

MINNEAPOLIS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN VISUAL STUDIES

**Program Handbook**  
**2018 / 2019**

## **Minneapolis College of Art and Design Master of Fine Arts in Visual Studies Program**

The MCAD MFA program is a community of makers, thinkers, theorists, researchers, and creative professionals. Our student body is diverse with a robust international presence. Topics of student inquiry respond to social, cultural, and professional needs as well as to entrepreneurial opportunities, stretching across art and design practices. Students in the program pursue creative work in a lively, interdisciplinary environment that includes graphic design, printmaking, paper and book arts, painting, photography, illustration, sculpture, drawing, animation, interactive media, filmmaking, comic arts, furniture design, and installation art. The MCAD MFA program centers around a rigorous one-on-one mentor-based model. Graduate students work with mentors who are experts in their fields. For three semesters, this intensive experience is augmented by equally challenging critique seminars and theory courses. Midway through the process, students engage in a formal review with a committee of faculty who suggest, evaluate and guide students' projects. The concluding semester of the candidate experience culminates with a public exhibition of the thesis project and its defense.

The MCAD MFA program is an active part of the vibrant creative community in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and the program utilizes the expertise of world-class faculty and professionals. All mentors are drawn from the local community. A successful candidacy will allow students to join professional and/or academic life, having mastered at a high level their discipline as practitioners.

<b>SECTION 1.</b>	THE MFA PROGRAM	<b>01</b>
<b>SECTION 2.</b>	ACADEMIC POLICIES AND INFORMATION	<b>11</b>
<b>SECTION 3.</b>	MID-PROGRAM REVIEW	<b>16</b>
<b>SECTION 4.</b>	THESIS PROJECT PREPARATION AND DOCUMENTATION	<b>20</b>
<b>SECTION 5.</b>	OTHER PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES	<b>26</b>

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This handbook is developed by the Graduate Program for graduate student use. The information found in this handbook is accurate to the best of our knowledge as of August 2018. The information and policies contained in this MFA student handbook are presented as a matter of information only and are not intended to create, nor is the handbook to be construed to constitute, a contract between MCAD and any student. MCAD has the right to alter, amend, modify, deviate from, or otherwise terminate any privileges, provisions, or obligations contained in this handbook at any time if it so chooses with or without notice to a student. Changes to this handbook will be announced via e-mail. If you have any questions about the contents of this handbook, please contact the Graduate Program Director.

*In addition to the Graduate Student Handbook, students are subject to all MCAD policies found in the MCAD student handbook.*

## SECTION 1. THE MFA PROGRAM

### **GRST 7002, 7003, 7004**

#### **Graduate Critique Seminars**

3 Studio credits per semester

The Graduate Critique Seminar provides all graduate students structured group critiques of their work and that of their peers. Students develop a methodology of critique and the ability to discuss work across disciplines. A rotation of guest artists, designers, and critics visit throughout the semester. The visitors present their own work and discuss their practice and then participate in student critiques. Each student has a minimum of two formal critiques each semester with options for additional critiques throughout the semester as time permits. The seminar includes contemporary readings and conversations about contemporary art, successful critiquing strategies, and methods for describing intent, content, meaning, and form of presented artwork.

### **GRST GM99**

#### **Mentored Credits**

6–9 Studio credits

Mentorship is regarded as the core of the MCAD graduate curriculum. Each semester the student and mentor determine its content, which is summarized in a Learning Contract in context with the student Long-Range Learning Plan. Students work one-on-one with their mentor in the advancement of studio work, studio research, and professional practice. Mentor Credits coursework is structured to facilitate discussions and assess goals on a weekly basis. Credits may also include attending visiting-artist/designer lectures, exhibitions and workshops, audited courses, seminars, and internship and externship opportunities.

### **GRLA 7011**

#### **Interrogating the Modern**

3 Liberal Arts credits

A primary concern for artists and designers is the ability to narrate, analyze, and discuss the contexts of their own work in relationship to historical and Modernist discourse. This course introduces and analyzes the visual and textual methods and theories through which artists and designers work and understand the meanings of “art” and “design.” This investigation provides the basis for students to think of themselves and their ideas as belonging to histories of culture and work. Through a seminar-style method of readings, discussion, assignments, and studio visits with the instructors, students position themselves and their work through the context of histories and cultures. This course also serves to provide students a forum for developing and utilizing art and design vocabulary when critiquing each other’s studio work.

**GRLA 7012****Entering the Contemporary Field**

3 Liberal Arts credits

Students build upon their interrogation of the historical discourse of Modern art and design and enhance their skills in critique and analysis in the articulation of works of 21st century Contemporary art and design as the context for their own work. To be able to identify the discursive, artistic, and cultural ground in which their work will be understood, necessitates that students learn to better present their own works through an expansion of discursive concepts. The course fosters literacy and imparts a vocabulary of contemporary theories, forms, and practices. Students read and discuss the contemporary cultural and critical theories used to analyze and critique contemporary art and design, and identify specific theories that inform their practice. Through focused assignments requiring a critical and analytical response, they will achieve deeper understanding of their place as makers within their Contemporary cultural discourses and the stakes of their practice. This course will prepare the student for the Mid-program Review.

**GRLA 7013****Researching the Thesis: Methods for Drafting, and Revision**

3 Liberal Arts credits

This course is designed to help students articulate the theoretical basis of their work and write artist or designer statements requiring a critical assessment of their practice in relation to acknowledged contemporary works and culture. Students write a "Statement of Practice," a final essay concerning the context, the content, and the theoretical and conceptual influences of their current work. This constellation of concerns is then collated into a cogent thesis statement on the nature of the student's current practice. Using the assistance of mentors, instructors, critics, and peers in the formation of a thesis statement of practice, students leave this course with a refined and practical aid for their final thesis paper and assumption of the professional life beyond the MFA studio.

**GRLA 7014****Writing and Presenting the Final Thesis Paper**

3 Liberal Arts credits

The initial emphasis of this course is devoted to refining the student's Public Presentation of their Thesis Proposal. The balance of this course is designed to guide students through the process of Final Thesis development. Students will complete their required thesis paper under the guidance of their mentor and their Thesis Committee with support from this class, which assists students in the timely completion of recommended revisions. Finally, this course guides graduate candidates through the process of finalizing the Thesis Paper after their defense to meet the requirements for submission of their Final Thesis Paper to the college.

**GRST 7018**  
**Graduate Thesis Exhibition**

3 Studio credits

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This capstone project is the completion of the student's required studio work for the Thesis Exhibition under the guidance of his or her mentor in preparation for the final thesis review. Graduate candidates navigate this process in consultation with their mentor and the Thesis/Exhibition Review Committee.

**GRLA 7016**  
**Graduate Teaching Seminar: Theory and Methods**

2 Liberal Arts credits

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This two-week summer intensive exposes students to teaching and learning theories and history as they develop professional practice skills. The seminar introduces graduate students to general teaching pedagogy, course planning, resources, classroom and course management, levels of learning, and critique methodology. The course prepares graduate students for fall semester teaching assistantship positions and post-degree teaching. This seminar is taught in conjunction with a subsequent semester assisting with teaching and attending bi-weekly sessions with the MFA teaching assistant cohort. See GRLA 7017.

**GRLA 7017**  
**Graduate Teaching Practicum**

1 Liberal Arts credit

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This semester-long practicum is part of the Graduate Teaching package. Students who completed the seminar coursework of GRLA 7016 over the summer are placed as teaching assistants with an appropriate faculty member in a fall studio course. During the teaching assistant semester, graduate students meet every other week to discuss and troubleshoot classroom issues while serving as TAs and develop professional practices documents and strategies for teaching job applications, including teaching philosophies, teaching resumes, cover letters, and interviews. Prerequisite: Graduate Teaching Seminar: Theory and Methods

## Program Overview of the Master of Fine Arts in Visual Studies

### CREDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MFA DEGREE

Studio Core/Mentored Credits <i>(includes 3 credits for Thesis Exhibition)</i>	39 credits
Graduate Critique Seminars	9 credits
Liberal Arts Seminars <i>(includes 3 credits for Thesis Paper)</i>	12 credits

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**TOTAL** **60 credits**

*Teaching Component (optional)* 3 credits

**TOTAL** **63 credits**

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#### First Semester **15 credits**

Studio Core/Mentored Credits	9 credits
Grad Critique Seminar	3 credits
Interrogating the Modern	3 credits

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#### Second Semester **15 credits**

Studio Core/Mentored Credits	9 credits
Grad Critique Seminar	3 credits
Entering the Contemporary Field	3 credits

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#### Third Semester **15 credits**

Studio Core/Mentored Credits	9 credits
Grad Critique Seminar	3 credits
Researching the Thesis: Methods for Drafting, and Revision	3 credits
Teaching Component (Optional)	3 credits

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#### Fourth Semester **15 credits**

Studio Core/Mentored Credits	9 credits
Graduate Thesis Exhibition	3 credits
Writing and Presenting the Final Thesis Paper	3 credits

***Full-Time and Part-Time MFA candidate status:***

The recommended course load for full time MFA candidates is 15 credits each semester.

A course load of 12 or more credits indicates full-time status and access to a studio.

All MFA candidates must take a minimum of 6 Studio Core / Mentor credits per semester.

***Considerations for Part-Time Students***

Students may take up to five years to complete the program. However:

In order to be eligible for financial aid, students must register for a minimum number of credits. Students should check with the Student Financial Services office for specifics related to their situation.

In order to be eligible for a Mentorship Contract, students must be enrolled for a minimum of 6 Studio Core/Mentor Credits.

Exceptions to any program requirements must be approved by the Graduate Program Director and Vice President of Academic Affairs.

**The Mentorship**

The majority of Studio Core/Mentor credits are structured by a Semester Learning Contract with the mentor.

***Mentors are expected to:***

Work as an adviser to the student, helping to design an individual program of study specific to goals for development as an artist/designer, and to ensure that these goals meet the standards of the Graduate Program.

Provide feedback and critique during the mentorship.

Co-develop, review and approve the student's Long Range Learning Plan, Semester Learning Contracts, and Semester Evaluations.

Participate in the student's Mid-Program Review.

Work with the student in selecting the Thesis Exhibition Committee Members

Participate in the student's Thesis Committee Meetings and Thesis/Exhibition Review

Advocate for the student, if and when appropriate.

Evaluate, in writing, student progress in studio work and to assign the official grade (pass/fail) for mentor credits at the end of each semester.

Be aware of and maintain MFA Program policies



### **Working with a Mentor**

Mentors are active, professional artists and designers who present their work regularly to the public and are engaged in contextualizing and conceptualizing art and design. Mentorships are negotiated between the student and mentor and vary depending on personal work styles, personalities and preferences. MCAD expects MFA students to be working artists/designers with a clear idea of what they want to achieve from their studies. The mentor is a guide and a source of thoughtful and critical response throughout this process. Students and mentors negotiate a schedule to meet regularly in order to productively advance the student's work. A successful mentorship experience depends on mutually clear articulation and understanding of expectations and an equally clear strategy for creating and maintaining a productive working relationship.

### **Finding a Mentor**

Beginning the first week in August information about mentors is available from the Graduate Program Director. In consultation with the Director, each student receives mentor recommendations. The Graduate Program Director notifies potential mentors that students may be contacting them for an interview, and students set up interviews. Together, the mentor and student mutually agree to begin a mentoring relationship. These interviews ideally must be completed as early in the new semester as possible. The student and mentor plan the student's course of study and complete a Long-Range Learning Plan and a Semester Learning Contract at the beginning of the semester. The student confirms mentor selection with the Graduate Director and completes required registration materials.

***NOTE: The Graduate Director may also reserve the right to assign a mentor to a graduate student on a case-by-case basis.***

### **Changing Mentors**

Students may choose to change mentors during the course of the program. Any changes must be discussed first with the current mentor and made at the end of the semester. Students should then notify the Graduate Program Director and start the interview process, when appropriate, to select a new mentor.

Mentors are not obligated to continue working with a student if they feel it is not a good working relationship or if their schedules will not allow for sufficient mentoring time. Mentors may only choose to end the relationship at semester's end.

Students who wish to change mentors before the Fall semester must wait until August to do so because a change of mentors needs to be coordinated with the mentor process for incoming students.

The Graduate Program Director is available for advice and counsel regarding any mentor concerns.

### **Studio Core Credits with the Mentor and Other Learning Opportunities**

A graduate student may take up to 9 credits of undergraduate classes in the MCAD curriculum during their time in the MFA Program. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis by the instructor and recorded on the student's official transcript. In addition, students may plan with their mentors to audit a class, sit in on part of a class or participate in some other learning experience at MCAD or elsewhere (See Appendix 1 for Graduate Policy/Procedure for Auditing Courses). These experiences will be part of the Studio Core/Mentor Credits of the Semester Learning Contract and will be evaluated and graded (pass/fail) by the mentor, with input and evaluation from faculty members or individuals who have worked with the student.

### **Year-Round Learning Opportunities**

MCAD has a lively, active summer session with multiple opportunities for MFA candidates. Graduate students are encouraged to continue working in their studio during the summer. Students are also encouraged to pursue summer internships and residencies appropriate to their chosen area of study. The College offers workshops throughout the academic year and some special weekend workshops through Continuing Studies, all of which may enhance program plans. In order to facilitate effective study throughout the duration of the MFA curriculum, each graduate student is required to submit a Summer Learning Plan to the Graduate Director and their mentor.

### **Internships**

MFA candidates may find internships a useful part of graduate study and are credited as a part of mentorship. Many MFA students find internships through MCAD Career Services, personal contacts, or their mentor. All MCAD students applying for internships must work through MCAD Career Development. The MCAD Career Development Office provides assistance with locating and applying for internships. For comprehensive assistance, students should schedule an appointment with the Director of Career Development.

### **Teaching Program**

The MFA Teaching Program prepares graduate students for a career in art and design education by providing exposure to art teaching/learning theories and practices. Students gain familiarity with the theory and practical application of critique methodologies and learn classroom management and course planning techniques. Students will also be guided through the development and completion of an application packet that they can use to seek teaching positions.

The MFA Teaching Program was developed in order to better serve those MFA candidates who wish to pursue teaching after graduation. It consists of two parts: a two-credit Teaching Seminar during late summer and a one-credit Teaching Practicum fall semester. Students are required to enroll in both parts of the Teaching Program. The MFA Teaching program is an optional offering and is not required for graduation, nor are the three credits counted toward graduation. Students who enroll in the Seminar and Practicum will graduate with 63 credits.

***NOTE: This class carries an additional flat tuition rate, which will be added to a student's fall semester tuition regardless of the number of credits for which they are already registered. Students registered for this class are advised to contact staff in the Financial Aid Office in order to determine whether their fall semester aid can be adjusted.***

## **SECTION 2.**

### **ACADEMIC POLICIES AND INFORMATION**

Information below does not include all policies and procedures, please refer to the Student Handbook for official language.

#### **Registration and Advising**

MFA candidates register through the Records office after advising with the Graduate Director. The Semester Learning Contract must be read and signed by the student, mentor, and the Graduate Program Director before it is submitted to the Records Office. This occurs at the end of the semester after the semester evaluation is complete. Continuing graduate students may register before undergraduates.

#### **Credits and Grades**

MCAD employs a Pass/Fail grading system at the graduate level. In practice, successful completion of a semester of study is recorded on the candidate's official transcript as "Pass." Criterion for grading will be established at the beginning of each class by the instructor and by the mentor for mentorship credits. Failure to meet course requirements will be recorded as "Fail" and credit hours will not be granted. All course requirements, including all class assignments, must be completed and deemed satisfactory by the instructor or mentor in order to earn a grade of "Pass". "Incomplete" and "Withdrawal" will be recorded in appropriate instances. Reasons for requesting an incomplete grade include medical emergencies or other events outside of the student's control. In the event that an "Incomplete" is recorded, the coursework must be completed by the fifth week of the subsequent semester or a permanent grade of "Fail" will be recorded for the semester. Incompletes are not granted for unfinished work.

#### **Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to attend all classes and mentor meetings. Teaching faculty sets policy for their classes. Students who do not comply with attendance policy may be subject to a grade of "Fail" or disciplinary action based on consultation with the teaching faculty and the Graduate Committee with advice from the Director of the MFA program.

### **Studio Core Semester Evaluation**

The Semester Learning Contract and Long Range Learning Plan are evaluated each semester in a meeting between the student and mentor. Together they review goals, overall plans for the semester, and assess the achievement of the semester's work. Students who have worked with other instructors as part of their contract will request a written evaluation from their instructors that will be given to the mentor for use when completing the Semester Evaluation. The student, mentor and Graduate Program Director sign a Semester Evaluation form that acknowledges this meeting and includes a comprehensive evaluation of the semester's work. The mentor is responsible for recording a grade of Pass or Fail with the Records Office.

### **Progress to Degree**

In addition to course grades and Semester Evaluations completed by mentors and students there are two required reviews for candidates that assess and determine a student's status in progress toward the MFA degree: the Mid-Program Review (*see section 3*) and the Final Thesis Exhibition Review (*see section 4*).

Any student failing the Mid-Program Review or Thesis Exhibition will automatically be placed on Academic Probation. Students who do not meet a level of creative and/or academic performance established by the Graduate Committee may be asked to leave the program. Criteria on which this decision is based may include a failure to meet expectations of a substantial level of academic work, and/or a lack of professional and timely installation of their creative undertaking, and/or a lack of engagement in the MFA program's activities.

### **Student Alert Notices**

The Student Alert Notice allows chairs and the Dean of Student Affairs to a wide range of concerns about a student at the first signs of concern. The Student Alert Notice helps the college mobilize appropriate support as quickly as possible. Students are also encouraged to contact the faculty and take steps to remedy the issue.

The alert form is sent to Records, who notifies by email the student and Student Affairs. If a student receives two or more alert notices the student will be contacted by the Dean of Student Affairs. A subsequent meeting will be scheduled to help the student analyze the problem and make realistic plans to remedy the situation and succeed at the college.

**Academic Probation**

According to College policy, if a mentor or instructor submits a “Fail” grade, and the Graduate Committee confirms the “Fail” grade, the candidate is placed on probation for the subsequent semester. Any student failing the Mid-Program Review or Thesis Exhibition will automatically be placed on Academic Probation. The student, mentor, and Graduate Director prepare a plan for academic improvement that is submitted to the Graduate Committee for approval. At the end of the following semester the Graduate Committee reviews the student’s progress and the student may either be removed from probation or dismissed from the program. A student may appeal to return, in writing to the Graduate Director, following the dismissal. Readmission following dismissal may be granted upon recommendation of the Graduate Committee after a period of at least one semester, and will be reviewed by the Graduate Committee on a case by case basis. The student will submit a portfolio of work that includes work completed during the program as well work completed during the time away from the program. This work should represent a significant amount of development, and include a statement outlining a plan for how to continue to make progress in the program if re-admitted.

**Graduate Student Appeals and Grievances**

All graduate student academic appeals and grievances should be brought to the Graduate Director. Each appeal and grievance will be treated on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Graduate Committee who will decide on appropriate action.

**Withdrawal**

Students who wish to withdraw from the college during a semester are required to schedule an appointment with the Graduate Program Director and the Dean of Student Affairs and complete a Notification of Student Withdrawal form. Grades of Pass, Fail, Incomplete, or Withdrawal will appear on each student’s transcript for all credits attempted.

**English Language Competency**

For students that are not native English language speakers there is an expectation of continued improvement in comprehension, written, and spoken language skills throughout the MFA program. Language assessment at the point of admissions is considered only adequate for entry to the program. All Students who are not fully able to participate in the English language spoken and written requirements of the program will be required to participate in mandatory English language programs offered by the Learning Center. Students who are not able to improve their language skills to an acceptable level will be asked to leave the program for a period of time to improve their skills. The decision will be made following a formal review and assessment by the Graduate Committee.

### **Prohibited Behaviors**

The following are defined as disciplinary offenses actionable by the college. Consequences for prohibited behaviors may include failing an assignment or course, loss of mentored credits, academic probation, or dismissal from the program. The Graduate Director and the Graduate Committee will determine consequences for prohibited behaviors, with counsel from the Vice President of Academic Affairs and/or the Dean of Student Affairs. A student may appeal any of the disciplinary actions in writing to the Graduate Director for committee review.

### **The following are defined as disciplinary offenses actionable by the college.**

#### *Academic Dishonesty*

Submission of false records of academic achievement; cheating on assignments or examinations; altering, forging or misusing a College academic record, document or funds; taking, acquiring or using test materials without faculty permission; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records to obtain grades, honors, awards or professional endorsement in a dishonest manner; plagiarizing.

Plagiarizing: Quoting uncited materials, visual, written, or coded; presenting the work of others as your own; using work of other MCAD students without their express permission. This includes submission of work for MCAD courses, exhibitions, or sales.

Using the Same Work in Different Courses: Students may not submit the same work for more than one class without the knowledge and consent of all faculty.

Consequences for plagiarizing and double submissions may include removal of work from exhibition or sale, failing the assignment or the course, or academic probation.

These policies also apply to work submitted to the MCAD Art Sale, MCAD Auction, and MCAD off-campus exhibitions. All submitted work should not infringe on another artist's work.

These policies also apply to work submitted to the MCAD Art Sale, MCAD Auction, and MCAD of-campus exhibitions. All submitted work should not infringe on another artist's work.

### ***Alcoholic Beverages Policy***

Alcoholic beverages may not be sold, served, or consumed on the MCAD campus, including the MCAD Graduate Studios, except in conformance with all applicable state laws. Alcohol may not be served at receptions. The only exceptions to this policy are events approved by the President of the college. Selling alcoholic beverages in College apartments in any way (including price-for-admission basis) is against state law and MCAD Policy. In no case may alcoholic beverages be served to individuals who are not of legal age or who appear to be intoxicated. Since the majority of students who live in College apartments are not of legal drinking age, all consumption of alcohol in College apartments is discouraged.

If an individual appears to be intoxicated while on campus, Public Safety should be notified immediately. Rules and sanctions regarding alcohol in on-campus housing are listed in the Housing Handbook and can include eviction.

### ***Chemical Dependency***

MCAD is a drug-free campus. Students who are concerned about their own chemical use or the chemical use of family members, friends or other students are strongly encouraged to seek help from the Counseling Psychologist or the Dean of Student Affairs. Students who possess or abuse drugs on-campus may not just face disciplinary action, but legal action as well.

### ***Damage/Theft/Invasion of Privacy in Studio Spaces***

Any damage, vandalism, loss, or concerns about personal safety should be reported to Public Safety and the Graduate Director. Theft or damage caused in any buildings or studios to artwork or property, and/or entering another student's studio will not be tolerated and may lead to dismissal or disciplinary action based on consultation with the Graduate Committee with advice from the Director of the MFA program.

### ***Additional Prohibited Behaviors***

Other policies regarding prohibited behaviors are found in the MCAD Student Handbook and apply to all graduate students.



### SECTION 3. MID-PROGRAM REVIEW

The Mid-Program Review demonstrates a student's progress in the program and indicates a student's potential to produce a cohesive, accomplished, and successful Thesis Paper and Exhibition. Student performance in Mid-Program Review is measured against professional standards as understood by the mentor and the Graduate Committee with guidance from the Graduate Program Director. Students who have accumulated 30 credits (including their current semester) toward the MFA degree are required to present work, deliver a verbal defense and provide a written statement of intent for review by the Graduate Committee. The Mid-Program review provides a forum in which students are expected to demonstrate and justify how they participate in their field of creative production. The review is scheduled for the semester during which the student is completing 30 credits. However, if 30 credits are being completed during the Summer session, the review may occur in the subsequent semester. The Graduate Program Director sets dates each semester for Mid-Program Reviews.

***The review consists of 4 components:***

1. Creative work presented
2. Process Book
3. Candidate's verbal presentation and defense during committee questions
4. The written statement of intent

***During the review the candidate is expected to:***

Present a completed body of creative work that demonstrates a significant body of creative inquiry and mastery.

Articulate ideas and objectives clearly indicating intention, contemporary and historical influences, expectations of the viewer's experience, and context in the candidate's field.

Discuss technical explorations.

Address the relevance to the candidate's field and justify their participation in it.

Define the aesthetic approach for the ideas presented in the work.

The work is measured against professional standards as understood by the mentor and the Graduate Committee with guidance from the Graduate Program Director. In essence, the Mid-Program Review demonstrates a student's progress in the program and indicates a student's potential to produce a cohesive, accomplished, and successful Thesis Paper and Exhibition that demonstrates their ability to contribute to their field of art and design discourse and practice upon graduation.

### **Creative Work:**

Students present a current body of completed work to the committee as a gallery exhibition. In addition to the work, students present three copies of an edited process/sketch book as part of the exhibition. The work must be installed with didactic materials in a professional and timely manner and must adhere to the time constraints for installation set by the Graduate Director. The exhibition space is a shared space. During installation, students must exercise professional considerations for other students who are installing work. If the work takes a form that does not lend itself to gallery presentation, students should consult with their mentor and the Graduate Program Director to discuss appropriate presentation options.

### **Process Book:**

The process book is a collection of sketches, writings, ideas, ideation and notes that will help the committee to understand the scope of candidate's explorations during the first year.

### *In the Paper and Verbal Defense students are expected to:*

1. Articulate the areas in your creative work and background that are relevant to the work presented.
2. Declare the subject that you are pursuing and your area of creative and discursive context that includes an overview of the ideas and objectives of your creative work.
3. Present an overview of the creative work produced as well as the research and academic study in your first year. This should generally include the historical context, contemporary practitioners/influences, and theoretical writing that support your ideas and objectives presented in the creative work.
4. Show the methodologies, techniques, and aesthetic approaches used in the process of your studio practice in making your work and describe why these elements are important.
5. Define an expectation of the viewer's experience.

***NOTES: Work that is not professionally installed before the deadline for installation may subject the student to disciplinary measures and may prohibit the student from taking part in the Mid-Program Review. This includes all didactic materials and the Process Book. Disciplinary measures are determined by the Graduate Faculty Committee with advice from the Graduate Director.***

***Students are to be present and ready for their reviews 15 minutes prior to the review.***

***It is recommended that students and mentors arrange a mock review, preferably in the exhibition space, prior to the official review to help prepare for their defense of the work.***

### How is the Review Different from a Critique?

The purpose of the Mid-Program Review is for the mentor and the Graduate Committee to assess student progress and degree candidacy status. The student will give a formal verbal presentation after which committee members will ask questions of the candidate. The committee will then give an evaluation of the work. In contrast, the critique process takes place with a group of fellow students and involves give-and-take discussion.

### The Review Process

**NOTE: Candidates are required to be present 15 minutes prior to their scheduled review time. Students who are not on time will FAIL their review based on the graduate committee's discretion and will have to repeat their review. Cases requiring re-review will occur in the subsequent semester.**

1. The graduate student's work is installed at a predetermined time before the formal committee review so that committee members can individually review the work. (For film, video or computer-oriented work, talk with the Graduate Program Director about proper exhibition standards.) The student also prepares a statement and submits four copies to the Graduate Program Director one week prior to the scheduled review for distribution to the Graduate Committee.
2. The Graduate Committee meets with the student to review the work. This part of the review lasts 45 minutes. The student's mentor is required to attend the review as an observer, and to participate in the meeting following the formal review. The student begins with a focused presentation of their work. The Graduate Committee then responds to the work with comments, questions, critique, and a discussion about the work with the student.
3. After the formal review, the Graduate Committee meets, without the student present, for 15 minutes to debrief and to determine Mid-Program Review recommendations. At this time, the committee may also refer to the work the student submitted upon application to the MFA program. Students either receive a grade of "Pass" or "Pass with Reservations" and move on to thesis work or they receive a grade of "Fail."
4. The recommendation of the Graduate Committee is presented to the graduate student in writing. This document is presented during a meeting with the Graduate Program Director. The written report indicates the decision of the committee and includes suggestions and/or recommenda-

tions by the committee as well as a timetable if another review is to be held.

*Pass.*

Candidates who pass the Mid-Program Review may move on to thesis exhibition research and development.

*Pass with Reservations.*

Students who pass with reservations will meet with the Graduate Program Director and their mentor to make a plan for improvement. Students may be required to meet mid-way through the following semester with the Graduate committee to have their progress assessed. This will be communicated to the student when the outcome of the review is being discussed with the student. If the graduate committee determines that the progress is not satisfactory the student will be placed on academic probation.

*Fail.*

Students who fail their first Mid-Program Review will be placed on Academic Probation and scheduled for a re-review prior to the subsequent semester, and continue course-work as scheduled. The date of the re-review will be set by the Graduate Committee and usually occurs in the subsequent semester.

*Second Attempt.*

Students who do not pass their second attempt at the Mid Program Review are asked to leave the program. These students may petition the Graduate Committee to approve reinstatement to the program after a period of at least one semester. The Graduate Committee may approve or refuse reinstatement based on material presented that indicates whether the student has made substantial improvement and is capable of successfully proceeding in the program.

## SECTION 4. THESIS PROJECT PREPARATION AND DOCUMENTATION

### **Thesis Project Preparation**

The Thesis Project is the capstone of the MFA program and an indication of the candidate's development as an artist/designer as a result of the graduate experience. MFA candidates work closely with their mentors and thesis committees to plan and implement the Thesis Project, which consists of two parts: a written Thesis Paper and a Thesis Exhibition. Students will be asked to defend their contributions to their chosen field at their Thesis Defense in the presence of their work.

### **MFA Public Thesis Presentation**

At the beginning of the fourth semester each student will make a public thesis presentation outlining the scope and content of their final thesis project. These presentations are arranged by the Graduate Director and include the following five areas:

1. Introduction. Who you are and what is your background relative to your graduate studio work.
2. Declaration of the subject that you are pursuing that includes an articulation of the ideas and objectives of your thesis work.
3. Presentation of the scope of your thesis research. This should generally include the historical context, contemporary practitioners/influences and theoretical writing that support your ideas and objectives.
4. Demonstration of the methodologies, techniques, and aesthetic approach used in the process of your studio practice in making your work and describe why these elements are important.
5. Presentation of an initial proposal and general samples of the type of work you intend to show for your Graduate Thesis Exhibition.

*Public thesis presentations will not exceed 15 minutes in length.*

### **Thesis Paper Preparation**

The Thesis: Studio Survey and Analysis course is designed to foster independent research, writing, and discussion of ideas toward the development of the Thesis Paper. The outcome of this semester is a first draft of the thesis. Candidates register for this seminar in their third semester (after 30 credits).

### **Thesis Paper**

The written thesis is an investigative paper of a minimum of 15 pages in support of the Thesis Exhibition. This paper is designed to help students articulate the theoretical basis of their work, and write an artist or designer statement requiring a critical assessment of their practice in relation to acknowledged contemporary works and culture. As a “Statement of Practice,” the Thesis Paper will concern the context, content, and the theoretical and conceptual influences of the student’s current work. These concerns will be collated into a cogent thesis statement on the nature of the student’s current practice. Students work on final drafts of their written thesis with their mentor, thesis committee and in the Graduate Thesis Paper class. Using the assistance of mentors, instructors, critics, and peers in the formation of a thesis statement of practice, students will have a refined yet practical aid for professional life beyond the MFA studio. Digital versions of Thesis Papers and images documenting the Thesis Exhibition and creative work will be submitted as outlined by the Graduate Director and archived by the MCAD Library. Students will not receive diplomas until all required thesis documentation is submitted.

### **The MFA Thesis Committee**

The Thesis Committee is the body that evaluates and makes recommendation for the awarding of the degree. Each MFA candidate works with their mentor and their Thesis Committee throughout their final semester to advance the capstone project, written thesis, and verbal defense of the MFA thesis work. Thesis Committee selection and approval form must be completed prior to last day of the semester prior to the graduation semester.

### ***MFA Thesis Committee, Schedule, Responsibilities***

#### *The Thesis Committee*

Every thesis committee has three members that include the MFA mentor, MCAD faculty member (either full-time or adjunct) and Outside Advisor. The MFA Director approves all committees. In all cases, the overall strength of the committee will be the guiding criteria for approval, meaning that a committee member’s contribution to the thesis conversation takes precedence over their perceived institutional relationship to the College. When in doubt, check with the Director. Thesis Outside Advisors receive an honorarium after the thesis review has been completed in the semester of a candidate’s graduation.

### *Schedule*

MFA students begin discussing their committee with mentors during the fall semester of the year they plan to graduate. It is important to have some idea of your thesis project before approaching potential committee members. The more material you can present (in terms of concept, studio work in progress, written work in progress), the better you can gauge a potential committee member's contribution. It is recommended that committees be finalized by the MFA advising day but it is required that the committees be completed the last day of the semester preceding the student's final term.

### *Responsibilities*

It is crucial that committees meet and discuss thesis projects as a group. The dynamic interplay of ideas is vital, but equally important is agreement among committee members and MFA students regarding direction and completion of work. MCAD requires that the Thesis Committee meet three times, which includes the Thesis Exhibition Review as the third and final meeting.

### *Committee Meeting Protocols*

It is advised that the committee meet as a group for the first meeting. If this is not possible the mentor will devise a strategy for the members to communicate with the student and share information. If necessary, online real time or asynchronous committee communication is permitted for the first two meetings as deemed appropriate by the mentor. The third meeting must be held with all committee members physically present with the work to complete the review and make the final recommendation to award or not award the MFA degree. Virtual participation by any committee member in the final thesis review is not permitted and will constitute a thesis re-review.

#### **Meeting 1. Introductory Session:**

This meeting must occur early in the final semester. Students will have their creative and written thesis research underway at this time and can share progress and a draft of the Thesis Paper with the committee. The committee will review progress of both the studio and written parts of the thesis project to date as well as set goals for the project. The first draft of the Thesis Paper research is submitted to the Thesis Committee at this meeting. Written notes from each committee member covering studio and written parts of the project are helpful. Besides setting goals and providing comments on work to date, committee members can set the schedule of remaining meetings. In addition, all students will have made their Public Thesis Presentation and the committee may review it for context and to assess the direction of the student's current creative work.

**Meeting 2. In-Progress Review:**

This review allows committee members to track any changes in the initial project plan. Committee members are able to review and make suggestions to help the student refine the Thesis Paper for coherence and connection to the studio component. It is the mentor and the Thesis Committee's responsibility to make the final approval of the content, conceptual orientation, and formal structure of the student's creative thesis work and written thesis by the end of the second meeting in order to evaluate work for the thesis exhibition and the final draft of the written thesis at the final review. Students must submit the final thesis draft to committee members at least two weeks before the final review, or the student may not be allowed to undergo the final review process, as determined by their Thesis Committee.

**Meeting 3. Mandatory Thesis Exhibition Review:**

This meeting is held after work has been installed in the thesis exhibition and the Thesis Paper is completed. The Graduate Program will set the time and date for all work to be installed and complete and the time and date for the Thesis Exhibition Review to take place. It is the student's responsibility to communicate the time and date of the Thesis Review to their mentor and the Committee members, and to resolve any scheduling conflicts. It is a requirement that all three committee members be physically present at the time of the review. Online participation is not permitted. See below for a detailed explanation of the Thesis Review.

***NOTES: Any student who does not meet all criteria as outlined above will not be allowed to proceed in the program and will be placed on academic probation.***

***Work that is not installed before the deadline for installation may subject the student to disciplinary measures and may prohibit the student from taking part in the Thesis Exhibition Review and Commencement Ceremony.***

***Students are to be present and ready for their reviews 15 minutes prior to the review.***

***Disciplinary measures are determined by the Graduate Faculty Committee with advice from the Graduate Director.***

***It is recommended that students and mentors arrange a mock review, preferably in the exhibition space, prior to the official review to help prepare for their defense of the work.***



### **The Thesis Exhibition Review**

Once a student's exhibition is installed, the committee meets with the student for a formal review facilitated by the Graduate Program Director. The review will last approximately one hour and will evaluate the candidate on the quality of creative work presented, written thesis, and the candidate's verbal defense.

The MFA candidate will make a presentation of the work (10–15 minutes), and each committee member will have an opportunity to respond to and ask questions about the thesis work and paper. After each Committee member has finished questioning, the review opens to a discussion format. The Graduate Program Director will alert the committee when there are 15 minutes remaining, indicating that it is time to reiterate, emphasize and encapsulate their points. Also during this time, the candidate may request clarifications and specifics from the committee members, as needed. At the conclusion of the meeting, the student will be asked to leave briefly while the committee discusses their recommendation, after which the Committee will report its decision to the student verbally and in writing. The Graduate Program Director will record the Thesis Exhibition Review and the MFA candidate will receive a file of the audio recording following the review.

*The Thesis Committee recommends to the graduate faculty that the degree of Master of Fine Arts:*

1. Be awarded
2. Be conditionally awarded
3. Not be awarded

Conditional recommendations must include specific conditions under which the committee will reconsider or pass the student's Thesis Paper and Exhibition. Upon recommendation of the committee, the graduate faculty, through the Graduate Program Director, recommends to the President and the Board of Trustees that the MFA be awarded.

Should the Thesis Exhibition Committee recommend the MFA not be awarded, the candidate is placed on academic probation and may appeal the decision to the Graduate Committee through the Graduate Program Director. The graduate committee will determine a plan for the student to complete their degree.

### **Documenting the Thesis Exhibition, Valuation and Submission**

The Final Thesis creative work and the Final Thesis paper are expected to be complete at the time of the Thesis Exhibition Review. Digital copies of the Final Thesis Paper should be submitted to the Graduate Program Director after the Final Review has been passed, conditions of the committee have been addressed, and mentor approval has been secured. Digital versions of Thesis Papers and images documenting the Thesis Exhibition and creative work will be submitted as outlined by the Graduate Director and archived by the MCAD Library.

***NOTE: Students will not receive diplomas until all required thesis documentation is submitted.***

## **SECTION 5. ADDITIONAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Financial Aid, Scholarships and Work Opportunities**

Students may be able to apply for Graduate Assistantships (GAs). GAs are a special opportunity for the Graduate Program, designed to provide MFA candidates with meaningful extracurricular experience and to help offset the expense of tuition. Some examples are GAs in the Printmaking Studio, Media Center, Learning Center, Computer Support, Academic Services, 3D Shop, Distance Learning, and MCAD Gallery offices.

Graduate students with prior teaching experience are also eligible (after they have earned 30 credits at the graduate level or have master's degrees in appropriate disciplines) to apply for part-time teaching opportunities at the College, either in Continuing Studies or the undergraduate program. See the Graduate Program Director and the appropriate Department Chair for application guidelines.

The College has a scholarship program, including MCAD Trustee Scholarships for distinguished students and a merit scholarship for continuing students. See the Director of Financial Aid for information about these scholarships.

**END.**