



BROWN
Theatre Arts &
Performance Studies
MFA PLAYWRITING HANDBOOK
2026 - 2027

This document supersedes previous TAPS MFA Playwriting Handbooks

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. THE MFA PLAYWRITING PROGRAM INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. WRITING FOR PERFORMANCE IN THE BROADER DEPARTMENT AND UNIVERSITY .	4
3. GRADUATE ADMISSIONS	5
4. FINANCIAL SUPPORT	6
5. THE MFA PLAYWRITING PROGRAM OF STUDY	6
6. MFA PLAYWRITING CURRICULUM OVERVIEW	7
7. ELECTIVE COURSES.....	8
8. GOALS OF THE MFA PLAYWRITING PROGRAM.....	9
9. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TAPS IN GENERAL	12

This handbook is addressed to current and prospective MFA students to be used as a planning guide and reference resource throughout a student’s academic career. Pertinent University web resources should be regarded as the primary references for degree requirements and options. It is intended to complement the [Graduate Studies Handbook](#) and students should consult the Graduate Studies Handbook on university-wide policies on matters such as funding, leaves of absence, etc.

Further inquiries regarding the **MFA in Playwriting** should be addressed to Sibyl Kempson, Head of Playwriting, Box 1897, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912; email: Sibyl_kempson@brown.edu.

1. The MFA Playwriting Program Introduction

Brown's MFA in playwriting is a three-year program. We are looking for students who define themselves as writers, and whose writing resists definition—but involves a keen, tireless attention to live performance. This program is a place to study what writing for theater has been, while honing a creative practice that also feeds voraciously on the nontheatrical: all kinds of literature, art, rebellion, and thought. Above all it is a place—and time—to write like you've never written before.

Each semester, all the MFA playwrights take a combination workshop/seminar together, reading, writing, and listening in a sustained, intimate conversation. A slate of elective courses means that students set their own intellectual and creative agendas throughout their time in the program. The MFA degree is—among other things—a teaching credential, and you will design and teach two undergraduate courses here. You will collaborate with actors, directors, and other artists to present your work in readings, workshops, and a thesis show. Our playwrights are not only poets, but engineers too: while you are here, we also want you to generate your own independent projects outside official programming, and keep goading each other to new feats of daring.

Brown is a chief and storied site for the formation of playwrights, established to grant broad inventive license while offering close mentorship and profound resources (in the Department, the University, and the world beyond).¹ Our alumni distinguish themselves by their professional accomplishments and their artistic courage. Brown's resources are deep—gorgeous stores of intellectual and artistic capacity, a will to innovate and collaborate, outstanding libraries, a substantial array of interdisciplinary opportunities, and students who are rightly and well authorized to formulate and execute their own experiments.

Why live theater, in the age of media? And why *plays*, when a much wider spectrum of *performance*—in practice and in theory—has spent the past century refuting the centrality of the dramatic stage? You are probably already familiar with several popular answers to these questions: live theater brings people together, it creates community, it models political action! Or else: drama teaches us that we are all human, its storytelling helps us make sense of our own pain! You might agree with all these claims, or none of them; in this program, you will be asked to keep on questioning all the assumptions that underlie your artistic practice, and inventing new ways to think about what you make. In a society that generally makes us shout at the top of our lungs about the value and meaning of everything we do, this is one of the rare spaces in which you have permission *not* to know what you are doing or why it matters, and to make work rigorously shaped

¹ Certain passages throughout this Handbook are pilfered verbatim from earlier editions.

by the urgency of not knowing. If the live, breathing, sweating moment of theater has anything special to teach us, it must have something to do with this kind of radical possibility, also known as freedom.

But: it's still school, and we do have some values that shape our curriculum and inform our admissions process. These include:

An appetite for **experimental form**, and especially for experiments that operate, whether gently or aggressively, upon particular dramatic, poetic, narrative, artistic and theatrical traditions (instead of remaining oblivious to them);

An attraction to the **impossible**: impossible worlds, impossible projects. An impatience with what we already know is possible, i.e. with “the market,” as well as with the ways our imaginations have been limited by dominant social systems like capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy. Our taste for the impossible also implies tireless artistic **rigor**: perfection is impossible; let's never give up on it.

A desire to read, see, and make work that is informed by **weird, difficult texts** of all kinds, including the big, weird world of texts sometimes known as “**theory**” (like queer theory, critical race theory, feminism, continental philosophy, literary theory, and many other kinds...) BUT: no assumptions as to what that informing looks like. And no interest in limiting our audiences & creative partners to those who are likewise theoretically desirous.

And—since, as the French theater poet Antonin Artaud wrote, “we are all mad, desperate, and sick”—a commitment to pleasure: fun, laughter, **playfulness** at every level and every moment, since that's how we survive. Because we are doing theater, this also means considering and re-learning how to play well **with each other**, and with any number of others.

2. Playwriting in the Broader Department and University

MFA students in Playwriting can easily find opportunities to work collaboratively among scholars, actors, dancers, directors, playwrights, and other writers and artists— in the classroom and in production. An undergraduate BA, an MA and a PhD program in Theatre and Performance Studies exists in the same building as the Playwriting Program. MFA Playwrights, undergraduate and PhD students often collaborate. Our students and faculty participate actively in the rich programming of the [Brown Arts Institute](#) (BAI), an interdisciplinary venue and central resource for arts on campus.

In addition, all graduate students in the Theatre and Performance Studies Department at Brown University benefit from the flexibility of Brown's graduate system, which allows opportunities to take classes throughout the University. Opportunities for intersection are built into the program with interaction across departments also possible. The Department maintains close working relationships with the Africana Studies Department and [Rites and Reason Theatre](#) as well as [Modern Culture and Media](#), [History of Art and Architecture](#), [American Studies](#), [Slavic Studies](#), and [Comparative Literature](#), with faculty cross-appointments in these departments. The [Department of Literary Arts](#) is an especially lively hub of writerly experimentation on campus. TAPS maintains close affiliation with the [Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America](#) and [the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women](#). Our students are also welcomed in courses at [RISD, the Rhode Island School of Design](#).

In short, Brown is enormously rich in artistic and critical activity, and the confluence of different approaches assures an atmosphere of debate, discovery, and overall rigor. A dynamic theatre season at Brown and a slate of courses with significant strength in playwriting, world theatre histories, performance theories, cultural studies, and contemporary performance allow a student to determine the right mix of instruction in theory and practice. The libraries at Brown also provide exceptional resources for research and house several special collections, among them the [Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays](#); [the Bryson Dance Collection](#), the [H. Adrian Smith Collection of Conjuring, and Magicana](#), and [Popular Amusement Forms](#); [the Albert-Bernard Shaw Collection](#); and the [John Carter Brown Library](#), renowned for its historical sources pertaining to the Americas, both North and South, before ca. 1825.

3. MFA Playwriting Admissions

For graduate application deadlines please check the [Graduate School website](#). A statement of purpose (also called a personal statement, generally one to three pages), two writing samples, and three letters of recommendation are requested with the application. Also requested are complete official transcripts of all previous study, undergraduate and graduate. GRE exams are not required. All international applicants whose native language is not English must submit an official Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score. An undergraduate major in theatre or performance studies is not required for admission.

8.12.2026

For questions about the application process (including GRE/TOEFL submission, LORs, transcripts, and other technical questions), please contact the Graduate School directly at graduate_admissions@brown.edu. **Applications to the MFA programs are submitted to, and managed through, the Graduate School. Please do not email the department with technical questions or requests to troubleshoot your online application submission.** You can find [detailed instructions about the application process](#) and some of the components here. The application for all graduate programs at Brown can be found at <https://graduateschool.brown.edu/apply-mfa-or-doctoral-study-brown>.

Further inquiries regarding the MFA Playwriting Program should be addressed to **Sibyl Kempson**, Box 1897, Brown. University, Providence, RI 02912; email: Sibyl_Kempson@brown.edu

4. Financial Support

The program provides a financial aid package that covers tuition, health fee and health insurance for three years of full-time enrollment. In addition, the program provides stipends for fall and spring semesters for each year of full-time enrollment as well as a stipend for two summers (following first and second years). Funding is contingent on students remaining in good standing.

5. The MFA Playwriting Program of Study

MFA students are required to take the graduate playwriting workshop in each semester of their residency. As mentioned above, most other classes are electives, culled from a wide range of classes in playwriting, theatre studies, performance studies and the offerings of many departments beyond the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies. Courses are selected by the student, in consultation with the program faculty. Other faculty in Theatre Arts and Performance Studies are also happy to advise playwrights when desired.

MFA playwrights present their work to an audience each year at [the Writing is Live Festival](#), as a reading (year 1), reading/workshop (year 2), or thesis workshop production (year 3). The annual festival is produced in collaboration with undergraduate and PhD students and other members of the Brown community participate as well. In casting, priority goes to TAPS undergraduates, TAPS PhDs, and the greater Brown community. For all festival presentations, the program's Creative Producer and Playwriting and TAPS faculty/staff decide on creative teams, casting, budget, and space, typically in conversation with students. Indeed, developing the muscles of collaboration is a central pedagogical focus and reason for the festival; the rehearsal process includes time

dedicated to collaborative check-ins between writers and directors, as well as periodic production meetings meant to foster articulate attention to process itself. Of course, collaboration between artists is only one axis of the theatrical relation, which also extends from artists to audience and back again. All presentations in the festival are open to the public (tickets to readings are free), and each team of collaborators must figure out

what kind(s) of audience engagement their piece will offer, what kind of feedback they want, and how to elicit it.

An earlier series of collaborative “Incubator” workshops with directors and actors takes place in the fall; playwrights are teamed with directors and asked to devise miniature projects to be executed over the course of a day’s rehearsal and presentation to the cohort. (Writer-director teams meet, discuss, and submit plans for the piece to faculty advisors beforehand.) Graduating playwrights will have the opportunity to present a reading of their thesis play to an invited audience in New York City. We also expect that our writers will take the initiative to self- and/or peer-produce smaller performance events on campus and in Providence throughout their time in the program.

6. MFA Playwriting Curriculum Overview

The MFA Playwriting Program will consist of a minimum of 14 courses that include:

- Six (6) semesters of Graduate Playwriting Workshop (TAPS 2310)
- One (1) course in dramaturgy (TAPS 2545; required for all MFA students)
- At least one (1) additional theory or history course in TAPS or cross-listed in TAPS at the 1000 or 2000 level. It is strongly recommended that playwriting MFA students take at least one course offered in the department’s Performance Studies PhD program; such courses satisfy this requirement. Students who have not studied theater extensively are also encouraged to take additional coursework in the theory and history of theater and performance, which will count towards their electives.
- Four (4) additional elective courses from throughout the university. (See more on electives below.)
- Two (2) semesters of Thesis Preparation in the third year of the program (TAPS 2975)
- Note: Up to two (2) independent studies may be used toward the total of elective courses. An independent study cannot be used to substitute for the TAPS Theory/History course listed above.

This course load will allow students to participate in co-curricular and professional development activities, which include:

1. Readings and workshops of creative work in collaboration with actors, directors and sometimes designers, in years one, two and three in the Writing is Live Festival
2. Thesis presentations in year three, both on campus and in New York
3. Small-scale performances and projects generated and produced by students throughout the year
4. Periodic sessions with guest artists and professional guests
5. Trips to see theater and meet artists and professionals in New York and elsewhere, including a curated weekend of shows and conversations for third-year playwrights at the Under the Radar Festival
6. Networking opportunities with professionals in the field on campus and in New York
7. A yearly writing retreat
8. Two semesters of teaching in year 2, with preparatory work beginning in the spring of year 1. Since the MFA is a terminal degree that qualifies you for university teaching, all students should have teaching experience so they can pursue these possibilities after graduation.

7. Elective Courses

Besides being introduced to the exceptional faculty at TAPS, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the faculty and course offerings in [Literary Arts](#), [English](#), [Modern Culture and Media](#), [American Studies](#), and especially [Africana Studies](#), which is very much a partner with the program. The [Rites and Reasons Theatre](#) in [Africana Studies](#) is a frequent collaborator with TAPS and offers resources for developing student performance projects.

In recent semesters, courses offered or cross-listed in TAPS at the 1000- and 2000- level have included: Global Theatre and Performance; Artists and Scientists as Partners; Mise en-scène; Queer Performance; Reading Sex; Performance Studies and Theatrical Theory; Performance Historiography and Theatre History; Twentieth-Century Western Theatre and Performance; Perception and the Performativity of Neurology; Digital Media and Virtual Performance; Neurodiversity and Performance; Doing Performance Philosophy; Theatre History in a Changing Present; Voices Beneath the Veil; Political Theatre of the Americas; Body Politics; Late Modern and Contemporary Theatre and Performance; A Producer Prepares: Curation, Ethics, and Arts Programming; Neoliberalism and Performance; Persuasive Communication; and Dance Studies courses including Queer

Dance and Dance History of the 20th Century. TAPS also offers practical courses in Directing, Acting, Dance Practice, Persuasive Communication, Design, and Director/Designer Collaboration, which explore different methodologies and discourses as well as variety in subject matter.

A wide range of faculty across the university offer seminars related to performance and theater in Music, [Africana Studies](#), [English](#), [Literary Arts](#), [Comparative Literature](#), [Classics](#), [Anthropology](#), [Modern Culture and Media](#), etc., and playwriting students can take courses in film studies, digital media studies, literary theory and genre studies, religion and ritualistic performance, art history and representation, cultural studies and political discourse, and gender and identity politics, many of which are cross-listed and some team-taught through two departments, indicating the openness to academic border crossing and resource-sharing that is the norm at Brown.

Students may choose to audit an elective course, or, depending on the Professor, may be allowed to attend without registering (sometimes called [vagabonding](#)). Brown's "shopping period" (the period during which you can add a course without incurring a fee) allows students to sit in on several different courses before deciding upon a final course schedule for the semester. Please be aware pre-registration is required for continuing undergraduate and graduate students (normally during the preceding April for Semester 1 and November for Semester 2), in accordance with a schedule established by the Registrar. Students who do not preregister by the deadline will have a \$15 pre registration fee assessed to their student account.

Students are encouraged to audit, vagabond, and produce widely.

8. Program Goals by Year

As a Whole

Our program is small and highly tailored to individual writers' developing goals. Because of this, and because first-year, second-year, and third-year students take workshops together, the three years are not rigidly differentiated: the main goal is to provide each student with three years in which to write intensively and experimentally, engage with scholarly and artistic disciplines that can feed this writing, and nurture each other as responsive, responsible colleagues in a space and time dedicated to building a lifelong artistic practice. All students are expected to draft five new plays during their time here: one each semester until the final term, which is dedicated to revising the thesis play; the area(s) of focus in the workshop will shift each semester, for first- second- and third years together. Nevertheless, there are certain distinctions that bear emphasizing here:

Year One

Students attend orientation with other TAPS first-year graduate students, and begin sharing their work and finding a place in the ecology of the department, the university, and the city. Partly in order to further this process, and in order to provide common ground for the discussions that will ensue over the next three years, first-year playwrights take Dramaturgy (TAPS 2545). This course is designed to “introduce a variety of plays and critical approaches to dramatic texts and performances with emphasis on culturally divergent dramaturgies, adaptation and textual analysis for performance.” Most students also take three additional (elective) courses in their first year, for a total of three courses per semester.

First-year students present a reading of a new play in the annual Writing is Live festival, with 20 hours of rehearsal over a period of 2 weeks (no tech). Beyond WiL, students are encouraged to generate at least one performance project in collaboration with other members of the program and/or other community members. Because this festival is intended to contribute to students' formation as theater-makers, not just as writers narrowly defined, first-year students may also be called upon to offer up to 20 hours of producing support, with responsibilities mutually determined and approved by the Program Head and Producer according to students' interests and availability, e.g. work on outreach, dramaturgy, design support, and/or co-organizing festival events.

In the spring of the first year, students will begin working with the Head of Playwriting and other faculty to develop syllabi for their teaching in the following year.

Year Two

This is the “teaching year” in our program. Normally, second-year students will teach undergraduate playwriting both semesters: one semester of Playwriting 1 (introduction to playwriting) and one semester of Playwriting 2 (intermediate playwriting), not necessarily in that order. Classes are limited to 14 students each, and offer second-year MFAs the opportunity—and the challenge—of articulating the principles of playwriting as a craft, and testing out those principles in dialogue with undergraduate students through exercises, reading assignments, and the structured development of one-act plays. Some of our MFA students come to the program with considerable teaching experience, and many do not; we consider teaching to be a fundamental part of the playwright's professional toolkit, both as a means of making a living and as a spur to self-awareness and responsibility in the practice of the art.

Before and during the period of teaching, students will engage in discussions with faculty

8.12.2026

and peers about syllabus development, lesson planning, class sessions, grading. Depending on course availability, this may take the form of optional enrollment in an additional half-credit pedagogy seminar designed to support first-time teaching; otherwise, it will be conducted through informal meetings organized by the Program Head. In either case, in the spring of the first year, students will examine syllabi and attend pedagogy discussion sessions, draft and revise a course syllabus; throughout the second year, students will meet with the Program Head individually and as a team to discuss the teaching experience and brainstorm challenges and opportunities. The Program Head will also visit each student's class to observe and offer feedback at least once per semester.

Because of teaching, second-year students normally only take one elective course per semester. (Second-years may choose to take only one elective this year in total, in which case they will take two elective courses in the third-year, alongside workshop and work on the thesis.)

Second-year students present a staged reading of a play in the [Writing is Live Festival](#), with approximately 40 hours of rehearsal over 2-3 weeks; there is technical support for minimal design, with strictly delimited parameters. As in the first year, writers are also encouraged to generate at least one independent performance project during this academic year. Second-year MFAs may also be called on to offer up to ten hours of producing support (i.e., less than first-years, because of teaching responsibilities) for the third-years' thesis productions, per the same rationale and process outlined under "Year One" above.

At the end of the second year, students resubmit a play written in the program, alongside a proposal to revise and develop it for their thesis presentations the following year.

Year Three

In the final year of the program, students register for two semesters of Thesis Preparation (TAPS 2975) alongside workshop and their remaining elective course(s). Students should enter this year having identified the thesis project: a script written earlier in the program, which will develop significantly over the course of the year. They are encouraged to choose elective coursework that will contribute meaningfully to the thesis. At the end of the year, the "finished" thesis will take three forms: a workshop production in the Writing is Live festival (with approximately 75 hours of rehearsal and a limited budget for lighting, sound, and costume design), a reading in New York City, and a digital manuscript submitted to the graduate school, to be maintained in the university library's Brown Digital Repository. (Please see the thesis [guidelines from the Graduate School](#) for more information on thesis submission.)

In January, writers attend the Under the Radar Festival in NYC to see work from around the world and meet with professionals in the industry.

9. Frequently Asked Questions about TAPS in General

- a. [Who provides administrative support for the program?](#)
- b. [What are the program facilities and services?](#)
- c. [How does the department communicate \(email, etc.\)?](#)
- d. [How are Graduate Students represented in/to the Department?](#)
- e. [What if I have a Grievance?](#)
- f. [What if I have a Change in Status?](#)
- g. [Can I take courses at Harvard?](#)
- h. [Is there anything the Graduate School needs me to do once I get to campus?](#)
- i. [Can I get mail at the department?](#)
- j. [What about parking? Or housing?](#)

a. Who provides administrative support for the program?

The Staff

The two members of the TAPS administrative staff you should get to know immediately are: **Chris Redihan**, Department Manager (Christine_redihan@brown.edu, 401-863-6718) and **Matthew Hoffman**, Student Affairs Manager (Matthew_hoffman@brown.edu, 401-863-3283). Their office, Lyman 106, is the main hub of the Department. They know a lot about the bureaucratic niceties of being a graduate student during your years here and can answer most of your practical questions, including those about payroll, registration, reimbursements, IDs, photocopying, mail, keys, etc. If you need keys or have facilities questions, please contact the Academic Events & Facilities Manager, **Alex Nurkin** (Alex_nurkin@brown.edu, 401-863-6951). For more information about our [facilities](#) and staff, please see our [website](#).

The Head of Playwriting

Sibyl Kempson, Head of Playwriting, oversees the Writing for Performance MFA program and will be your guide and primary advisor through your entire course of study. She can address questions regarding the timeline for your graduate studies as well as teaching assignments, or departmental standing and procedures. It remains the responsibility of each graduate student to fulfill departmental curricular guidelines, and to discuss their course selections with Professor Kempson. She holds regular office hours, or you may make an appointment by email (Sibyl_kempson@brown.edu).

8.12.2026

The Director of Graduate Studies

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) is a professor in TAPS who oversees all of the internal academic affairs of the departmental graduate programs and coordinates the programs with the Graduate School. The DGS will be sure that your progress reports are submitted and that your TAs assignments are made. The DGS holds regular office hours, or you may make an appointment by email. As this is a rotating position, please consult the TAPS website (or just ask someone) to find out who currently holds this post.

b. What are the program facilities and services?

Faculty and Graduate Offices

Faculty offices are primarily located on the second Floor and Basement Floor of Lyman Hall. The Department's Administrative Office is on the first floor, in room 106. The Department Chair's Office is also on the first floor, inside the main office, room 108. Students serving as TAs will have access to Lyman 009 and have priority for the use of that room as a space to hold office hours and related tasks. It will be important for all users to coordinate schedules in making equitable use of the room. Office hours should be reported to the Student Affairs Manager, Matthew Hoffman as soon as possible and posted outside the door to alert your students to your schedule and to avoid double booking of the room. TAs for TAPS 0030 will not be given access to Lyman 002 ("the Cave") for office hours.

Graduate Lounge

The grad lounge is located in Lyman 213. You will be assigned an individual mailbox there. Only grads, faculty, and staff have key access to the lounge, so any deliveries or notes/papers from undergraduate students should be left in the general graduate student mailbox in the main office. Mail is delivered from the general mailbox to personal boxes once daily by one of the graduate students. It contains computers and a printer, as well as a small refrigerator. There is also a telephone (401-863-3272). Please note it has no outgoing long distance or voicemail capability, but can be used to receive calls, call on campus or to make local calls. Students are expected to furnish their own supplies for their coursework and/or personal communications. Personal and research needs do not receive administrative support such as typing, copying, etc. Please report any technical problems with the computers in the grad lounge to [the Office of Information Technology](#). Be aware that OIT does not provide support for privately owned computers or mobile devices. If the printer in the grad lounge is out of ink, please let Matthew, our Student Affairs Manager, know as soon as possible.

8.12.2026

Computer Clusters and Training Elsewhere on Campus

Computer clusters, scanners, and printers can also be found in Brown's University libraries. Training in a wide variety of software applications is offered by the [Office of Information Technology](#).

Libraries

The main humanities library at Brown is the John D. Rockefeller Library (aka "the Rock"). Tour of the library can be arranged on request. The [main website](#) of the Brown University Libraries is a portal to electronic research tools and services. Brown's library system also includes the [Orwig Music Library](#), and many other small, [specialized collections](#) specific to certain departments and programs that you will get to know as you become involved with them. In addition, Brown's library relies on a consortium of local lenders, most immediately the nearby [RISD library](#) and the [Providence Athenaeum](#), both collections Brown students can access through our on-line library catalogue, [Josiah](#).

The [John Hay Library](#) houses the University Library's collections of rare books and manuscripts, the University Archives, and many special collections on a wide variety of topics. Notable areas of strength include American literature and popular culture, political and diplomatic history, the history of science, book arts and graphics. The [John Carter Brown Library](#) is an internationally renowned, constantly growing [collection](#) of primary historical sources pertaining to the Americas, both North and South, before ca. 1825. The Performing Arts Librarian is [Laura Stokes](#). Based in [Orwig Music Library](#), she works on collections and research in subjects covered by TAPS and the Music Department. She maintains the [Performing Arts guide](#) (which includes [links to the Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive collection](#), among others). If you have items you would like the library to purchase, or if you would like to have a library consultation on a project, please let Laura know. Her office is Orwig 108. The best way to reach her is via email (Laura_Stokes@brown.edu). Brown students also have borrowing privileges at the RISD's [Fleet Library](#) located at 15 Westminister Street.

Graduate students writing a dissertation or thesis or literary work can apply for their own study carrel. The application for this can be found on the [library website](#). In addition to providing you with a place to work, a carrel is useful because you can charge limited circulation books to your carrel for longer periods, rather than charging them to your ID card for a short loan. Books charged to your carrel must be left on the carrel; they cannot be removed from the library unless charged to your ID. No books may be placed on your carrel without charging them out to the carrel at the circulation desk. Lockers are also available for graduate student use. Keys may be obtained from the circulation desk.

c. How does TAPS communicate?

Most departmental announcements and much of the daily information flow are communicated via **email**. Therefore, it is extremely important that you [establish your account](#) by mid-July prior to your enrollment, that you check your Brown email regularly, respond to requests for information or meetings in a timely manner, and that you keep the office staff informed of any changes to your contact information. If you wish to forward your Brown email to another email address, you can do it immediately after activating your Brown account, but please be aware you will need to use your Brown email and credentials to login to computer clusters, Banner, course websites and to access the library from off- campus. Students are urged to check their email and mailboxes regularly, as meetings and special events may be announced on short notice.

The Department also maintains Brown email contact info and bios for all graduate students on the website at <https://taps.brown.edu/people/graduate-students>. If you would like to submit (or change) a bio and/or picture at any time, please contact [Brienne Shaw](#), our Communications and Audience Services Manager. If you are teaching or TAing in a given semester, please get in the habit of using **your Brown email addresses in all correspondence with students and also using your Brown credentials to log into Banner (selfservice.brown.edu)**. The system will not recognize you any other way and using dueling emails can cause logistical headaches for your students and the staff.

Listservs

There are several Department email listservs/newsletters that you will be automatically subscribed to when you activate your Brown email address. Subscription to **TAPSGRAD_Lyman** is restricted to Brown TAPS grad students, grad faculty, and associated artists. The Graduate [Listservs](#) provide a forum for all kinds of communication relevant to the TAPS grad community, including lecture announcements, calls for papers, job and grant leads, social events, questions, etc. You are also automatically subscribed to “This Week at TAPS”—the weekly bulletin of upcoming events in the Department that is sent out weekly during the Fall and Spring semesters. If you are not receiving regular departmental notices or are unsure how the listservs should be used, please contact [Matthew Hoffman](#), the TAPS Department Student Affairs Manager. There is also a listserv that you can request to be added to (it will feature academic matters that don’t need to be circulated on the full TAPS grad list but that, if you are interested, you can join). If you want to be added to the [TAPSPHD](#) listserv, let the DGS know.

d. How are Graduate Students represented in/to the department?

Graduate Liaison to the Faculty

This person attends most faculty meetings as the representative of the interests of the

8.12.2026

graduate students at TAPS and in communication with the DGS. This position normally rotates annually among the Lyman Hall based graduate students, and is elected by the graduate students. In the past the position has always been filled by a doctoral student, but if you are interested as an MFA, please put yourself forward with the other graduate students as open for selection. There is no reason a WFP MFA can't serve.

Graduate Student Files

The Department maintains a file for every graduate student. Your file is a record of your graduate career at Brown that is used to help the faculty assess your progress and to establish internal rankings (see below). Most internal documentation (such as funding awards from the Graduate School or Department, the passage of language exams, etc.) will be entered into your file for you. You have the right to view your file, and you have the right to submit documentation to your file. It is in your best interest to make sure that all of your achievements are documented. For example, if you receive an external grant or honor, you should submit a copy of the award letter to your file via the Student Affairs Manager.

Graduate Student Progress Reports

It is important for students to receive feedback on their performance in the program and candid evaluations of their progress toward their degrees. At the end of every semester, the faculty meets as a group to discuss each student's performance and participation in courses, their performance as a TA or proctor, and, when appropriate, their completion of program requirements and progress on the dissertation. During this faculty meeting each student is ranked according to the Graduate School's status rankings of "good," "satisfactory," or "warning." Areas needing improvement are identified and concerns are voiced. Students receive these evaluations as part of the written reports from the DGS at the end of each semester, and are encouraged to use them as an occasion for checking in with their advisor and the DGS about what the program's expectations are, and how best to meet them. Your rank in the program has a direct impact on your funding. Graduate School funding guarantees are contingent upon maintenance of good academic standing in the program.

e. What if I have a grievance?

Students having trouble with a faculty member should consult the DGS. The Graduate School has adopted a University-wide grievance procedure, to which you may turn if

these less formal and local measures fail. These [procedures are available](#) here. If you want to discuss your situation with someone outside the Department, contact the Dean of the Graduate School or the [Ombudsperson](#). Note that the Chair and the DGS are considered, by [Title IX](#), as “responsible employees.” If matters of potential sexual harassment or abuse are brought to the Chair or the DGS’s attention, he/she is legally bound to report them. The Chair or DGS can direct you to confidential interlocutors if you prefer.

If one of your students complains about your teaching and you cannot resolve the problem yourself, you should consult with the course supervisor or faculty evaluator. If the issue cannot be resolved at that point, you should take the matter to the DGS. In cases where there is some disagreement between you and the faculty member or between either and the DGS, the Chair will review the evidence, discuss the matter with everyone involved, and report his or her conclusions in writing to you. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of this process, you are always free to pursue the Graduate School’s grievance procedures.

f. What if I have a change in status?

Any changes in a student’s status (leave of absence, withdrawals, part-time, changes in degree program) should be sent in writing to the DGS. The DGS in turn submits notification of any change to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs of the Graduate School. For more on leaves and other status changes please consult the [Graduate Studies Handbook](#). Material about readmission after a leave (including childbirth accommodation, family leave of absence, personal leave and medical leave) can be found there as well.

g. Can I take courses at Harvard?

Cross-Registration at Harvard University: There is a long-standing agreement between Harvard and Brown to allow cross-registration of graduate students in courses in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences only without paying tuition to the host institution. To do this, you must get the appropriate forms from the Registrar’s Office and obtain the signatures of the director of each graduate program and a dean from each Graduate School. If the student wants to take an entire semester’s course work at Harvard, he or she should enroll in the Exchange Scholar program. Ordinarily, this option is only recommended for more advanced students.

h. What does the Graduate School need me to do once I get to campus?

Please make sure to look over the [New Student Checklist](#) that the Graduate School

8.12.2026

maintains. **This includes state and federal tax paperwork, which, if neglected, will prevent you from being able to register for classes or receive your stipend.** If you have any questions about any of these requirements, please ask the Department Manager or the Academic Assistant at the front desk in the main office.

i. Can I get mail at the Department?

The Department mailing address is: Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies, Box 1897, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912. The physical address of Lyman Hall is 83 Waterman Street, Providence RI 02912. All mail sent to the Department goes first to the general graduate mailbox in the main office. It is delivered to graduate students' mailboxes in the grad student lounge at least once weekly. All regular mail (USPS) should be sent to (your name) at Box 1897, although your routine "domestic" mail (bills and correspondence) should be sent to your home address whenever possible. The mailroom refers to both department and box numbers when sorting mail. Therefore the use of a complete address is recommended. It's a good idea to give either the TAPS Department Manager or the Student Affairs Manager a heads up if you are having a package delivered. We recommend you use this option only when necessary as we have a limited amount of space in the office for storage of packages.

j. What about parking? Or housing?

Parking

Parking on streets near TAPS is metered during weekday business hours (until 6pm) and heavily monitored by the police. Free on-street parking near campus is possible, but one must usually look several blocks from Lyman in order to find it and it's usually restricted to two-hour blocks. There are Brown-maintained parking lots for which a permit can be purchased but the wait lists can be very long, sometimes years long. Meter readers are aggressive and efficient, and it is almost certain that improperly parked vehicles will be ticketed. It is difficult and expensive to park near campus on a regular basis, and is discouraged. Alternatively, Brown offers free transportation to all full time students/faculty/staff with a Brown ID on any bus or trolley operated by RIPTA, Rhode Island's public transportation system. Zipcar also operates several lots around campus. There is also a campus [shuttle service](#). Consult the [Transportation Office](#) for routes, current schedule and days of operation or call 401- 863-3157 for more information.

8.12.26

Housing

Housing is a matter of personal preference, but there are several resources you may find helpful in making your living arrangements. The Brown graduate community [listserv, GSBB-L](#), is often used to exchange information about available or desired housing. (Subscription works on the same model as our departmental listserv.) The Graduate School itself offers limited on- campus housing for grad students ([See Graduate School website](#)). You may also wish to consult with the University Auxiliary Housing office, which maintains a housing bulletin board on campus as well as online. Craigslist.org is also a very helpful resource. Please check the [Graduate Student Council Website](#) for more information.