This Handbook provides a framework for a fruitful and civilized collaborative process between directors, choreographers, designers, and technicians. It is meant to be a guide and general timeline for interactions, but all artists who are involved in the production process need to be flexible and sensitive to each other’s creative methods and adapt this structure when and if necessary.

**THEATRE PRODUCTIONS**

**DESIGN CONFERENCE #1**

MINIMUM 10 Weeks out from build. Artistic Director, Director, Scenic, Lighting, Costume and Sound designers (and faculty advisors) and Choreographer when appropriate, meet to discuss the play, the environment, the characters, the themes, etc. Director should present a brief, “why we want to do this play” statement with emphasis on WHAT AND WHY not HOW. Designers may want to bring general research material. This meeting is not to find design solutions, but to explore intellectual and artistic possibilities. If the director has a clear vision for the production at this stage it should be presented at this time.

The **outcome goal** of this meeting is for all participants to share likes, dislikes, challenges, fears, and *early* conceptual ideas. If the meeting is successful, directors and designers should leave the meeting with many ideas to process and consider. All should be given a chance to share his or her unique perspective.

**Potential Discussion Questions:**

1. What do you like about the script?
2. Why was this script chosen?
3. What do we want the audience to understand about this text?
4. Who or what is the story about?
5. What is not in the text, but is perhaps another layer of storytelling you see?

**Preparation** (all participants):

1. Having thoroughly read the script and listened to the music
2. Made initial lists pertaining to the design areas (all may do this):
   a. **Scenic/Properties**: locations, passage of time, any special effects or challenges related to environment
   b. **Costume**: character list, quick changes, any special effects or challenges related to character
   c. **Lighting/Sound**: passage of time, moods, any special effects or challenges related to moods
   d. **Director**: paths (flow of the show), initial ideas of theatrical conventions that may affect the outcome of the design, how grounded he or she is in realism or abstraction, any initial conceptual ideas
In order to **move forward into Meeting Two**, everyone should feel as if they understand the textual genre, given circumstances, and the limitations of the production calendar (build time, personnel, and material budget). **AFTER Meeting One and Meeting Two the Director may choose to have one-on-one meetings with individual designers to refine ideas.**

### DESIGN CONFERENCE #2

**MINIMUM 8 Weeks out from build.** Director and Designers present research to clearly show the direction of their thinking. **PAPERWORK AND RESEARCH DUE and include:** Verbal and written presentations of the approach to the production.

- **Director:** Written statement refining scope of show (number of characters/actors, locations, size of orchestra, etc.) especially discussion of items that might deviate from the printed script(combing/cutting of characters, scenes, etc.). Visual research is encouraged
- **Scenery:** Scene Breakdown and visual research.
- **Costumes:** Scene Breakdown and visual research.
- **Lighting:** Scene Breakdown and visual research.
- **Sound:** Scene Breakdown and audible research.

The **outcome goal** of this meeting is for all participants to share visually how the ideas discussed in Meeting One will potentially translate into reality. This can range from abstract paintings or concrete research. **Designers and Directors should bring as much visual information** to this meeting so that all know his or her opinion on the path moving forward.

**Potential Discussion Questions:**

1. How does this research tell the story to you?
2. How do you respond to these concepts?
3. How does this concept underscore the themes in the text?
4. How does the concept assist or hinder us in tackling the production challenges?
5. Is this concept interesting? Challenging? Innovative?
6. Does this path still work within the budgetary constraints (time, personnel, and money)?

**Preparation** (all participants):

1. Having thoroughly re-read the script and listened to the music
2. Refined initial lists pertaining to the design areas (all may do this):
3. Prepared images, either abstract or concrete, to clearly delineate ideas relating to concept. Designers in particular should speak to as much specificity as possible.
   a. **Scenic/Properties:** images relating to each location, images moving towards solutions to production challenges, and initial color concepts
   b. **Costume:** images to delineate hierarchy and/or social groups, images moving towards solutions to production challenges, and initial color concepts
c. **Lighting/Sound**: images or sounds to emphasize each major thematic mood, location, and timeframe, images moving towards solutions to production challenges, and initial color concepts

d. **Director**: images to underscore his or her overall feeling for the world of the play, the people who live there, and the mood of the production

We should finish by revisiting the calendar and template, and assess the estimated build time, personnel, and materials budgets. This will continue to be refined over the course of the process. Ad hoc meetings between the Director and Designers may be scheduled at this point to continue to refine ideas, and faculty advisors continue to meet with Student Designers.

### DESIGN CONFERENCE #3

**MINIMUM 6 Weeks out from build.** Director and designers present a preliminary scheme to clearly show the direction of their thinking.

**ROUGHS DUE:**

- **Director**: Revised statement (if needed). Possible visual and/or audible research.
- **Scenery**: visual research and rough sketch work or equivalent.
- **Costumes**: scene/character chart, visual research of each character/costume, possible rough sketches or equivalent.
- **Lighting**: visual research. Possible rough sketch work or equivalent
- **Sound**: audible research. Possible rough sketch work or equivalent

The team should identify unique/special production issues (i.e., real car on stage, casting of children, animals, or non-university personnel, pyro, fire, elevators, understudies, anything needing large lead times or special permission, etc.)

Ad Hoc conferences of the Director/Design Team continue. A faculty advisor must be present at all meetings with student designers whether meeting is formal or informal.

The **outcome goal** of this meeting is for all participants to share visually how the concept discussed in Meeting Two will be realized. Designers should present their work in as clear and detailed methodology as possible, so as to leave the director with a strong sense of their plan. Directors should respond to the work with how and why these plans will affect the storytelling and create a cohesive, theatrical world.

**Potential Discussion Questions:**

1. Why did the designer make these choices and how do these choices relate to the overall concept?
2. How do the designers’ choices enhance or detract from the story?
3. Will the audience understand the story through the lens of the design?
4. Is this design the most inventive and creative solution to the story?
5. Are the choices being made cohesive and integrated across design mediums?
6. Does this path still work within the budgetary constraints (time, personnel, and money)?
7. Does the designer have an action plan for actualizing the design?

In order to move forward into Meeting Four, everyone should feel as if they understand how this show will be realized. Directors should have time to think through the design choices with the script and respond to designers’ work as quickly as possible, but not necessarily in the meeting itself. We should be confident that this show will work within the means of production and the given circumstances of the story.

**DESIGN CONFERENCE #4**

**PRELIMINARY DESIGNS PRESENTATIONS AND DUE for approval**
- Scenery: presentation to include pencil sketches or other appropriate representation, a rough ground plan to scale, representative color palette, and a working scenic units/major props list.
- Costumes: pencil sketches or other appropriate representation of all costumes, representative color palette, representative fabric swatches, dressing lists, pull/build/buy/budget list.
- Lighting: a preliminary list of lighting requirements/equipment, color palette and lighting key.
- Sound: a preliminary list of cues and their type (i.e., FX, music), information on sound requirements/equipment—rough idea of speaker placement needs or ideas.

**TD, COSTUME SHOP MANAGER, DEPT MASTER ELECTRICIAN SHOULD BE PRESENT SO AS TO:** Begin Rough Estimate “Pie Chart” for Labor and Budget—discussed with designer while in process

Ad Hoc conferences of the Design Team continue including the Technical Director/Costume Shop Manager.
All areas should begin to incorporate budgeting into the design process.
A faculty advisor must be present at all meetings with student designers whether meeting is formal or informal.

**DESIGNS APPROVED—**Director and Producer have reviewed and Director has signed off on all design elements. Approval takes place after designs are submitted the week between Design Conference #4 and Design Conference #5.
DESIGN CONFERENCE #5

FINAL DESIGN PRESENTATION & FINAL DOCUMENTATION DUE - MINIMUM 2 Weeks out from build.

DESIGNS DUE:

- Scenery: scale white model with color renderings or a color scale model showing all scenes/settings, or complete color renderings, groundplan, section, scenic units/props list.
- Costumes: full color sketches with swatches for all characters (Subject to Casting).
- Lighting: sketches/images, rough cue idea list, lighting key(s).
- Sound: rough sound plot, rough cue list.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR and COSTUME SHOP MANAGER: “pie chart” rough estimates for both time and money as previously discussed with designers due.

FINAL SCENIC AND COSTUME DESIGNS:

Presentation of final packet. Materials presented should include all drawings, renderings, sketches and/or lists needed to go into the shops. Faculty advisers must have signed-off on all elements before this date.

- Scenery: final packet: scaled plan, scaled section, scaled painted model or full color renderings, 1/2” design elevations, 1/2” paint elevations, Final Scenic Units/Props List. All final scenic designs must include all masking elements (includes plan, section, model, renderings, etc.).
- Costumes: final color renderings with swatches, dressing lists, revised pull/build/buy/budget list.

Shop Supervisors and area heads should meet during this time to develop construction plans, establish a construction AND PAINT calendar, and begin materials ordering.

FINAL BUDGET PLAN DUE

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR and COSTUME SHOP MANAGER: Final cost and time budget plan due one week after Design Conference #5 by email to the designer, director, artistic director, production manager, other shop personnel as needed

PROPS LIST DUE: Director and Designers: provide preliminary lists for props (set, hand, costume). This list is due at Design Conference #5. The props list is due for finalization on the Monday before Tech Week. Any changes at that point must be approved by the Scenic Designer and Producer (Chair).

FIRST PRODUCTION MEETING

Beginning the Monday the week prior to the first rehearsal and continuing thru the Monday before tech weekend, weekly production meetings are held to monitor the flow
and progress of the production. Progress reports (including a written budget update every two weeks) and problems from all areas are presented weekly.

**SITZPROBE**
This is a rehearsal with actors and orchestra. It is the opportunity for the cast to acclimate themselves to the orchestration. This is sometimes done with body microphones. The priority of the rehearsal is music.

**DRESS PARADE**
A Dress Parade is not often necessary or even useful given the time constraints of academic theatre, and will only be scheduled at the discretion of the costume/directing team.

**PAPER TECH**
A Paper Tech is a session where the director, all designers, the Technical Director and the Stage Managers discuss the technical elements of the show from beginning to end. Each cue is “talked through” and recorded in the Stage Manager’s prompt book. These included scene shifts, special effects, lighting and sound cues, and quick change. The Paper Tech is scheduled on the Friday before Tech Rehearsals begin.

**TECH WEEK AND DRESS REHEARSALS**
We typically have a final Production Meeting during the Monday of Tech Week, and also the Director and Production/Design Team meets briefly at the conclusion of each dress/tech rehearsal to discuss the rehearsal and plan for the following day.

**DANCE DESIGN MEETINGS AND PRODUCTION MEETINGS**

**DESIGN CONFERENCE #1**
Choreographer communicates concept, inspiration, movement style/genre, mood, and initial idea of piece to be choreographed to Design Team (Costume, Set, and Lighting Designers). If music has been selected at this point, it can be shared with the Designers.

**DESIGN CONFERENCE #2**
Choreographer communicates and refines concept, movement style, and idea/theme of piece to be choreographed to Design Team (Costume, Set, and Lighting Designers). Choreographer communicates scene/dance number breakdown, general length of piece, narrative or choreographic “journey”, and overall choreographic design and idea for each scene. The Designers may choose to visit an early rehearsal to get an overall sense of the choreography/dance work.

**DESIGN CONFERENCES #3 and #4**
Designers observe rehearsal(s) and continue communication with Choreographer to refine design concepts and details of dance piece (i.e., entrances, exits, number of sections, special effects, props, gel color/choice, template choices and ideas, etc.)

### Production Process and Technical/ Dress Rehearsals

**Spacing Rehearsal**
A spacing rehearsal will be scheduled as an appointment on an evening during the week prior to the start of Technical Rehearsals. This rehearsal is on stage in the Guignol Theatre, with sound, but without lighting, and will be attended by the Lighting Designer and Stage Manager.

The intent of the rehearsal is to provide time for the choreographer to work spacing and entrances/ exits. The Lighting Designer and/or Stage Manager may request a run of the dance to be videotaped by them for their use.

**Paper Tech**
A Paper Tech is a session where the choreographer, Lighting Designer and Stage Manager discuss the technical elements of the show from beginning to end. Each cue is “talked through” and recorded in the Stage Manager’s promptbook. These include scene shifts, special effects, lighting and sound cues, and quick change. The Paper Tech is scheduled on the Friday before Tech Rehearsals begin.

**Technical Rehearsals (2)**
The technical rehearsals will be scheduled as appointments with start and end times for each piece. Each piece will be assigned a single time slot. The length of the time slot will be based on the length of the piece in proportion to the length of the whole program. The schedule of these time slots should be posted in the Production Schedule by the Stage Manager.

The intent of these rehearsals is to refine and coordinate the lighting cues, set sounds levels, and equalization, train the stage manager and show crew, and run the piece.

**Dress Rehearsals (2)**
The Dress Rehearsals are the time in the process to include costumes for the performers. Choreographers and dancers must remember that the first dress is one part of the process. It is potentially the first time for designers to see their work with movement on stage and the collaboration and refinement of the design will continue over the next few days.

During the first Dress Rehearsal performers may sit in the house and watch the concert. The Stage Manager reserves the right, during this rehearsal, to run each piece a second time if necessary. The second Dress Rehearsal will run like a show. It may have invited preview audience in attendance.