

NAST Competencies Summary

Degree: The BFA in Acting, a professional undergraduate degree

Essential Note: Items below are excerpts from the NAST *Handbook*. Items 1 through 4 indicate the content and natures of the competencies expected of those graduating with the above degree. Items 5 and 6 indicate recommendations for competency development.

Only the *Handbook* in its entirety contains all standards and guidelines applicable to and used by all phases of NAST membership reviews. In the text below "H." indicates the location of the excerpted text in the *Handbook*; the term "(All)" indicates standards applicable to all professional undergraduate theatre degrees including acting; "(Acting)" indicates specific standards for that major.

Item 1. (All)

Common Body of Knowledge and Skills (H.VIII.B.)

1. **Production.** Students must acquire:
 - a. Technical skills requisite for artistic self-expression in at least one major area of production (for example, acting, design/technology, playwriting, directing) and those skills must be progressively developed to the highest level appropriate to the particular area of concentration. Technical proficiency standards should be established for each level of study. The achievement of a specified level of proficiency in technique should be required for retention at each level and must be required for graduation.
 - b. An overview understanding of the major aspects, techniques, and directions in the area of concentration.
 - c. Fundamental, comprehensive understanding of the various elements and basic interrelated processes of creation, interpretation, performance, and production.
 - d. Fundamental, conceptual understanding of the expressive possibilities of theatre.
 - e. Knowledge and skills sufficient to work in both collaborative and individual roles in matters of theatre interpretation.
 - f. Growth in artistry, technical skills, collaborative competence, and knowledge of repertory through regular performance and production experiences. Students must have such experiences throughout the degree program.
2. **Repertory.** Students must acquire:
 - a. Familiarity with theatre literature of various historical periods, cultural sources, and modes of presentation.
 - b. Experience with specific repertories and comparative standards of production quality through performance, academic study, and attendance at productions.
3. **Theoretical and Historical Studies**
 - a. Students must acquire:
 - (1) The ability to analyze plays perceptively and to evaluate them critically.
 - (2) An understanding of the common elements and vocabulary of theatre and of the interaction of these elements, and be able to employ this knowledge in analysis, including analyses of their productions.

- (3) The ability to place works of theatre in historical and stylistic contexts and have some understanding of the cultural milieu in which they were created.
- (4) The ability to develop and defend informed judgments about theatre.
- b. The competencies listed in Standards for Accreditation VIII.B.3.a. are achieved by coursework and studies in such fields as repertory, playwriting, theatre history, theatre criticism, philosophy of theatre, dramaturgy, performance studies, movement, anatomy and kinesiology, and production design.
- c. In certain areas of specialization, such as costume and scenic design, it is advisable to require that students study the historical development of works within the specialization.
- 4. **Technology.** Students must acquire a working knowledge of technologies and equipment applicable to their area(s) of specialization.
- 5. **Synthesis.** While synthesis is a lifetime process, by the end of undergraduate studies students should be able to work independently on a variety of professional problems by combining, as appropriate to the issue, their capabilities in performance, repertory, theory, history, and technology, as well as other fields they have studied.

Item 2. (All)

Results (H.VIII.C.)

Upon completion of any specific professional undergraduate degree program:

- 1. Students must demonstrate achievement of professional, entry-level competence in the area of specialization including significant technical mastery, the capability to produce work and solve professional problems independently, and a coherent set of artistic/intellectual goals that are evident in their work.
- 2. Students must demonstrate their competence by developing a body of work for evaluation in the major area of study. A senior project or presentation in the major area is required in many concentrations, and strongly recommended for all others.
- 3. Students must have the ability to communicate ideas, concepts, and requirements to theatre professionals and laypersons related to the practice of the major field. Such communication may involve oral, written, visual, and musical media.

Item 3. (Acting)

Essential Competencies, Experiences, and Opportunities (H.IX.A.3.)

(in addition to those stated for all degree programs)

- a. Demonstrated ability to act (i.e., to project one's self believably in word and action into imaginary circumstances, evoked through improvisation or text).
- b. Demonstrated ability to engage effectively in improvisations both by oneself and in an ensemble.
- c. Demonstrated ability to create characters convincingly from plays drawn from different genres and styles in an ensemble relationship with other actors.
- d. A developed technique for analyzing the specific tasks required in performing varied characters from written plays.
- e. Understanding of the specific demands of the acting styles for major periods and genres of dramatic literature.
- f. Clear, articulate, and expressive speech, normally with demonstrated ability to use appropriate tools and systems to learn and perform dialects, and the ability to perform effectively in verse plays.

- g. A flexible, strong, and controlled voice with trained breath support; appropriate vocal range and freedom from vocal and postural tension in rehearsal and performance; demonstrated ability to use the voice effectively as an instrument for characterization together with the ability to project the voice effectively in theatre spaces of varying sizes and in media productions.
- h. A flexible, relaxed, and controlled body trained in basic stage movement disciplines, including dance and other approaches to movement training and/or physical theatre; demonstrated ability to use the body effectively on stage as an instrument for characterization and to be responsive to changing time/rhythm demands and spatial relationships.
- i. A working knowledge of makeup materials and techniques, and their application as informed by artistic choice.
- j. Demonstrated comprehension of the basic business procedures of the actor's profession, including audition procedures, résumés, agents, and so forth.
- k. Solo and ensemble performance experience in a variety of formal and informal settings shall be provided throughout the degree program. Students must participate in at least one fully produced major production during their course of study. In addition, performance of a significant role in at least one production during advanced study and prior to graduation is required. This performance need not be fully produced and may be in a medium other than live theatrical performance.

Item 4. (All)

General Studies Competencies (H.VIII.A.6.)

- a. **Competencies.** Specific competency expectations are defined by the institution. Normally, students holding a professional undergraduate degree in theatre are expected to have:
 - (1) The ability to think, speak, and write clearly and effectively.
 - (2) An informed acquaintance with fields of study beyond theatre such as those in the arts and humanities, the natural and physical sciences, and the social sciences.
 - (3) A functional awareness of the differences and commonalities regarding work in artistic, scientific, and humanistic domains.
 - (4) Awareness that multiple disciplinary perspectives and techniques are available to consider all issues and responsibilities including, but not limited to, history, culture, moral and ethical issues, and decision-making.
 - (5) The ability to identify possibilities and locate information in other fields that have bearing on theatre questions and endeavors.
- b. **Operational Guidelines**
 - (1) Some theatre courses, if conceived and taught in relation to other realms of human experience, may be appropriately included in the category of general studies. Some theatre history, literature, theoretical or cultural studies may meet this criterion.
 - (2) Many areas of inquiry from general education are directly supportive of various specializations in theatre.

Item 5. (Acting)

Recommendations for General Studies (H.IX.A.2.)

Studies in social, political, cultural, and intellectual history that form the subject matter of plays are strongly recommended.

Item 6. (All)

Recommendations for Professional Studies (H.VIII.D.)

Students engaged in professional undergraduate degrees in theatre should have opportunities to:

1. Gain a basic understanding of the nature of professional work in their major field. Examples are: organizational structures and working patterns; artistic, intellectual, economic, technological, and political contexts; and developmental potential.
2. Acquire the entrepreneurial skills necessary to assist in the development and advancement of their careers, normally including the development of competencies in communication, presentation, business, and leadership skills necessary to engage in professional practice in the major field.
3. Explore areas of individual interest related to theatre in general or to the major. Examples are: bibliography, aesthetics, theory, production practices, specialized topics in theatre history, analysis, technology, and pedagogy.
4. Practice synthesis of a broad range of theatre knowledge and skills, particularly through learning activities, such as independent study, that involve a minimum of faculty guidance, where the emphasis is on evaluation at completion (see Section III.G.).

Please Note:

For specific information regarding curricular structure, see H.IX.A.1. Normally, approximately 65% of a 120 semester hour program is in theatre studies to ensure that time is available to develop the requisite competencies.

For a table of contents for all standards, see [NAST Handbook](#).