

Draft I: Proposed Revisions to the *Handbook 2023-24*

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF THEATRE

January 22, 2024

OFFICIAL NOTICE. This constitutes the official notice of proposed revisions to the *Handbook* forwarded in advance as required by the NAST Bylaws and Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II.

Note: All proposed revisions are indicated in red.

Following the current comment period, a second proposal of these amendments will be presented to the NAST membership in February for further review and comment.

VOTE SCHEDULED. A final text of these proposed revisions will be presented to the NAST Commission on Accreditation and membership for a vote in March.

Rationales for these changes are provided at the end of the document on page 9.

COMMENT PERIOD I

January 22, 2024–February 21, 2024

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Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II

— Action by the NAST Commission on Accreditation —

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Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II

Article I., Institutional Membership

Section 4. Accreditation and Institutional Autonomy

Amend Article I., Section 4. as follows:

Section 4. Accreditation and Institutional Autonomy. The National Association of Schools of Theatre has established standards for accreditation that are applied only at the invitation of institutions. These standards are developed and approved by accredited member institutions acting autonomously. The standards provide benchmarks for reviewing the extent to which operational, curricular, and evaluative functions associated with particular degree programs and areas of study are being fulfilled.

As they evolve, NAST standards for accreditation are continuously designed to allow considerable variation within broad principles applicable to degree programs and areas of study. Failure to meet the exact provisions of a specific standard will not preclude accreditation if it can be shown that artistic, intellectual, educational, and developmental functions indicated by the standard are and can continue to be fulfilled by appropriate means.

NAST standards are applied with profound respect for the rights and responsibilities of institutions and programs to identify, designate, and control (a) their missions, goals, and objectives; (b) artistic, educational, and philosophical principles and methodologies used to pursue functions implicit in their various missions, goals, and objectives; (c) specific repertoires, texts, and other teaching materials utilized for study and presentation; (d) agendas and areas of study pursued through scholarship, research, criticism, and policy development; (e) specific personnel choices, staffing configurations, and other operational decisions; and (f) content and methodologies of tests, evaluations, and assessments.

Respect for institutional mission as required in the Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II, Article I., Section 4., paragraph 3., and throughout the Association's published materials includes respect for religious mission. **NAST bases its decisions regarding accreditation on its published standards and shall not use as a negative factor the institution's religious mission-based policies, decisions, and practices in consideration of areas related to theatre such as curricula; faculty; facilities, equipment, and supplies; student support services; and recruiting and admissions practices, academic calendars, publications, grading, and advertising. NAST may require an institution to include in its curricular programs all core components as specified in applicable standards.**

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Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II

Article X., Appeals of Adverse Decisions Concerning Accredited Institutional Membership

Section 10. Decision on an Appeal

Amend Article X., Section 10. as follows:

Section 10. Decision on an Appeal. After following requisite procedures, considering the appeal and responding to it only in terms of one or both of the grounds for appeal in the Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II, Article X., Section 5., and making judgments based solely on NAST published standards and procedures and the documentation provided, the appeals committee's final decision shall be either to (a) deny the appeal and sustain the decision of the Commission, or (b) sustain the appeal and remand the decision to the Commission for reconsideration **explaining the basis for the decision to remand, including, but not limited to, any amendments to the original decision proposed by the appeals committee by identifying specific issues the Commission must address, including but not limited to the appeals committee's decision regarding amendments to or a reversal of the original decision.** In making its final decision, the Commission must act in a manner consistent with **published NAST standards and procedures, and with due consideration of all written findings and recommendations of the appeals committee accompanying its decision to remand the appeals panel's decisions or instructions.**

The final decision of the appeals committee shall be distributed to the theatre executive and the chief executive officer of the institution and to the Chair of the Commission whose decision is being appealed.

An institution's continuing disagreement with a final decision of the appeals committee to deny the appeal shall be settled by arbitration in accordance with the Rules of the American Arbitration Association. Arbitration considers only items (a) and (b) of the Grounds for Appeal outlined in the Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II, Article X., Section 5.

Standards for Accreditation

— Action by the NAST Membership —

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Standards for Accreditation

III. Theatre Program Components

H. Distance Learning

1. Definitions

Amend III.H.1. as follows:

1. Definitions

- a. **Distance Learning.** Involves programs of study delivered entirely or partially away from regular face-to-face interactions between teachers and students in studios, classrooms, tutorials, and laboratories associated with coursework, degrees, and programs on the campus. Normally, distance learning uses technologies to deliver instruction and support systems, and enable **regular and** substantive interaction between instructor and student either synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) The Internet;
 - (2) One- and/or two-way transmission through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, **satellite**, and wireless communication devices;
 - (3) Audio and/or video conferencing; or
 - (4) Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in (1)–(3) above.
- b. **Substantive Interaction.** Involves engaging students in teaching, learning, evaluation, and assessment as related to the course of study in which the student is enrolled. It also includes, but is not limited to, at least two of the following:
 - (1) Providing direct instruction;
 - (2) Assessing and/or providing feedback to students regarding their course of study;
 - (3) Providing information and/or responding to questions regarding the content of a course and/or required competencies;
 - (4) Facilitating group discussion regarding the content of a course and/or required competencies; and
 - (5) Other instructional opportunities and/or initiatives deemed appropriate by the institution **and in compliance with applicable NAST operational and curricular standards** intended to support and advance a student’s course of study.

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Standards for Accreditation

III. Theatre Program Components

H. Distance Learning

3. Standards Applications

Amend III.H.3. as follows:

3. Standards Applications

- a. Distance learning programs must meet all NAST operational and curricular standards for programs of their type and content. This means that the functions and competencies required by applicable standards are met even when distance learning mechanisms predominate in the total delivery system.
- b. ~~Institutions approved by NAST to offer theatre programs delivered either entirely or partially~~ ~~Programs in which more than 40% of their requirements are fulfilled~~ through distance learning means will be designated as ~~such distance learning programs~~ in NAST publications.
- c. Institutions approved by NAST to offer distance learning programs shall provide, in institutional publications as appropriate, a listing, or designation, or indication of all theatre programs offered either entirely or partially through distance learning means. Institutions shall designate in publications whether required courses are offered through distance learning (i.e., online, hybrid) and/or on ground in-person means.

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Standards for Accreditation

VII. The Liberal Arts Degree with a Major in Theatre

D. Essential Content and Competencies

1. General Education

b. Operational Guidelines

Amend VII.D.1.b. as follows:

- b. **Operational Guidelines.** These competencies are usually developed through studies in English composition and literature; foreign languages **appropriate to the course of study**; history, social studies, and philosophy; visual and performing arts; natural science; technology; and mathematics. Precollegiate study, regular testing and counseling, and flexibility in course requirements are elements in achieving these competencies.

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Standards for Accreditation

IX. Specific Professional Baccalaureate Degrees in Theatre

E. Bachelor of Fine Arts in Stage Management

2. Specific Recommendations for General Studies

Amend IX.E.2. as follows:

2. **Specific Recommendations for General Studies.** Such areas as psychology[;] foreign languages **appropriate to the course of study**, ~~especially modern romance languages or German~~; accounting[;] personal finance[;] history[;] management[;] and first aid/wellness/safety are strongly recommended. Studies in dance also are recommended since dance movement, choreography, and blocking are often aspects of productions.

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Standards for Accreditation

XI. Baccalaureate Degrees in Preparation for Advanced Professional Study

B. History and Criticism

Amend XI.B.5. as follows:

5. The student should achieve adequate mastery of at least one foreign language **appropriate to the course of study** to support research through the reading of primary source materials.

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Standards for Accreditation

XIV. Specific Initial Graduate Degree Programs

B. Research-Oriented Degrees

Amend XIV.B.4. as follows:

4. Knowledge and skills in the use of research tools applicable to the program, such as foreign languages **appropriate to the course of study** and statistics.

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Standards for Accreditation

XV. Specific Terminal Degrees

C. Research-Oriented Degrees—Doctoral Degrees

3. Qualifying Prerequisites

Amend XV.C.3.j. as follows:

- j. A reading knowledge of one or more foreign languages **appropriate to the course of study**, or the substitution of other special research techniques.

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Standards for Accreditation

XIX. Specific Operational Standards for Free-Standing Theatre Institutions of Higher Education

Section 1. Standards for Accreditation

K. Teach-Out Plans and Agreements

2. Conditions of Applicability

Amend XIX., Section 1.K.2.b. as follows:

- b. NAST requires an accredited institution to which Standards for Accreditation XIX. apply to submit a teach-out plan and, if practicable, teach-out agreements requesting Commission review and action upon the occurrence of any of the following events:
 1. The U.S. Secretary of Education notifies NAST that:
 - i. it has placed the institution on the reimbursement payment method under 34 CFR 668.162(c) or the heightened cash monitoring payment method requiring the Secretary’s review of the institution’s supporting documentation under 34 CFR 668.162(d)(2);

- ii. the Secretary has initiated an emergency action against an institution, in accordance with section 487(c)(1)(G) of the Higher Education Act (HEA), or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution participating in any Title IV, Higher Education Act (HEA) program, in accordance with section 487(c)(1)(F) of the Higher Education Act (HEA).
2. NAST acts to withdraw, revoke, or suspend the accreditation of the institution.

NOTE: Under such conditions, NAST may maintain the institution’s accreditation until the institution has had reasonable time to complete the activities in its teach-out plan or to fulfill the obligations of any teach-out agreement to assist students in transferring or completing their programs.

- 3. The institution notifies NAST that it intends to cease operations entirely or close a location that provides one hundred percent of at least one program.
- 4. A state licensing or authorizing agency notifies NAST that an institution’s license or legal authorization to provide an educational program has been or will be revoked.
- 5. The institution stops offering an educational program before all students enrolled in that program complete the program or transfer to another program.

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Standards for Accreditation

XIX. Specific Operational Standards for Free-Standing Theatre Institutions of Higher Education

Section 2. Procedural Requirements

E. Starting a Branch Campus or Similar Entity

Amend XIX., Section 2.E.2. as follows:

- 2. Within six months of the opening of a branch campus or similar entity, the branch/similar entity must schedule a **site** visit and host a team of NAST visiting evaluators, **and the team must conduct and complete the visit.**

Appendix I.A.

— Action by the NAST Membership —

NAST Handbook 2023-24—Pages 144–145

Appendix I.A., Operational Standards for Branch Campuses and Other Entities

Section 2. Guidelines **and Comments**

Amend Section 2.B. as follows:

- B. A branch campus, **or similarly functioning entity, is a physical facility typically considered an additional location of an institution** that is geographically **separate from apart and independent of** the main campus of the institution and **within the same ownership structure of the institution, and that also typically:**
 - 1. **Is independent from the main campus, meaning the location:**
 - a. ~~1~~ is permanent in nature;
 - b. ~~2~~ offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential;

- c. ~~3~~ has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
 - d. ~~4~~ has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
2. For the purpose of participation in federal aid programs, is approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a branch campus or similarly functioning entity.

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**Appendix I.A., Operational Standards for Branch Campuses and Other Entities
Section 2. Guidelines and Comments**

Amend Section 2.C. as follows:

- C. An additional location, or similarly functioning entity, is ~~typically considered~~ a physical facility that is geographically ~~separate apart~~ from the main campus of the institution and within the same ownership structure of ~~at which~~ the institution, at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational a program and ~~may qualify as a branch campus~~. An additional location participates in the Title IV, HEA programs only through the certification of the main campus.

Appendix I.B.

— Action by the NAST Membership —

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**Appendix I.B., Standards and Guidelines for Opera and Musical Theatre Programs
Section 1. The Common Body of Knowledge and Skills for Career Entry**

A. Performance Skills

Amend Section 1.A.5.a. as follows:

- a. For Opera: ~~as appropriate to the course of study, including, but not limited to~~, diction/pronunciation skills in English, Italian, German, and French; reading/speaking proficiency in Italian; and working knowledge of French and German.

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**Appendix I.B., Standards and Guidelines for Opera and Musical Theatre Programs
Section 4. Standards for the Professional Baccalaureate Degree in Voice with an Emphasis in Pre-Professional Studies in Opera**

C. Essential Competencies, Experiences, and Opportunities

Amend Section 4.C.5. as follows:

5. The study and use of foreign languages and diction ~~appropriate to the course of study~~ are essential. *(This applies only to degrees in Opera Performance.)*

Appendix III.F.

— Action by the NAST Membership —

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Appendix III.F., Policies Concerning Regard for Decisions of States and Other Accrediting Organizations in the NAST Accreditation Process

Section 1. Institutions Offering Theatre Curricular Programs Only

Amend Section 1. as follows:

Section 1. Institutions Offering Theatre Curricular Programs Only

- A. NAST accredits only those free-standing postsecondary institutions offering degree- or non-degree-granting curricular programs in theatre that are legally authorized under applicable state law to provide a program of education beyond the secondary level.
- B. NAST does not renew the accreditation of a free-standing postsecondary institution during a period in which the institution:
 - 1. Is the subject of an interim action by a recognized institutional accrediting agency potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or preaccreditation.
 - 2. Is the subject of an interim action by a state agency potentially leading to the suspension, revocation, or termination of the institution’s legal authority to provide postsecondary education.
 - 3. Has been notified of a threatened loss of accreditation, and the due process procedures required by the action have not been completed.
 - 4. Has been notified of a threatened suspension, revocation, or termination by the state of the institution’s legal authority to provide postsecondary education, and the due process procedures required by the action have not been completed.
- C. In considering whether to grant initial accreditation to a free-standing postsecondary institution, NAST takes into account actions by:
 - 1. Recognized institutional accrediting agencies that have denied accreditation or preaccreditation to the institution, placed the institution on public probationary status, or revoked the accreditation or preaccreditation of the institution.
 - 2. A state agency that has suspended or revoked the institution’s legal authority to provide postsecondary education.
- D. If the Commission grants accreditation to a free-standing postsecondary institution notwithstanding the actions described in Section 1.B. or 1.C., NAST provides the U.S. Secretary of Education, not later than thirty days after the date of Commission action, a thorough explanation, consistent with its accreditation standards, why the previous action by a recognized institutional accrediting agency or the state does not preclude a grant of accreditation status.
- E. NAST will promptly review its accreditation of a free-standing postsecondary institution to determine if it should also take adverse action against the institution if:
 - 1. A recognized institutional accrediting agency takes an adverse action with respect to a dually accredited institution.
 - ~~2. A recognized institutional accrediting agency places the institution on public probationary status, or~~

2. ~~3.~~ A recognized programmatic accrediting agency takes an adverse action, for reasons associated with the overall institution rather than the specific program ~~or~~, against a program offered by an institution ~~or~~ places the program on public probation.
- F. NAST will promptly review its accreditation of a free-standing postsecondary institution to determine if it should place the institution on probation or show cause if:
1. A recognized institutional accrediting agency places the institution on public probationary or an equivalent status.
 2. A recognized programmatic agency places the program on public probation or an equivalent status.

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Appendix III.F., Policies Concerning Regard for Decisions of States and Other Accrediting Organizations in the NAST Accreditation Process

Section 2. Multipurpose Institutions Offering Theatre Curricular Programs

Amend Section 2.D. as follows:

- D. NAST will promptly review its accreditation of a multipurpose institution offering one or more theatre curricular programs to determine if it should also take ~~adverse~~ action against the program if a ~~recognized institutional accrediting agency~~:
1. ~~A recognized institutional accrediting agency~~ Takes an adverse action with respect to the institution offering the program, ~~or~~
 2. Places the institution on public probationary status.

NOTE: Rationale for Changes

The rationales for the changes proposed above are as follows:

1. *Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II, Article I., Section 4. and Article X., Section 10.; Standards for Accreditation, III.H.1., III.H.3., XIX., Section 1.K.2.b. and Section 2.E.2.; Appendix I.A., Section 2.B. and Section 2.C.; Appendix III.F., Section 1. and Section 2.D.:* To align with federal regulation and guidelines.
2. *Standards for Accreditation, VII.D.1.b., IX.E.2., XI.B.5., XIV.B.4., XV.C.3.j.; Appendix I.B., Section 1.A.5.a. and Section 4.C.5.:* To offer further clarity as it pertains to the breadth of the requirement.