

POLICY FOR GRADUATION WITH DISTINCTION IN THEATER STUDIES

Students with at least a 3.5 GPA in their Theater Studies courses are eligible to apply for a project. Students must complete 11 courses in total to graduate with distinction in the major instead of the standard 10. All distinction courses count toward the major and can be completed in either spring or fall of their senior year.

Interested students should meet with the DUS no later than one month before their application deadline; this meeting is required for consideration. A faculty project supervisor should be identified early in the student's process, and serve as an adviser on both the application and the final project, if accepted. The student must identify a second committee member, and obtain signatures from both committee members and the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) on this application form. All applications must meet all deadlines outlined in this application.

A student may pursue a project in writing, directing, design, acting, dramatic literature, theater history, or performance studies. All projects must include a substantial written component. They may also have a production component.

Students seeking Graduation with Distinction Outside of the Major (GWDOM) are encouraged to follow the same process as Theater Studies majors, scheduling a meeting with the Theater Studies DUS in the spring prior to the student's graduating year.

Distinction Coursework

Student must take a Research Independent Study (THEATRST 493-1) or a Home Seminar in the first semester and the Senior Distinction Project (THEATRST 495) in the second semester.

First Semester: Research Independent Study (THEATRST 493-1) or Home Seminar:

The Research Independent Study (THEATRST 493-1) option requires students to meet once every two weeks with their project supervisor. At least 15 pages of research must be documented and turned in by the end of the semester. This documentation can vary depending on the nature of the research, including but not limited to written notes, visual representations, and journal entries.

Home seminars entail enrolling in a course taught by the project supervisor which is closely associated with the topic. The supervisor's permission should be obtained prior to enrollment, arranging additional reading and writing assignments for the class as agreed with the instructor that will translate the course work into the terms of the distinction project. The home seminar option is only available during the first semester of the distinction project.

Second Semester: Senior Distinction Project (THEATRST 495)

All distinction candidates must submit a thesis paper.

- Candidates with a distinction project in theater history, performance studies, or dramatic literature are required to submit a 40-70 page thesis paper.
- Candidates with a distinction project in acting or directing are required to submit a 25-page paper supplementary to their acting or directing project.
- Candidates pursuing a design, technology or management distinction are required to articulate project deliverables in their distinction proposal; these are to be defined in consultation with the DUS and project supervisor and will include a paper of at least 15 pages in length.
- Candidates writing original scripts, adaptations, and/or translations are required to turn in a 15-page paper supplementary to their playwriting project.

Evaluation Procedure

All Graduation with Distinction proposals will be evaluated by the DUS, Chair, and the project advisors of the applying juniors. This committee may ask students to answer additional questions, submit additional information, or resubmit their proposal. Once all applications have been reviewed the committee will make a recommendation to the faculty, who will then vote on the proposals. The DUS will make all efforts to notify students of the faculty's decision before registration for the upcoming semester begins.

DISTINCTION PROJECT APPLICATION

Name: _____ Project Supervisor: _____
 Email: _____ Phone: _____ GPA: _____

In addition to this form, please supply an application portfolio for your Distinction Project including:

1. An accurate and current Theater Studies advising sheet;
2. A basic bibliography (one page single-spaced, except in the case of an original play);
3. A two to three paragraph description of your project including: your motivation for pursuing this project; budgetary considerations for research or production; a timeline for completion; and a list of potential collaborators if proposing a performance component;
4. A letter of recommendation from your project supervisor, who must be a Theater Studies faculty member;
5. One writing sample of approximately 10 pages from a Theater Studies course OR a production sample (e.g., script, reel);
6. A note from Thomas Quintas, Director of Theater, stating that you have made necessary booking and budgetary arrangements for rehearsals and performances if your proposal has a performance component.

PROCESS TIMELINE

Spring 2026 – Fall 2026 Project Cycle		
Requirement	Due Date	Date Requirement Fulfilled
DUS, Advisor, and Student Meeting	September 12, 2025	
Proposal Submission	October 10, 2025	
Thesis due	November 11, 2026	

Fall 2026 – Spring 2027 Project Cycle		
Requirement	Due Date	Date Requirement Fulfilled
DUS, Advisor, and Student Meeting	February 6, 2026	
Proposal Submission	March 6, 2026	
Thesis due	March 26, 2027	

Juniors planning to graduate in the 2026-2027 academic year must meet with the Theater Studies DUS Torry Bend and student’s advisor to discuss possible projects one month prior to submitting an application as shown in the table above. Contact Professor Bend by email to schedule the meeting (torry.bend@duke.edu).

Following a meeting with the DUS to discuss a planned proposal, a complete application with signatures from a Theater Studies faculty project supervisor and a second faculty committee member must be submitted to the Theater Studies DUS by the project cycle proposal deadline, along with the materials requested in this policy for the application dossier. The project supervisor must be a member of the Theater Studies faculty. Decisions to approve or decline proposals are made before the end of registration for the following semester, and involve review by the department’s faculty for consideration. Approved proposals will be granted a permission number to enroll in a section of **THEATRST 493-1 Research Independent Study** for the first of two semesters’ work on the project. The DUS will be in contact with both the student candidate for graduation with distinction and the faculty project supervisor for a progress review of work completed in 493-1 to decide whether continued enrollment in the project is permissible. Following a favorable progress review, a permission

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number will be granted for enrollment in a section of **THEATRST 495 Senior Distinction Project** during registration for the next semester.

Student signature

Faculty Project Supervisor signature

Second Committee member signature

Director of Undergraduate Studies approval

Please email this completed form and all supporting materials requested for the application portfolio to the Theater Studies DUSA Katja Hill at katja.hill@duke.edu no later than October 10, 2025 for applications to the Spring 2026 – Fall 2026 cycle, or no later than March 6, 2026 for applications to the Fall 2026-Spring 2027 cycle.