. Hence, the document is presented as a resource for assessment in a broad variety of contexts of which accreditation is only one. It is structured to provide assistance with analysis prior to action, recognizing that the depth, scope, and effectiveness of such analysis will have significant influence on the quality of undergraduate education offered at specific institutions.

The success of any comprehensive assessment process is dependent upon involving the largest possible number of faculty, administrators, and others concerned with undergraduate degrees in theatre. Before proceeding, all those involved in the assessment should become familiar with NAST standards for undergraduate study found in the NAST [Handbook](#).

USING THE UNDERGRADUATE ASSESSMENTS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide a beginning for assessment work tailored to the needs of each user. The document is structured so that sets of questions about each topic can be used alone. It can also be used comprehensively either in the order presented or in some other order. Although the text contains many important questions about undergraduate study, it does not purport to contain every question pertinent to every institution. Note also that similar topics are often approached from different perspectives. Individuals wishing to utilize the document comprehensively will want to be judicious in eliminating or emphasizing multiple perspectives on similar questions depending on the nature and scope of their review.

I. THE CONTEXT FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Undergraduate study provides an artistic/intellectual foundation for individuals capable of significant roles in theatre. Some will become theatre professionals. Others will use theatre study as the basis for other professions. The aggregate theatre enterprise of the nation requires a large number of individuals engaged in many different activities: performance, playwriting, scholarship, teaching, research, therapy, and business are examples. Only institutions with extraordinary resources can give adequate coverage to the entire field. Given these circumstances, the setting of goals and objectives becomes crucial to developing the capabilities of institutions offering undergraduate degrees in theatre.

Goals and objectives—clear, precise, rational, focused—provide the essential framework of any operational structure. Goals and objectives cannot be charted in a vacuum, since they both affect and are affected by resources, policies, and numerous contextual circumstances. However, there is an objectives/resources/context equation which can be developed for each institution based on its unique circumstances. The questions presented below focus on the objectives component of this equation.

A. Beyond the Institution

Every undergraduate theatre program works in a context generated by a complex of forces beyond the institution. An assessment of this context is important as a base for the continuing study both of objectives and of other program elements.

1. What elements of the national condition have specific relationships to the ability of the institution to offer (a) liberal arts undergraduate degrees in theatre; (b) professional undergraduate degrees in theatre? For example: demographics, economics, cultural directions.
2. What elements of state, regional, or local conditions relate to the institution and its (a) liberal arts undergraduate degrees in theatre; (b) professional undergraduate degrees in theatre? For example: similar offerings in nearby institutions, special needs in the region, governance and funding agencies beyond the institution.
3. To what extent are the undergraduate degree programs in theatre able to influence the contextual elements described in A.1. and 2. above, and to what extent are they controlled by these elements?

B. Institution

All undergraduate degrees in theatre operate in an institutional context. Whether in an independent school of theatre or as part of the theatre program of a college or university, the institutional purpose, to the extent that it is defined as the framework for operations, has tremendous influence.

1. What are the overall institutional goals and objectives with respect to (a) undergraduate and (b) graduate education, their discrete differences and their interrelationships in the institution?
2. What are the factors, stated or not stated, which seem to be guiding decision-making at the institution?
3. How consistent has the institution been with respect to its overall purposes and goals? What is the probability that these will remain constant?

C. Theatre Unit

In most places, the undergraduate theatre offerings operate either as a unit or as part of or in conjunction with a graduate program. Undergraduate programs also may be located in a unit which is involved with precollegiate students, continuing education, and a variety of specialized programs. Thus, the theatre program as a whole has significant impact on conditions for undergraduate study.

1. What are the goals and objectives that seem to be guiding the theatre unit? Special attention should be given to these at the baccalaureate, initial master's, and, if offered, terminal degree levels.
2. To what extent must governance, and therefore determination of goals and objectives, be shared with other units of the institution?
3. How consistent has the theatre unit been with respect to its overall purposes and goals? What is the probability that these will remain constant? What are the primary conditions that could alter them?

D. Purposes of Undergraduate Theatre Programs

It is essential that each undergraduate degree program in theatre have a statement of purpose which defines its special, perhaps unique, function in the larger context of artistic endeavor.

This section deals with general issues concerning purposes. Subsequent sections will refer to specific goals and objectives related to degree programs and their operation.

1. What is the stated purpose of each undergraduate degree program in theatre? For example, what roles are the program and its graduates expected to play in the theatre enterprise?
2. To what extent are the purposes of all undergraduate programs related?
3. To what extent are these statements of purpose truly guiding each degree program? For example, as (a) the basis for making curricular decisions; (b) the basis for long-range planning, including the development of new curricula, innovative activities, expansion or reduction of the program; and (c) the basis for operational decisions with respect to admission practices, selection of faculty and staff, and allocation of resources.
4. What degree of autonomy does the theatre unit have in setting the purposes for its undergraduate degree programs?

E. Goals and Objectives of Undergraduate Theatre Degree Programs

Goals are broad statements of aim, the specific needs toward which efforts are directed, while objectives are the specific steps for reaching goals. Goals should imply something less remote and more definitive than purposes, while objectives should be components measurable in time, numbers, dollars, or specific activities.

1. How have the goals and objectives for the overall undergraduate theatre program evolved to their present form?
2. To what extent is there an organized process, either continuous or *ad hoc*, for developing goals and objectives for undergraduate theatre programs and for specific elements thereof? What office or mechanism has primary responsibility for leading the development process?
3. To what extent are goals and objectives guiding daily operational decisions as well as planning decisions (a) for the undergraduate theatre program as a whole; (b) for specific undergraduate degree programs? For example: (a) maintain nationally prominent degree programs in five areas of specialization in the face of adverse demographic projections [goal] which includes development of a more intensive recruitment and admission process [objective]; or (b) establish a five-year plan to enhance the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree program in theatre arts [goal] which includes hiring full-time artist/teachers in acting and scene design [objective].

F. Goals and Objectives of Specific Curricula

Goals and objectives relate not only to the undergraduate theatre effort as a whole, but also to the specific purpose of each curriculum.

1. What are the specific goals and objectives of each curriculum in theatre: (a) undergraduate liberal arts; (b) undergraduate professional?
2. How do these goals and objectives relate to the following basic approaches to undergraduate study: (a) traditional liberal arts undergraduate education; (b) traditional professional undergraduate education; (c) experimental or innovative undergraduate education?
3. To what extent are the individual goals and objectives of (a) undergraduate theatre faculty; (b) undergraduate students; (c) administrators consonant with the detailed goals and objectives of the undergraduate curricula to which they are most closely related?
4. To what extent do the faculty, students, and administrators involved with each curriculum have a specific concept of excellence for that curriculum beyond its current status? How does this relate to the ongoing definition of goals and objectives?
5. To what extent does each undergraduate curriculum prepare students to make or be involved with decisions that influence cultural development, i.e., issues and procedures concerned with program content, funding, and management at local, regional and national levels (a) in their areas of specialization; (b) in other areas of theatre; (c) in the arts and arts education in general?

G. Dissemination of Purposes, Goals, and Objectives

The communication of purposes, goals, and objectives to all constituencies involved in an undergraduate theatre curriculum is essential to preserve a sense of rationality about the variety of operations that cause it to function.

1. To what extent is there a continuous effort to promote common understanding of purposes, goals, and objectives among the constituents—faculty, students, administration—of (a) the undergraduate program as a whole; (b) each undergraduate degree program?
2. To what extent are responsibilities for communicating purposes, goals, and objectives delineated? How effectively are these responsibilities being carried out, both with respect to the program itself and to the institution as a whole?

H. Evaluation of Purposes, Goals, and Objectives

Periodic evaluation of purposes, goals, and objectives is essential to maintaining the appropriate framework for operational decisions.

1. When was the last major review of undergraduate theatre programs, and what were the results of that review?
2. What forces can generate the necessity for review, and to what extent are the goals and objectives represented by these forces consonant with those of the undergraduate theatre program as a whole or with its component parts?
3. How does the theatre unit evaluate its effectiveness in communicating its purposes, goals, and objectives for undergraduate study to its various constituencies?
4. To what extent are there ongoing procedures and mechanisms for review? Are these mandated in legal organizational documents of the institution or by some higher authority? Are they *ad hoc*? Who determines the procedures? Who has oversight responsibilities?
5. To what extent is the process for evaluation related to factors such as size, complexity, resources, and personnel?
6. To what extent can the theatre unit carry out the stated purposes, goals, and objectives of its undergraduate curricula under current conditions?

II. RESOURCES

Resources are more than dollars, or even what dollars buy. For undergraduate programs, resources involve the creation of an environment for undergraduate study which by its characteristics should encourage and facilitate the achievement of goals and objectives. While the presence of sufficient resources is essential, effectiveness is dependent on the appropriate deployment of resources in support of undergraduate study.

A. The Artistic and Intellectual Climate for Undergraduate Study

Undergraduate study demands the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and their application to practice, research, and scholarship. At the undergraduate level, quality of thought, initiative, and originality become honed as the acquisition of competence proceeds.

The various elements in the institution and the theatre program should produce an artistic and intellectual climate for undergraduate study. These elements—both individually and collectively—should be assessed regularly for their contribution to the artistic and intellectual climate.

1. What are the interrelationships of the artistic and intellectual climates present in (a) the institution as a whole; (b) the total undergraduate program of the institution; (c) each undergraduate program in theatre?
2. To what extent is there a “community” of undergraduate students in theatre, and what effect does this have on the artistic and intellectual climate?
3. Is there organized attention to the concept of an artistic and intellectual climate for undergraduate study in theatre? Are assessments made concerning the development of increased artistic and intellectual capabilities by students as a result of their presence in the environment of the institution?
4. How significant is the distinction between the institution’s approach to liberal arts undergraduate study and professional undergraduate study in theatre? Is this distinction a matter of design or does it result from the aggregate of operations? How do these distinctions and conditions contribute to the artistic and intellectual climate?

B. Size and Scope

In most cases, the size and scope of a program have direct impact on (a) the resources available; (b) the reputation of the program locally, regionally, and nationally; and (c) the relationship between reputation and resources.

Size and scope considerations also should be related directly to the purposes, goals, and objectives of each undergraduate curriculum.

1. What are the relationships among the size and scope of each undergraduate theatre curriculum and the goals and objectives of (a) each undergraduate degree program; (b) the total theatre program; (c) the institution?
2. What is the relationship of the size and scope of each undergraduate curriculum to the maintenance of the requisite artistic and intellectual climate for undergraduate study in theatre? (Programs of all sizes will find challenges in pondering this question.)
3. To what extent can the institution ensure for each of its undergraduate curricula: (a) an appropriate number of faculty and other resources; (b) sufficient advanced courses in theatre appropriate to the major area of study; and (c) requisite production experience at an advanced level?
4. To what extent do the size and scope of the program relate to the continuous maintenance of a community of students and faculty sufficient to support the major areas of study offered?
5. How do the size and scope of the undergraduate theatre program relate to its instructional profile? For example, what is the incidence of instruction in lectures, seminars, tutorials, master classes, individual projects, etc.? How does this instructional profile in turn relate to the maintenance of the appropriate artistic and intellectual climate for undergraduate study as indicated by the objectives for each undergraduate curriculum?
6. What projections are made regularly about the size and scope of the undergraduate theatre program, especially as related to the stability and continuity of resources, including the maintenance of key faculty positions? How are these projections related to employment trends in areas covered by major curricula?

7. Have size and scope issues been considered in relation to the work of educational institutions in the same geographic area or beyond? For example, to what extent have there been local, regional, or national analyses of (a) the need for each of the undergraduate degrees being offered in theatre; (b) the possibility of sharing resources and other cooperative efforts?

C. Governance

Governance implies both a decision-making process and supervision of policy implementation.

1. What are the primary governance structures affecting the (a) liberal arts undergraduate program; (b) professional undergraduate program?
2. How does the governance structure relate to (a) the maintenance of an artistic and intellectual climate for undergraduate study; (b) the size and scope of the program; (c) basic funding?

D. Administration

Administration implies regular decision-making guided by overall policies established by the governance system as well as the means by which such decisions are carried out. Normally, there is a strong connection between administration and governance.

1. What are the primary administrative structures related directly to the operation of undergraduate theatre curricula? How do the undergraduate theatre faculty relate to this administrative structure? How does this administrative structure relate to other undergraduate administrative structures in the institution?
2. What is the relationship between administration and the maintenance of an artistic and intellectual climate related to the undergraduate curricula offered?
3. What is the relationship of administration to the allocation and deployment of resources? How are these allocation decisions related to those with direct responsibility for the content of (a) liberal arts undergraduate degrees (b) professional undergraduate degrees?
4. What degree of authority does the administration of the undergraduate theatre program have regarding curricula, students, and faculty?

E. Faculty

The success of any undergraduate program is dependent upon the quality of the faculty. The background, experience, and leadership of these individuals will determine the level of excellence the program can achieve. Participants in the assessment should determine whether to include graduate teaching assistants with faculty, or whether to ask the same set of questions substituting graduate teaching assistants for faculty.

1. What qualifications are expected of faculty who will teach undergraduate theatre students?
2. To what extent does the overall profile of faculty expertise match the size, scope, goals, and objectives of undergraduate curricula in theatre?
3. What policies and procedures are used to select faculty for service in each undergraduate theatre curriculum? How are these procedures determined? How are these procedures related to (a) goals and objectives; (b) maintenance of an appropriate artistic and intellectual climate; and (c) the size

and scope of the theatre unit? For example, what is the profile of service of full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty; of teaching assistants?

4. To what extent do the undergraduate faculty serve as role models or mentors for students? What do these role models represent, especially with respect to exemplifying a continuity of commitment to artistic and intellectual growth?
5. What mechanisms are in place to encourage continuous faculty development, including work in contexts beyond the institution?
6. To what extent are undergraduate faculty members successful in encouraging creative artistic and intellectual work by their students, especially in those cases where student work may be significantly different from their own?
7. How are teaching loads of undergraduate theatre faculty determined? What are the profiles of faculty teaching loads, both individually and collectively? To what extent do these profiles seem to support the goals and objectives of the undergraduate theatre curricula and the presence of an artistic and intellectual climate?
8. To what extent does the institution have effective mechanisms for providing mentors or other assistance to faculty or graduate assistants new to teaching at the undergraduate level?
9. How is “leadership” defined by the institution and the overall theatre unit, and how is this definition related to the specific goals and objectives of each undergraduate curriculum, the artistic and intellectual climate, and the size and scope of the undergraduate theatre program? To what extent are members of the undergraduate theatre faculty, both individually and as a group, exerting leadership in their areas of expertise (a) locally; (b) regionally; (c) nationally; and (d) internationally? How does the issue of leadership relate to hiring, promotion, and tenure policies and procedures?
10. What other promotion and tenure policies are in place related to the undergraduate theatre faculty? To what extent are promotion and tenure policies developed in relation to the specific objectives/resources/context equation operating at the institution?
11. How effective is the institution’s student and peer evaluation system regarding faculty creative work in (a) playwriting and production; (b) research and scholarship; (c) teaching?

F. Library

Library resources are critical to the success of undergraduate programs. Appropriate resources must be provided to support each undergraduate curriculum.

1. What are the overall characteristics of the institution’s library system? How do these characteristics relate to the goals and objectives of the undergraduate theatre curricula and to the needs of the undergraduate faculty and students?
2. How do the collections in theatre and related disciplines support the goals and objectives, the artistic and intellectual climate, and the size and scope of the undergraduate theatre program, as well as the specific curricula undertaken by undergraduate theatre students?
3. What mechanisms and personnel are in place to relate curricula and library resources in an organized and ongoing manner? To what extent are these mechanisms, including acquisitions and

collections management, effective in developing a collection which supports each undergraduate theatre curriculum?

4. How well do library facilities and services serve students and faculty? To what extent do these provide a supportive environment for study?
5. To what extent are undergraduate curricula related to library resources? What is the scholarly/research/performance orientation of each undergraduate curriculum and how is this related to acquisition policies?
6. Will the collection support the needs of faculty and those of undergraduate students in their areas of concentration? If not, how are these needs fulfilled? What are the working relationships with the nearest major research library?

G. Facilities and Equipment

Many undergraduate theatre curricula require specialized facilities and equipment. The following questions are concerned with these resources.

1. To what extent do facilities for undergraduate study contribute to the artistic and intellectual climate for (a) the total undergraduate program of the institution; (b) each undergraduate program in theatre?
2. To what extent are facilities adequate for the size and scope of the undergraduate theatre offerings?
3. How does the undergraduate theatre faculty influence the governance and administrative operations concerned with facilities and equipment?
4. How effective is the mechanism for evaluating facilities needs on a continuous basis? How effective is the institution's program for maintenance, repair, and replacement of necessary equipment?

H. Funding

The control exerted by funding is recognized most directly with respect to short-term operations. However, this control is equally significant with respect to possibilities for long-term achievement. Salaries, stipends, fellowships, scholarships, and other direct funding are important. However, the relationship of funding to larger issues related to quality also should be considered (for example: resources for personnel development, the maintenance of an artistic and intellectual climate, library resources, performance opportunities, and so forth).

1. What is the relationship of present and projected funding to the (a) purposes, goals, and objectives; (b) artistic and intellectual climate; (c) size and scope of undergraduate theatre curricula? How are funding projections integrated into long-term planning?
2. How does this projection relate to continuity of each undergraduate curriculum or to plans for its expansion or diminution?
3. How are funding decisions made? For example, does the undergraduate theatre program receive funding primarily on the basis of tuition generated, some other formula, or the adjudged merits of specific undergraduate programs? How effective is the undergraduate theatre program in maintaining and enhancing its funding?
4. How effective is the use of funds allocated to the undergraduate theatre program?

III. ACADEMIC PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES

There are two basic elements that must be considered in the development of undergraduate curricula: (a) theatre studies and (b) general studies. Some undergraduate curricula also involve the element of professional or preprofessional studies. Institutional and departmental perspectives on these subjects inform the goals and objectives of each curriculum and the artistic and intellectual climate for undergraduate study. All the elements are related both to course work and to the development of competencies that pertain to all aspects of the curriculum. These elements are outlined in this section in a way to encourage assessment of each element separately as well as the interrelationship of all the elements.

A. Performance

1. What is the primary purpose of performance studies required of (a) all undergraduate theatre students; (b) students pursuing various areas of specialization?
2. What are the expectations regarding performance for (a) all undergraduate students irrespective of the area of specialization; (b) students enrolled in specific areas of specialization?
3. To what extent do the specific approaches to performance contribute to the development of (a) comprehensive performance skills; (b) abilities to relate performance studies to other studies?
4. To what extent do the approaches to performance covered in items 1. and 2. above coincide with the goals and objectives and the aspirations for the artistic and intellectual climate in (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
5. To what extent are various evaluation procedures concerning performance consistent with goals and objectives and the artistic and intellectual climate for (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
6. To what extent does the institution have means for projecting the future of its programs in performance?

B. Production and Design

1. What is the primary purpose of production and design studies required of (a) all undergraduate theatre students; (b) students pursuing various areas of specialization?
2. What are the expectations regarding production and design for (a) all undergraduate students irrespective of the area of specialization; (b) students enrolled in specific areas of specialization?
3. To what extent do the specific approaches to production and design contribute to the development of (a) comprehensive understanding of theatre; (b) abilities to relate production and design studies to other studies?
4. To what extent do the approaches to production and design covered in items 1. and 2. above coincide with the goals and objectives and the aspirations for the artistic and intellectual climate in (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
5. To what extent are various evaluation procedures concerning production and design consistent with goals and objectives and the artistic and intellectual climate for (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
6. To what extent does the institution have means for projecting the future of its programs in production and design?

C. Repertory and History

1. What is the primary purpose of repertory and history studies required of (a) all undergraduate theatre students; (b) students pursuing various areas of specialization?
2. What are the expectations regarding repertory and history for (a) all undergraduate students irrespective of the area of specialization; (b) students enrolled in specific areas of specialization?
3. To what extent do the specific approaches to repertory and history contribute to the development of (a) comprehensive understanding of theatre; (b) abilities to relate repertory and history studies to other studies; (c) an awareness of other cultures and other times?
4. To what extent do the approaches to repertory and history covered in items 1. and 2. above coincide with the goals and objectives and the aspirations for the artistic and intellectual climate in (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
5. To what extent are various evaluation procedures concerning repertory and history consistent with goals and objectives and the artistic and intellectual climate for (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
6. To what extent does the institution have means for projecting the future of its programs in repertory and history?

D. Analytical and Theoretical Studies

1. What is the primary purpose of analytical and theoretical studies required of (a) all undergraduate theatre students; (b) students pursuing various areas of specialization?
2. What are the expectations regarding analytical and theoretical studies for (a) all undergraduate students irrespective of the area of specialization; (b) students enrolled in specific areas of specialization?
3. To what extent do the specific approaches to analytical and theoretical studies contribute to the development of (a) comprehensive understanding of theatre; (b) abilities to relate studies in theatre analysis to other studies?
4. To what extent do the approaches to analytical and theoretical studies covered in items 1. and 2. above coincide with the goals and objectives and the aspirations for the artistic and intellectual climate in (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
5. To what extent are various evaluation procedures concerning analytical and theoretical studies consistent with goals and objectives and the artistic and intellectual climate for (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
6. To what extent does the institution have means for projecting the future of its programs in analytical and theoretical studies?

E. Allied Professional Studies

(Course work and experiences in allied professional fields such as education, therapy, business, and engineering)

1. What are the primary purposes of allied professional studies required of (a) all undergraduate theatre students; (b) students pursuing various areas of specialization?
2. To what extent do the specific approaches to professional studies contribute to the development of (a) comprehensive understanding of theatre; (b) abilities to relate allied professional studies to other studies?
3. To what extent do the approaches to allied professional studies covered in items 1. and 2. above coincide with the goals and objectives and the aspirations for the artistic and intellectual climate in (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
4. To what extent are various evaluation procedures concerning allied professional studies consistent with goals and objectives and the intellectual climate for (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
5. To what extent does the institution have means for projecting the future of its allied professional studies programs?

F. Technology

(Course work and experiences that produce familiarity with applicable equipment, systems, and related procedures)

1. What is the primary purpose of technological studies required of (a) all undergraduate theatre students; (b) students pursuing various areas of specialization?
2. What are the expectations regarding technology for (a) all undergraduate students irrespective of the area of specialization; (b) students enrolled in specific areas of specialization?
3. To what extent do the specific approaches to technology contribute to the development of (a) comprehensive understanding of theatre; (b) abilities to relate technological studies to other studies; (c) understanding of distinctions between means and ends?
4. To what extent do the approaches to technology covered in items 1. and 2. above coincide with the goals and objectives and the aspirations for the artistic and intellectual climate in (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
5. To what extent are various evaluation procedures concerning technology consistent with goals and objectives and the artistic and intellectual climate for (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
6. To what extent does the institution have means for projecting the future of its programs in technology?

G. Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies

1. What opportunities are available for the study of relationships among theatre and other disciplines?
2. What opportunities are available for studying multicultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural aspects of theatre?
3. To what extent are students required or encouraged to avail themselves of these opportunities?

H. Preparation for Teaching

Many of those who are enrolled in undergraduate degree programs in theatre will be engaged in teaching at some time during the course of their careers. Therefore, each undergraduate curriculum must reflect some determination about preparation for teaching.

1. Does the overall undergraduate program, or specific areas of specialization within it, have clearly defined goals and objectives with respect to the development of teaching skills?
2. How does the issue of preparation for teaching relate to the specific objectives for an artistic and intellectual climate?
3. If there is an internship program related to the preparation of teachers, how effective are mechanisms in place to evaluate and assist students engaged in these programs?
4. To what extent is preparation for teaching integrated into the various teaching methods employed by faculty?
5. To what extent do undergraduate students have opportunities to teach other students? For example, are they given teaching experience as a part of classroom, seminar, production, and tutorial work? To what extent are these teaching experiences supervised?
4. To what extent are undergraduate students at the senior level capable of teaching in their own area of specialization?

I. General Studies

1. What is the primary purpose of general studies required of (a) all undergraduate theatre students; (b) students pursuing various areas of specialization? To what extent does the program address the development of (a) precise, cogent, and forceful communication; (b) an acquaintance with mathematical, historical, and artistic forms of analysis; (c) an awareness of other cultures and other times; (d) understanding and experience with moral and ethical problems; (e) the ability to create and evaluate judgments and patterns of reasoning?
2. What are the expectations regarding general studies for (a) all undergraduate students irrespective of the area of specialization; (b) students enrolled in specific areas of specialization?
3. To what extent do the approaches to general studies covered in items 1. and 2. above coincide with the goals and objectives and the aspirations for the artistic and intellectual climate in (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
4. To what extent do the specific approaches to general studies contribute to the development of understandings about theatre?

5. To what extent are various evaluation procedures concerning general studies consistent with goals and objectives and the artistic and intellectual climate for (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
6. To what extent does the institution have means for projecting the future of its programs in general studies?

J. Synthesis and Integration: Theatre

1. What are the primary purposes of the synthesis and integration of studies in theatre for (a) all undergraduate theatre students; (b) students pursuing various areas of specialization?
2. What are the expectations regarding synthesis and integration of studies in theatre for (a) all undergraduate students irrespective of the area of specialization; (b) students enrolled in specific areas of specialization?
3. To what extent do the specific approaches to synthesis and integration of studies in theatre contribute to the development of (a) comprehensive understanding of theatre; (b) abilities to relate theatre studies to other studies?
4. To what extent do the approaches to synthesis and integration of studies in theatre covered in items 1. and 2. above coincide with the goals and objectives and the aspirations for the artistic and intellectual climate in (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
5. To what extent are various evaluation procedures concerning synthesis and integration of studies in theatre consistent with goals and objectives and the artistic and intellectual climate for (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
6. To what extent does the institution have means for projecting the future of its programs in the synthesis and integration of theatre studies?
7. To what extent do the undergraduate theatre program's approaches to performance, analytical and theoretical studies, production and design, repertory and history, general studies, professional studies, and technology develop graduates whose approach to theatre is characterized by the fusion of theatre and intellectual skills which support an understanding of the cultural and intellectual background of the theatre?

K. Synthesis and Integration: General Studies and Theatre

1. What are the primary purposes of the synthesis and integration of theatre and general studies for (a) all undergraduate theatre students; (b) students pursuing various areas of specialization?
2. What are the expectations regarding synthesis and integration of theatre and general studies for (a) all undergraduate students irrespective of the area of specialization; (b) students enrolled in specific areas of specialization?
3. To what extent do the specific approaches to synthesis and integration of theatre and general studies contribute to the development of (a) comprehensive understanding of theatre; (b) abilities to relate theatre studies to other studies?

4. To what extent do the approaches to synthesis and integration of theatre and general studies covered in items 1. and 2. above coincide with the goals and objectives and the aspirations for the artistic and intellectual climate in (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
5. To what extent are various evaluation procedures concerning synthesis and integration of theatre and general studies consistent with goals and objectives and the artistic and intellectual climate for (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
6. To what extent does the institution have means for projecting the future of its programs in the synthesis and integration of theatre and general studies?

IV. GENERAL PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Previous sections have discussed elements of the objectives/resources/context/academic policies equation. It is essential to add a fifth element: the specific academic programs to be undertaken by undergraduate students.

All procedures and requirements for undergraduate curricula should be assessed against these five elements both separately and as they interact with one another.

It is also recognized that undergraduate study presents an opportunity for focus based upon the talents and objectives of individual students. Assessments of procedure and requirements for majors and areas of emphasis should be as rigorous and thoughtful as those applied to the undergraduate program as a whole.

A. Admission

The admission of a group of individuals to undergraduate study does much to define the approach, style, and effectiveness of the undergraduate program.

1. To what extent does the institution have a defined set of entrance criteria related to the goals and objectives of each undergraduate theatre curriculum? Has there been an assessment of the type of student most likely to benefit from the particular characteristics of undergraduate curricula in place at the institution? Does the institution have policies regarding geographic distribution, cultural and ethnic diversity, and so forth? What policies, procedures, or philosophies exist with respect to prerequisites before entrance into each undergraduate degree?
2. To what extent are admission decisions based upon projections about an individual's aspirations and capabilities for (a) completing a specific curriculum; (b) achieving a basic general education at the college level; (c) developing high level professional work in the area of specialization? What criteria are used to make these judgments? For example, does the admissions process take into account some national standard of proficiency as a base for its decisions?
3. To what extent are admission policies based on quotas or other measures which ensure requisite experiences for students at the undergraduate level (for example: casting requirements, tutorials, directing opportunities, independent study opportunities, opportunities for a variety of production work)?
4. How is the level of selectivity related to the specific objectives of each undergraduate curriculum? For example, what are the ratios of application to acceptance over the last five years?

5. How are individual admission decisions made in relation to the body of students already enrolled?
6. What are the major elements of the admissions process for undergraduate students in general and for each area of specialization at the undergraduate level?
7. What is the rank order of importance accorded to the various elements in the admission process, and how does this relate to the profile of the objectives for undergraduate study (a) at the institution; (b) in the theatre unit?
8. To what extent are individual interviews and assessments part of the admission process? How are such interviews structured to support the objectives of each curriculum?
9. How does the theatre unit structure its battery of diagnostic auditions and examinations for entering undergraduate students?
10. What is the content profile of entrance auditions and examinations developed by the institution and the theatre unit? For example, to what extent do auditions and examinations test factual knowledge, general comprehension of concepts, creative approaches to problem-solving, technical performance skills, interpretive performance skills, potential in the above categories, etc.? How does this profile relate to the objectives profile of the undergraduate theatre program as a whole and to the objectives profile of the specific curriculum for which the student is enrolling? How does the approach to entrance auditions and examinations reflect the artistic and intellectual climate of the program?
11. To what extent are standard published examinations utilized in the admissions process? How does the content of these examinations relate to the goals and objectives of each undergraduate theatre curriculum?

B. Advisement

Advisement is the mechanism by which progress toward each student's potential can be most effectively guided. It is especially important for undergraduate students in theatre since they will begin their studies with a diversity of previous education, background, and interests. A strong advisement program is an essential element in ensuring that each curriculum meets its educational objectives.

1. What are the elements of the advisement program? What are its size, scope, and intensity?
2. How is the process of choosing course work for individual students related to the advisement program?
3. How is the advisement program related to professional practice in the area of specialization? To what extent does it prepare students for career opportunities upon graduation?
4. How is advisement related (a) to periodic assessment and evaluation of student competencies; (b) to overall assessments of the extent to which the undergraduate effort and its component programs are meeting their objectives?

C. Retention

Retention relates both to decisions of students to leave a particular program and the decision of a program to sever relationships with a particular student.

1. What regulations and mechanisms are in place regarding retention of students (a) in the undergraduate program as a whole; (b) in specific degree programs; (c) in areas of specialization within degree programs?
2. How are the retention mechanisms related to (a) the admissions process; (b) the advisement program?
3. To what extent have students left the program of their own volition? How many of these students have completed undergraduate work at other institutions? To what extent are these decisions analyzed with respect to the institution's admission and advisement programs?

D. Degree Requirements

It is recognized that a variety of academic elements comprise the composite degree requirements for any undergraduate program. In an overall sense, these requirements need continuous attention and evaluation.

1. In what ways does the profile of degree requirements relate to the objectives/resources/context equation and to the artistic and intellectual climate of each undergraduate curriculum?
2. To what extent do degree requirements relate to the projected future work of graduates? For example, does the institution have objectives that relate degree study to future work, or do its objectives deal more abstractly with the development of individual capabilities irrespective of relationships to the workplace?
3. To what extent are degree requirements structured to (a) encourage individual creativity in performance, scholarship, and research; and (b) include demonstration of the student's ability to produce professional-level work without supervision?
4. To what extent do degree requirements focus on (a) the student's area of specialization; (b) course work supportive of that specialization; (c) general knowledge of theatre; (d) general knowledge of other matters of art and culture; (e) general knowledge of science and the humanities?

E. Residence

1. Residence policies vary widely from institution to institution. It is recognized that no single residence policy will be appropriate in every case; however, the intensity of an individual's experience in the undergraduate community influences individual growth as an artist or scholar.
2. What are the primary forces driving the institution's residence policies for undergraduate study? How consonant are these forces with the institution's objectives for undergraduate study as a whole, the objectives of undergraduate programs in areas of specialization, and the objectives for a particular artistic and intellectual climate at the institution?
3. How do residence requirements relate to the institution's admission, advisement and retention programs and to the degree requirements for particular areas of specialization?
4. To what extent do residence policies relate to the provision of experiences which approximate the eventual working situations of the student?
5. How are residence requirements evaluated with respect to their effectiveness in supporting the objectives of (a) the undergraduate program in theatre as a whole; and (b) each specific curriculum?

F. Proficiencies: Languages and/or Other Extra-Theatre Knowledge and Skills

Undergraduate students need certain extra-theatre knowledge and skills in order to be productive in various theatre professions. The acquisition of languages and other research skills such as bibliography, statistics, computer programming, and advanced mathematics also broadens intellectual horizons and capabilities. Basic knowledge and skills in business, non-mathematical analysis, and organization may be important for some specializations.

1. What specific language, research, and/or other non-theatre knowledge and skills are required for each undergraduate curriculum? What level of proficiency is expected for each required skill? How are these related to general requirements for all undergraduate curricula in theatre?
2. How are these requirements established, and by what criteria are they chosen? For example, to what extent do projected student needs, the maintenance of an intellectual climate in the institution, tradition, the maintenance of requirements similar to those of other institutions, professional practices, etc., produce the language proficiencies and other required knowledge and skills profile of each undergraduate curriculum?
3. To what extent are skills requirements related directly to completion of a final project or to completion of other specific requirements for the degree, such as course work?

G. Course Work

The organization and utilization of course work as an aspect of undergraduate study vary widely among institutions, and even within institutions depending on the types of undergraduate curricula being offered. Policies concerning course work must be tailored carefully to meet the exigencies of each particular situation. There are no particular formulas or methodologies appropriate to every institution.

1. What are the scope and sequence of course work required for each undergraduate curriculum at the institution? How are these related to the specific objectives of each curriculum?
2. How are course requirements related to the development and testing of specific proficiencies appropriate to the area of specialization? If these proficiencies are not expected to be achieved through course work, what other mechanisms for teaching, learning, and evaluation are in place to develop these?
3. To what extent is there a distinction between the style, approach, and philosophy of undergraduate course work for lower- and upper-division students?
4. To what extent is course work regarded as preparation for final examinations or for entrance examinations to graduate study? To what extent is course work related to working conditions that the individual will be likely to face upon entry into the profession?
5. How does the content of course work for each undergraduate curriculum relate to the size and scope of the undergraduate theatre offerings?
6. How does the content of course work relate to objectives for artistic/intellectual synthesis and integration? For example, to what extent does the institution have programs such as writing across the curriculum, analysis across the theatre curriculum, etc.?
7. To what extent does either the theatre unit or the institution as a whole have objectives concerning structural interrelationships in course work?

8. What are the institution's policies concerning transfer of credits for course work taken at other institutions? To what extent are policies developed to facilitate transfer between two- and four-year institutions?

H. Independent Study

1. What is the primary purpose of independent study opportunities provided to (a) all undergraduate theatre students; (b) students pursuing various areas of specialization?
2. What are the expectations regarding independent study opportunities for (a) all undergraduate students irrespective of the area of specialization; (b) students enrolled in specific areas of specialization?
3. To what extent do the specific approaches to independent study contribute to the development of comprehensive understanding of theatre?
4. To what extent do the approaches to independent study covered in items 1. and 2. above coincide with the goals and objectives and the aspirations for the artistic and intellectual climate in (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
5. To what extent are various evaluation procedures concerning independent study consistent with goals and objectives and the artistic and intellectual climate for (a) the overall undergraduate theatre program; (b) specific areas of specialization?
6. To what extent does the institution have the means for projecting the future of its independent study programs?

I. Final Project

When required, the final project is normally structured to demonstrate competence in the area of specialization. For the purposes of this document, final projects include performances, theses, lecture demonstrations, or other original work. It is recognized that institutions may have other final project requirements in addition to those exemplifying traditional formats, and that structured final projects may not be appropriate for some curricula.

1. List the titles or describe the final projects completed at the institution during the past five years for undergraduate degrees. What does the content profile of these projects reveal about the undergraduate theatre program?
2. What does the final project content profile reveal about achievement of the purposes, goals, and objectives of the overall undergraduate theatre program and each specific curriculum?
3. To what extent is the final project regarded as a guided exercise or an independent exercise?
4. How are final project topics chosen? What is their relationship to a needs assessment of: (a) overall intellectual/artistic development; (b) professional development in the area of specialization; (c) preparation for teaching; (d) preparation for other work in theatre professions?
5. What significance does the final project have in graduation decisions?

J. Evaluations

Evaluations take place throughout the undergraduate program. Obviously, there are evaluations of course work, projects, and performances. This section is concerned with the undergraduate program's overall approach to evaluation and, specifically, with summary evaluations such as comprehensive reviews.

1. What is the institution's established philosophy with respect to evaluations at various points in each undergraduate program? How does this philosophy relate to the purposes and goals of the undergraduate program as a whole, and to the goals and objectives of each curriculum?
2. To what extent does this philosophy cover the content, timing, and level of expectations of evaluations?
3. What is the content of evaluations? How does this content relate to the goals and objectives of each undergraduate curriculum? How is this content related to admission, retention, advisement, and course requirements?
4. How does operation of the evaluation system contribute to the artistic and intellectual climate desired by the undergraduate theatre program?
5. How does the policy for evaluations encourage and assess the development of individual skills and creative approaches to disciplinary subject matter?
6. To what extent do such reviews indicate an individual's progress toward independence as a creative practitioner, teacher, researcher, or scholar?
7. To what extent do evaluations assess the integration of knowledge and skills gained through discrete course work and other experiences?
8. To what extent does the evaluation system assess comprehensive acquisition of knowledge and skills consistent with the objectives of the undergraduate program and any areas of specialization?

V. DEGREE TITLES

Institutions offering undergraduate degrees in theatre exhibit a wide variety of goals and objectives. For this reason, all degree titles should reflect national practice and be consistent with the content of the degree.

1. How are undergraduate curricula characterized with respect to the distinction made by NAST between (a) liberal arts and professional undergraduate degrees in theatre; (b) majors and areas of emphasis? (See NAST *Handbook*.)
2. How do degree titles relate to the specific content, purpose, and operation of degree programs? For example, does the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre accept and graduate only those individuals who have the ability to perform at a basic professional level?
3. Do degrees with combination or dual titles have sufficient content and requirements to indicate dual preparation in both specializations contained in the title?

VI. SUMMARY

The planning for and evaluation of undergraduate programs takes place in a variety of contexts. As indicated in the preface, these include:

- a. planning for the improvement of current programs
- b. examining the viability of current programs
- c. assessing the need for new programs
- d. planning new programs

After completing the foregoing sets of assessment questions, a summary should be prepared to support decisions concerning undergraduate degree programs.

A. Starting, Upgrading, and Deleting Programs

1. What are the real costs involved in beginning, improving, or deleting a particular program? If a new curriculum is being started or an existing curriculum is being upgraded, what is the probability that resources will be available to ensure an acceptable level of quality? If a curriculum is being deleted, what effects may be expected on the program as a whole? For example, will deletion of the curriculum result in a loss of resources or the ability to redirect resources into stronger programs?
2. What is the need for the existing or projected curriculum at local, regional, and national levels with respect to (a) its level of excellence; (b) the general, technical, and intellectual needs of the theatre field; and (c) the employment prospects for graduates?
3. What is the relationship of a projected curriculum to existing curricula with respect to objectives, resources, general requirements and general policies, both at the institution and at other institutions? The relationship to resource utilization is especially crucial, particularly when considering prospects for excellence.
4. If a curriculum is being initiated, what degree of excellence can be expected given the institution's objectives/resources/context equation? How long will it take the institution to achieve this level of excellence? What is the relationship of this length of time to the development of a strong reputation for the curriculum?

B. Synopsis

(The following questions are intended to address and combine answers discussed in other sections.)

1. What is the level of excellence being achieved by (a) the undergraduate program as a whole; (b) each curriculum being considered in this assessment process?
2. To what extent is there logical consistency between the philosophical and operational aspects of each undergraduate program element? To what extent do the concepts, policies, and operations of the various parts contribute to the functioning of the undergraduate program as a whole?
3. What are the critical issues that will influence the future viability and effectiveness of the undergraduate program?
4. To what extent does the assessment reveal that the institution is in a good position to deal with these critical issues?

APPENDIX: NAST SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

I. CONSULTATIVE SERVICES

NAST offers three primary types of consultative services: staff consultations, on-site consultations, and Commission consultations.

The NAST staff may be contacted at the National Office for information and assistance. The staff can provide suggestions and share appropriate information from NAST records; however, the staff does not make evaluative judgments about educational programs. There is no charge for staff consultations.

NAST will arrange for suitable on-site consultants to address needs identified by inquiring institutions. These consultants are nominated from among the most experienced individuals serving as visiting evaluators in the NAST accreditation process. Arrangements for consultants are made by contacting the NAST National Office. Institutions are responsible for the expenses of the consultant and a fee calculated on a per-day basis.

NAST member institutions may also submit formal requests for consultation about proposed undergraduate curricula to the Commission on Accreditation. Members of the Commission will review the proposed program and respond in writing without making an accreditation decision. Information about the process may be obtained from the NAST National Office. There is no charge for Commission consultation, and this procedure is especially encouraged in the early stages of curricular planning.

II. PUBLICATIONS

Several other publications produced by or available through NAST have applications for institutions involved in assessments. All publications are available for download or purchase from the NAST Web site, <http://nast.arts-accredit.org>. The following items may be especially useful:

A. General Resources

[NAST Handbook](#). Accreditation standards and guidelines for educational programs in theatre. The *Handbook* is published annually.

[NAST Membership Procedures Documents](#). Questions appropriate to self-study in preparation for accreditation review, as well as “[Optional Supplemental Questions for Self-Study](#),” which may have additional applications beyond the accreditation process. These documents are normally updated on a five-year cycle.

[HEADS Data Summaries for Theatre](#). Composite statistics from the annual reports of NAST members and non-member responders. Enrollments, faculty numbers and salary ranges, budgets, and faculty/student ratios are included. HEADS Data Summaries are published annually.

[NAST Executive Summaries of Futures Issues](#). Loose-leaf series covers demographics, values and traditions, professional education, economics, K–12 education, technology, the values context, research, administrative leadership, and an overview. Issues are considered in terms of their meanings for the work of theatre units.

[NAST Sourcebook for Futures Planning](#). A compendium of planning procedures oriented more to taking initiative than to demonstrating accountability. Focus is on realistic contextual analysis as the basis for action. Supplements to the *Sourcebook* are published from time to time.

[Achievement and Quality Web Site \(http://agresources.arts-accredit.org\)](http://agresources.arts-accredit.org). A Web resource addressing issues related to the consideration of achievement and quality in the arts. Sections on evaluating achievement and quality in the work of the individual and the institution may be particularly applicable.

B. Specific Topics (all the following titles are available [here](#))

Academic Advising: A briefing paper, *Guiding the Arts Student*, identifies issues for institutions and administrators concerned with the provision of academic advising, career counseling, and mentoring for arts students.

Arts Administration: A briefing paper, *The Work of Arts Executives in Higher Education*, outlines the multiple roles and responsibilities of those who direct arts programs in higher education.

Faculty Evaluation and Rewards: Two documents by a joint arts accreditation task force discuss the work of arts faculties at the postsecondary level. *The Work of Arts Faculties in Higher Education* explains the basic nature of intellectual and creative work in the arts and presents lists of responsibilities undertaken by faculties in various arts disciplines. *Local Assessment of Evaluation and Reward Systems for Arts Faculties in Higher Education* poses a series of questions for use in assessment.

III. NAST ANNUAL MEETINGS

NAST Annual Meetings are held during late March. Annual Meetings are designed to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among those who manage institutions developing theatre professionals. Program information for each year's upcoming Annual Meeting is published on the NAST Web site in the Fall.

IV. NAST ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

NAST accreditation procedures include full reviews for Membership and renewal of Membership as well as focused reviews of curricula initiated by member institutions in the interim between regular full reviews. Self-study is an integral part of both procedures.

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