

MFA in Visual Studies Graduate Studies Handbook

Table of Contents

Use of this handbook

Program Description

Advising

Scheduling Courses

Graduate Faculty

MFA Committee

Studio Assignments

Departmental Studio/Lab Access

Reviews & Requirements

Thesis Guidelines

Graduate Assistantships

Funding Opportunities

Appendix

Degree Requirements

Course Descriptions

Sample 3-year course progression

Program of study form

First-Year Review forms (faculty & student)

Second-Year Review forms (faculty & student)

Thesis Review forms (faculty & student)

Use of this handbook

The procedures that follow are a summary designed to assist graduate students pursuing the MFA in Visual Studies. They're offered as a guide for planning and fulfilling the requirements for the graduate degree.

Graduate students should familiarize themselves with the policies and regulations outlined not only within this handbook but the Graduate Catalog as well. The Graduate Catalog can be found on the Missouri State University web site.

Faculty may find this handbook helpful in outlining on-going, standard procedures/reviews.

This is a "living document" and may be updated frequently. Please ensure you have the most up-to-date copy. A current copy will always be available from the Art & Design web site.

Program Description (from the graduate catalog)

Advanced study in Visual Arts and Design with an emphasis placed on the student's individual research. The curriculum is specifically designed to be flexible to meet the individual research needs within contemporary, traditional and interdisciplinary approaches and media. The Department of Art and Design offers a wide range of facilities including graduate studios.

A variety of students with differing backgrounds and research interests is considered an important factor in the development of a scholarship community with an interest in developing original research.

Advising

Admitted students are expected to have the appropriate background to handle graduate instruction in studio art and/or design. If a deficiency is determined or revealed through the course of study, undergraduate coursework may be required before taking additional graduate courses.

The MFA candidate must earn a minimum of 60 hours to complete the degree. The Graduate Catalog has the complete, up-to-date degree requirements and course descriptions. A copy of these and example of a standard course-progression schedule are included in the appendix of this document.

The student and the major advisor will plan an individual program of study so that the student can meet his/her/their research needs within contemporary, traditional and interdisciplinary approaches and media. Major advisors are typically the faculty teaching the students' Directed Studies courses; incoming students are automatically assigned the Graduate Coordinator as their major advisor.

Every semester students need a release from their advisor in order to register for classes. A review of the program of study will occur before each registration period.

During the Second-Year Review, taken in what is typically the third semester of a full-time student's progression, a major advisor is declared by the student as part of the process and that status typically remains intact through the Thesis process. Any change in a student's major professor needs approval by the Graduate Coordinator.

Scheduling Courses

Students should check the on-line schedule for available classes as soon as it becomes available each semester to start planning their next semester coursework. This projected course schedule will also impact TA and GA assignments and the Graduate Coordinator will want to have this information as soon as it is available.

Dates for registration are available on the Registrar's web site. Many of the graduate courses require permission of the instructor. Students will need a registration release from their advisor before registering each semester. A review of his/her/their program of study should be conducted each semester.

Contact the Graduate Coordinator if there are any scheduling conflicts or in the case of registration difficulties.

Graduate Faculty

Only Graduate Faculty can teach 700-level or above courses. Graduate Faculty are faculty who have applied for and who have attained graduate faculty status. These are research-based appointments, faculty within the department and across the university approve the applications based on the criteria

set by the department. Graduate faculty appointments are an on-going process.

Graduate faculty in the department, as of the date of this document's publishing:

Joshua Albers, Deidre Argyle, Rick Briggenhorst, Fatih Benzer, Keith Ekstam, Sean Fitz Gibbons, Billie Follensbee, Jacek Fraczak, Megan Frauenhoffer, Maria Gerasimchuk-Djordjevic, Sharon Harper, Marcus Howell, Kevin Hughes, Mitzi Kirkland-Ives, Sean Lyman, Chris Rodgers, Shauna Smith, Andrew Wasserman, Sarah Williams, Steve Willis, Vonda Yarberry

Contact the Graduate Coordinator if you have an interest in studying with a faculty member not listed above. The application process might be already underway.

MFA Committee

The MFA Committee is a comprised of faculty who are charged with overseeing and guiding the development of the MFA program. This committee is also the core committee for making recommendations for admission into the program. Additional faculty will be brought in if the student's research interests appear to fall outside of the disciplines represented by the appointed committee.

Studio Assignments

Studios are intended to be used by the student for the development of his/her/their work for the degree program. Studios are assigned by the Graduate Coordinator, based on the available spaces in the department. Initial assignments are based on the following:

1. The nature of the student's intended work and how the physical characteristics of the space support this work
2. Seniority among students
3. Proximity to big equipment within the department (such as kilns) that the student plans to use in their work
4. Proximity or pairings with other graduate students who could act as mentors to first or second year graduate students.

If these circumstances change or the spaces are inappropriate in any way, contact the Graduate Coordinator.

Students will be assigned a studio for a maximum of six semesters, taking into account the program is 60-hours, and designed to be completed within three-years.

Students are responsible for returning the studio to the original state in which it was assigned: clean and freshly painted. Paint and supplies will be provided. Students must be prepared to vacate the studio space within 7 days of the last day of classes or make alternative arrangements with the Graduate Coordinator. Satisfying this requirement is part of the MFA Degree and can be seen on student audits.

Students will be issued keys for their assignment studio spaces and have 24-hour building access.

Computers may be provided to Graduate Students for their studio use but only on a case-by-case basis, as they are available. They will be assigned based on the best configuration of what's available for the work being undertaken by the student. There are no guarantees adequate computing can be accomplished on these computers within private studios. Best access to highest performing resources will be found in the communal computer labs. You may request after-hours access to the labs via the Graduate Coordinator.

Computers must be checked out and returned through the Distributed User Support Specialist. The deadline for return of a computer is July 1.

The university and department are not responsible for the personal items of a student's that are kept in assigned studio space that are lost or damaged in case of theft or damage from any cause.

Departmental Studio/Lab Access

Students will have access to all departmental facilities, but scheduled use will be determined on a space-by-space basis. Students must pass safety tests for various facilities such as the sculpture lab before they are cleared to work unsupervised. Contact the individual faculty supervising the area or the Graduate Coordinator for information.

Reviews & Requirements

Below is an overview of the curriculum reviews for the MFA in Visual Studies. In the following sections are descriptions of the processes. Review forms for both students and faculty are located in the appendix.

Portfolio Submission Requirement	end-of-each-semester
First-Year Review	end of the semester that Art 702 Directed Studies is undertaken
Second-Year Review	within the semester that Art 703 Directed Studies is undertaken
Second-Year Probationary Review	within the semester that Art 704 Directed Studies is undertaken
Thesis Review	during the second semester of Art 799 Studio Thesis

Portfolio Submission Requirement

The purpose of this requirement is to form an on-going library/archive of materials that represents the MFA in Visual Studies program.

Process

Every semester a student is enrolled in the Visual Studies program, he/she/they are required to submit documentation of at least one work completed or in-progress that semester.

Each represented work submitted must have a written statement accompanying it. The statement will describe the work being documented, the processes used to create it, and the significance of the work to you, the artist and your developing body of work.

Documentation of the work must be in digital format. Documentation in the form of still images must be at least 300 dpi and 7200 x 7200 pixels; video must be at least 1080p (1920x1080, 29.96 fps); sound must be AIFF, uncompressed.

Any variation to the above format must be approved by the Graduate Coordinator.

Files must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator before the end of the final exam period or your university record will show an encumbrance, which will keep you from enrolling in future semesters and halt any release of official transcripts.

Unless the student specifies otherwise, this documentation may be used for promotional purposes for the university, in print or on-line.

The Graduate Coordinator is available to answer questions.

First-Year Review

The purpose of this review is for students to reflect on the overall development of their course of study. The collected materials will be used by faculty to help guide the students along their individual curricular paths, towards the ultimate goal of the thesis. Feedback from faculty will be provided to the student after the review. In addition, the review will also be used to gauge the program's level of effectiveness as part of the department's on-going assessment process.

Process

This review occurs towards the end of the semester that Art 702 Directed Studies is undertaken. The Graduate Coordinator will announce the deadline for all reviews within the first two weeks of the beginning of every semester.

Completion of this review is required for matriculation within the program. The format and instructions for submitting student materials are located in the appendix of this document.

Once the Graduate Coordinator has collected the review materials from the students, he/she will make them available on a departmental server for distribution to faculty involved in the review process. Instructions to faculty will be included at the announcement of the review process. Faculty review forms are also included in the appendix of this document.

The Graduate Coordinator will compile and submit the information for assessment documentation in accordance to the departmental plan. The Graduate Coordinator will schedule a meeting with individual students to relay a summary of the faculty feedback and to incorporate that information into the on-going discussion about the student's direction and course of study.

Second-Year Review

The purpose of this review is to assess individual students are making satisfactory progress within the degree program. Completion of this review is required for matriculation within the program.

If a student receives a 'satisfactory' rating, he/she continues to prepare for the final thesis review. If a student receives a 'probationary' rating, the review will be re-administered within the following semester. The student must show improvement to a 'satisfactory' rating within that time period or receive a 'non-satisfactory' rating. A 'non-satisfactory' rating will result in the student being dropped from the program.

Students will be rated: satisfactory, probationary, non-satisfactory based on the following criteria:

- + progress towards a focused direction of study, ultimately leading to a significant body of work
- + progress towards building professional competence/depth of knowledge within their field of study
- + developing understanding within their field of study
- + ability to think independently
- + ability to integrate and synthesize information associated with their field of study
- + awareness of current issues and developments that are influencing their field of study
- + ability and potential for expansion and evolution of their field of study
- + capabilities in the creation, dissemination, documentation of their work within the field of study
- + effective communication skills

Process

This review occurs within the semester that Art 703 Directed Studies is undertaken. The Graduate Coordinator will announce the deadline for all reviews within the first two weeks of the beginning of every semester. The format and instructions for submitting student materials are located in the appendix of this document.

Committee selection

Each student will choose three faculty he/she/they feel know his/her/their work best and/or those that he/she/they feel can provide the most valuable feedback towards his/her/their research development. Two of the three faculty must be faculty from the Art & Design Department, the third member of the committee can be from another department within the University

Soon after the student has submitted the completed Second-Year Review form to the Graduate Coordinator, the date and location of the review will be announced. After the date has been announced, the student will initiate a meeting with the Graduate Coordinator to discuss how best to prepare the work, based on the location and equipment available for the review.

Major advisor/major professor selection

One of these faculty members chosen for this review must be named the student's "major advisor" with

the intention that this role and title extend through the student's Thesis Review. The major advisor must be a member of the Art & Design Department. Changes to the student's designation of major advisor must receive the approval of the Graduate Coordinator.

Review

During the review the student will present his/her/their work. Faculty will participate in the critique of the work and engage in discussion over the work's development and direction.

Review results

Once the Graduate Coordinator has collected the completed review forms from the faculty, he/she/they will compile and submit the information for assessment documentation in accordance to the departmental plan. The Graduate Coordinator will compile a summary of the faculty feedback for the student's major advisor. The major advisor will then schedule a meeting with student to relay the results and to incorporate that information into the on-going discussion about the student's direction and course of study.

Thesis Review & Guidelines

The purpose of this review is to determine whether the student has satisfactorily completed the thesis requirements within the degree program. This review takes into consideration the exhibition, the written thesis document, the thesis documentation and the oral thesis defense.

If a student passes their final semester of ART 799 by receiving a 'satisfactory' rating, he/she/they will receive the recommendation of the committee to award the degree. A 'non-satisfactory' rating will result in the student being dropped from the program and/or not receiving their MFA in Visual Studies Degree.

Students will be rated 'satisfactory' or 'non-satisfactory' based on the following criteria:

- + focused and significant body of work within their discipline(s)
- + demonstrated professional competence/depth of knowledge within their discipline(s)
- + understanding within their discipline(s)
- + ability to think independently
- + ability to integrate and synthesize information associated with their discipline(s)
- + awareness of current issues and developments that are influencing their discipline(s)
- + ability and potential for expansion and evolution of their discipline(s)
- + capabilities in the creation, dissemination, documentation of their work within the discipline(s)
- + effective communication skills

Process

This review occurs within the second semester that Art 799 Graduate Studio Thesis is undertaken. The Graduate Coordinator will announce the deadline for all reviews within the first two weeks of the beginning of every semester. The format and instructions for submitting student materials are located in the appendix of this document.

Committee selection

The professor of the Art799 course is considered the chair of the Thesis Committee. Students, with the help of their Thesis Committee Chair, will choose two additional faculty they feel know their work best and/or those who can provide the most valuable feedback towards their research development. One of the two additional faculty must be faculty from the Art & Design Department, the second member of the committee can be from another department within the University but must be related to the thesis.

Exhibition

The major component of the thesis review involves the evaluation of the thesis work being exhibited. The quality and quantity of work exhibited should be consistent with the criteria listed above. The character of this exhibition should be considered a solo exhibition, even if more than one student is exhibiting in the same space. What constitutes a "focused and significant body" must be part of the conversation with the thesis committee as these determinations vary depending on the nature and form of the works to be exhibited. The exhibit schedule and space used for the exhibition must be approved by the thesis committee. The installation of the exhibition will be the student's responsibility and must meet professional standards, for which the thesis committee will serve as guide.

Written document

The written thesis will serve to document the work within the thesis exhibition and to provide a narrative description of the work's development and theoretical framework, including influences, and its significance within the discipline(s). This document should include substantial visual documentation appropriate to the media. An approved template for the format will be provided the first semester the thesis work begins. Once the committee has given final approval/acceptance of the thesis and the student has received a 2/2 score from the Graduate College Reviewers, students are required to submit three, printed copies in final, approved bound form to the Graduate Coordinator; one for the Art & Design Department's Visual Resources Collection; and one for the Thesis Chair; one for the Graduate Coordinator; and one digital copy in approved form. This requirement is part of the MFA Degree and is visible on the audit.

Before the end of the fourth semester, prior to enrolling in Art799 Graduate Studio Thesis, an outline of the thesis writing is due to the thesis committee; the thesis committee will return comments before the end of the semester so development can continue throughout the semester break. The published deadlines for each stage of thesis development, from outline to final, will be available before the semester the thesis is undertaken.

Exhibition documentation

To serve as an archive of student work, all thesis exhibitions must be documented with high-resolution, digital photographic files depicting the work and its installation. For work not suitable for still-photographic documentation, high-quality alternative documentation appropriate to the media is expected. Documentation must be approved by the Graduate Coordinator before the degree can be awarded.

Committee Chair responsibilities

The Thesis Committee Chair serves as the mentor to the student for the preparation of the written and visual thesis. The Chair should consult and meet with the student on a regular basis; coach the student through committee protocols; advise on topic selection; guide the student in the writing and exhibition process; and, assist the student with selecting faculty members to serve on the committee. The Chair should also ensure that Committee Members are familiar with committee roles and the frequency in which members review the student's work. The Chair is also expected to communicate expectations for the entire thesis submission and review process to the student.

Committee responsibilities

Faculty members serving on the MFA Thesis Committee are expected to help students understand the importance and expectations of each stage of the thesis process. Thesis Committee members are also expected to clearly communicate their availability to students and the Graduate Coordinator, including summer semester schedule, travel, sabbatical, and other commitments. In addition, all Thesis Committee members must respect the thesis due dates and provide feedback on drafts and revisions within timeframes specified in the Thesis Submission Schedule. While the Thesis Committee Chair has the primary responsibilities and prerogatives in scheduling the review process, is working most closely with the student and giving the most guidance, all Committee members should provide guidance throughout the course of the thesis process. Committee members also understand that while the

completion of each step is ultimately the responsibility of the student, the members share the responsibility to ensure that the student knows how to do these tasks.

Student responsibilities

First and foremost, students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the thesis guidelines and processes. Each student is responsible for working with the Thesis Committee Chair to establish and meet deadlines, schedule committee meetings, secure and complete the necessary paperwork and forms, and maintain channels of communication with all Committee Members and schedule the final oral thesis review.

The student will also note that special considerations are at play with each exhibition venue. It is the student's responsibility to identify and closely adhere to the guidelines of the exhibition space where the thesis exhibition is being staged.

Ultimately, the underpinnings to a successful thesis lie in the production of an exceptional body of creative work, developed via a strong, dedicated, thoughtful and well-managed studio practice.

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Assistantships are renewable, based on satisfactory performance and eligibility requirements that include enrollment of a minimum of 6 hours of graduate course work (600-level or above) and a 3.0 GPA during each semester of appointment. A graduate assistant is expected to provide approximately twenty hours of department service per week in return for the financial support during graduate study.

Graduate Assistants are required to participate in orientations and/or training that would allow them to complete their duties in a satisfactory way depending on the specific assignment.

Accepting a Graduate Assistant Award means you understand the expectations for the award's performance standards and are prepared to meet them if there is to be continued reappointment.

Please be aware that if you withdraw from courses during the semester or you demonstrate poor performance, your GA may be terminated before the end of the semester. Faculty are here to support you and we all hope you will reach out if you need help to avoid such consequences.