

PROGRAM HANDBOOK
M.F.A. IN VISUAL ART

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For International GTA-----	22
Information on graduate assistantship by the graduate school -----	22
9. Health Insurance -----	23
10. Leave of Absence -----	23
11.	

The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidance to both students and faculty for facilitating the progression of students to degree completion. It provides the necessary information for students to understand the requirements, expectations, and opportunities associated with both the Art M.F.A. Program and the Graduate School.

1. Program Description

Program Description:

The Master of Fine Arts in Visual Art is a terminal degree that incorporates a comprehensive background in the fine arts as well as advanced development in areas of studio specialization. The degree offers students advanced coursework in art history, critical theory and practiced criticism, combining studio and academic experience to provide students the opportunity to synthesize information at a higher level while engaging in original research and the development of a significant body of creative work.

The Department of Art offers study in the areas of two- and three-dimensional art selected from but not limited to book and publication arts, ceramics, digital-media, drawing, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture, and video.

The interdisciplinary objective is to ensure that students are not bound by a single discipline or particular medium, providing the opportunity and encouragement to explore new possibilities in the search for the most effective visual format for the expression of their ideas. Students will be expected to re-define boundaries of traditional media and to incorporate materials from art history, theory, criticism, and other academic disciplines of their choice. Equal emphasis is placed upon the creation of artwork and its intellectual, conceptual, and social contexts.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the program, the student will be able to:

- ◁ **Gain and apply in-depth knowledge and competence in one or more areas of specialization (i.e. sculpture, painting, photography).**

Studio knowledge and competency are assessed through regularly scheduled coursework, visiting artist and faculty studio visits and critique sessions, Mid-Way Advancement to Candidacy Exhibition (at 30 credit hours), and Thesis Exhibition (presented at the conclusion of the third year.) These activities involve direct assessment through portfolios, written assignments, oral defense, presentations (individual and group), exhibition (individual and group).

sensitivity to, and creativity with chosen medium(s), as well as present demonstrable technical skills, formal and conceptual application, and foundation principles applicable to the area of specialization.

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History, contemporary art, theory, and practices.

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of Art History, contemporary art, theory, and practices occurs in regularly scheduled required course work, visiting artist and faculty studio visits and critique sessions, Mid-Way Advancement to Candidacy Exhibition (at 30 credit hours), and Thesis Exhibition (presented at the conclusion of the third year.) These activities involve direct assessment through written assignments, oral defense, presentations (individual and group), exhibition (individual and group), thesis, and oral comprehensive.

Students must demonstrate an exemplary ability to analyze, interpret, and contextualize a broad range of contemporary and historical art practices. Students will (1) be well versed in critical theory and able to apply knowledge of current trends in context with their own work (2) possess a broad understanding of Art History and ability to apply Art Historical context to their own work and (3) have the ability to express their knowledge both verbally and in writing.

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created, curated, installed and publicized by the candidate must be presented. A formal written thesis, public artist lecture, and oral examination are required at the time of the thesis exhibition.

Degree Requirements:

The course of study is intended to be flexible allowing students to focus on individual needs. It is highly recommended that students plan two semesters at 12 credit hours, and four semesters at 9 credit hours, taking into consideration the time demands of their Mid-way Advancement to Candidacy and Thesis exhibition presentation semesters.

The degree requires sixty credit hours (three years of study) from the following:

- ⟨ ART 642: Intermedia (3 units) - 6 units required
- ⟨ ART 698: Seminar in Visual Arts (3 units) - 6 units required
- ⟨ ART 710: Graduate Studio Practices (3 units) - 24 units required
- ⟨ ART 722: Graduate Tutorial (3 units) - 3 units required
- ⟨ ART 737: Theory and Criticism (3 units) - 3 units required, may be repeated up to 6 units
- ⟨ ART 747: Directed Readings (3 units) - 3 units required, may be repeated up to 6 units
- ⟨ ART 777: Graduate Exhibition (3 units) - 3 units required
- ⟨ ART 790: Community Service in the Arts (3 units) - 3 units required, may be repeated up to 6 units
- ⟨ Electives: (

- ◁ The candidate must present a written exhibition proposal to the Thesis Committee for review and the Thesis Chair for approval by the first week of the third semester (in the fall of the second year.)
- ◁ MFA Advancement to Candidacy (Mid-Way) exhibitions are to be presented on campus in Student Galleries South. Extenuating circumstances and/or alternative exhibition venues must be justifiable and pre-planned a year in advance in direct consultation with the Thesis Chair and MFA Graduate Director. In the case of an alternative exhibition venue, the student is required to write a one-page justification for why an off-campus venue is essential and the Thesis Chair must write a short letter of endorsement to be filed with the MFA Graduate Director. (Deadline for off campus exhibition notice: Prior to the conclusion of the spring semester, April of the first year.)
- ◁ Candidates who exhibit in Student Galleries South must attend one of two workshops on gallery installation offered during the semester in order to exhibit in the student galleries.
- ◁ The student will work with the Director of University Galleries to understand exhibition announcement design and logo requirements, but will produce his or her own design. The design must be submitted to the Director of University Galleries for approval. All exhibition

Candidacy Exhibi

publication standards. (Deadline: one month prior to exhibition.)

- ◁ The candidate must write and present an exhibition statement to be presented with the gallery exhibition.
- ◁ The candidate must schedule formal critiques with each of the thesis committee members (including the Outside Member/Graduate School Representative) during the exhibition. The critiques may be scheduled with individual members, or the thesis committee may convene as a group for a single critique. Academic rigor and originality in research and creative activity will be assessed and evaluated at the time of the exhibition and formal critique. Pass/fail status of the completed exhibition, written exhibition statement is decided upon and stated by the Thesis Committee at the conclusion of the formal critiques. If the student fails to meet the Advancement to Candidacy requirements, the Thesis Chair will provide written notice to the student copied to the MFA Graduate Director no later than one week post the close of the exhibition.
- ◁ The Department of Art Advancement to Candidacy (Mid-Way) Exhibition Completion form must be completed, including required signatures, at the conclusion of the formal critiques.

Advancement to Candidacy (Mid-

- Consider artwork progress and review the character and content of the exhibition with Thesis Chair and Committee.
 - Review written Exhibition Statement with Thesis Committee two weeks prior to installation.
- ◁ **Early October**
Schedule formal critiques with Thesis Committee to be held during the exhibition run at the gallery/exhibition site.

Conduct the following during established dates

- ◁ Install exhibition
- ◁ Host public Gallery Reception
- ◁ Formal critiques with Thesis Committee (complete mandatory paperwork Art Department Advancement to Candidacy (Mid-Way) Exhibition Completion form.)
- ◁ De-install exhibition
- ◁ Schedule gallery walkthrough with Director of University Galleries.

MFA in Visual Art Mid-Way Advancement to Candidacy Completion form must be filed with the Graduate Director no later than the end of the fall term, second year (third semester).

* Addendum A (also available [Student Resources](#) in the department website)

MFA Midway Advancement to Candidacy Failure

The Chair of the Thesis Committee must issue a formal memo to the student (cc: MFA Graduate Director) stating the circumstance of the student failing to meet the "Advancement to Candidacy" requirements. The memo must include the requirement for the student to restage the Advancement to Candidacy exhibition and review within one year following the original Mid-Way exhibition. The second Advancement to Candidacy review requires a formal exhibition presentation that may involve a re-presentation of existing artworks, the development of new artworks, or a combination of both. The requirement may also include an updated artist and/or exhibition statement.

The student must provide an exhibition proposal that clearly articulates the scope of the second Advancement to Candidacy exhibition requirements in consultation with the Thesis Committee Chair and Thesis Committee. The student must coordinate with the Chair of the Thesis Committee to arrange a date and location for the restaged Advancement to Candidacy exhibition. If the second Advancement to Candidacy exhibition is presented and approved at the conclusion of the fourth semester (one semester following the original Advancement to Candidacy), the student may remain on track to present the Thesis at the conclusion of three years (sixth semester.) If the Advancement to Candidacy is presented one year post the original Mid-Way, the student must enroll for a seventh and possibly eighth semester in order to present the Thesis; completion of the degree and graduation is postponed for one year.

Graduate student studio space accommodations must be evaluated and determined on a case-by-case basis. Graduate student studio accommodations cannot be guaranteed past the three-year enrollment period.

The MFA Graduate Director must advise and approve any and all shifts in academic planning that requires the student to enroll in coursework beyond the expected three-year, full-time study, sixty credit hour degree requirements. These changes must be reported to the Graduate School.

A full committee critique and review is required for the restaged Advancement to Candidacy exhibition (including Outside Member/Graduate School Representative). The Thesis Committee must formally declare "Pass" or "Fail" at the conclusion of the restaged exhibition. The Chair of the Committee, in

consultation with the full Thesis Committee, must provide a written report to the student (cc: MFA Graduate Director) stating the circumstance of the Pass or Fail. If the student fails to pass the Advancement to Candidacy, a formal process will dismiss the student from graduate enrollment for failure to progress. (See Graduate School Academic Requirements on academic probation and dismissal)

Thesis Requirements:

The MFA in Art thesis requires four elements: (1) Written thesis paper, (2) Thesis exhibition, (3) Public Artist lecture, and (4) Oral Defense. Please see Section 7 of this handbook.

Graduate School Academic Requirements:

All graduate students must maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0. If their GPA drops below 3.0, they are either placed on probation or dismissed. Undergraduate courses will not count towards graduate GPA.

Probation: students whose cumulative graduate GPA falls between 2.31 and 2.99 are automatically placed on academic probation for one semester. If they fail to raise their cumulative GPA to 3.0 by the end of one semester, they are dismissed from their graduate program. Thesis,

4. Timeline for Degree Completion

Course of Study Plan:

The *Course of Study Plan is a tool designed to assist you in developing a unique course of study toward the pursuit of your individual focused inquiry. The Recommended Course of Study below is designed to ensure that you meet program requirements for the completion of your degree. This is a working document; your course of study may be amended and refined at any time through consultation with the MFA Graduate Director and the chair of your Thesis Committee.

*Addendum B

First Semester: Please schedule an advising session with the MFA Graduate Director to establish a preliminary Course of Study Plan no later than the conclusion of your first semester enrolled in the MFA program.

Third Semester: You will consult the chair of your Thesis Committee (once named) and the MFA Graduate Director to refine and potentially amend your Course of Study Plan at the Advancement to Candidacy (Mid-Way) review at 30 credit hours.

Fifth Semester: Please schedule a final advising session with the Graduate Director and consult the chair of your Thesis Committee prior to registration for courses in your fifth semester. This final session is to determine any last changes to your course of study.

Notify the Chair of your Thesis Committee and the Graduate Director of any changes to this plan once established.

Recommended Course of Study:

Requirements in bold; additional credit options in regular

First Year

FALL (9 credits)

- ◁ **Graduate Tutorial (ART 722 - 3 credits)**
- ◁ **Graduate Studio Practice (ART 710 - 3 credits)**
- ◁ **Seminar in the Visual Arts (ART 698 - 3 credits)**

Establish Thesis Committee at the conclusion of your first semester/start of your second semester

SPRING (12 credits)

- ◁ **Graduate Studio Practice (ART 710 - 3 credits)**
- ◁ **Graduate Intermedia Studio (ART 642 - 3 credits)**
- ◁ Two of the following (total 6 credits): Theory and Criticism (ART 737 - 3 credits), Community Service in the Arts (ART 790 - 3 credits), Elective (3 credits)

Name Graduate School Representative to your Thesis Committee in consultation with your full committee at the conclusion of your second semester/start of your third semester (prior to Mid-Way Advancement to Candidacy Exhibition and Review).

Second Year

FALL (9 credits)

- ⟨ **Graduate Studio Practice (ART 710 - 3 credits)**
- ⟨ **Seminar in the Visual Arts (ART 698 - 3 credits)**
- ⟨ One of the following (3 credits): Community Service in the Arts (ART 790 - 3 credits), Directed Readings (ART 747 - 3 credits), Elective (3 credits)

Graduate School Document:

1. Graduation Application (**March 1**)
<https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines>
<https://www.unr.edu/mynevadahelp/studentcenter/academicprogress/graduationapplication>
(instructions)
2. Notice of Completion: Master's Degree (**by the end of this semester**)
*Addendum J (This shows how to fill out this form.)
<https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines>
3. Exit Survey
<https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines/exit-survey>

Once the committee is established, the Chair of the committee serves as lead advisor and is expected to oversee the student members participate in advising the written thesis, the Chair is lead editor and is predominately responsible for guiding the final draft.

It is the responsibility of each MFA candidate to arrange and meet committee members throughout the span of the MFA program. It is required that MFA students meet with their MFA committee, either as a group or individually, at least once per semester. It is highly recommended that additional meetings be scheduled on a periodic basis. It is the responsibility of the candidate to be aware of a candidate must arrange for an appropriate substitute.

It member of the full Thesis Committee.

The Role of Members of the Graduate Thesis Committee:

The role of the graduate thesis committee is to provide guidance and mentoring to the graduate student with respect to their graduate education. This includes guidance on the selection of courses (i.e. the program of study) guidance on the knowledge requirements/expectations within their discipline, guidance with respect to the development of their research expertise (i.e. the Mid-Way Advancement to Candidacy exhibition, Thesis Paper and Thesis Exhibition). By providing guidance and mentoring, the graduate committee sets forth appropriate academic standards and rigor. The Chair of the thesis committee is lead advisor and is predominately responsible for ensuring the

progress towards completion of the degree (GPA/academic standards, Advancement to Candidacy (Mid-Way), draft and final thesis paper editorial review, thesis exhibition, and oral defense). Thesis Committee Chairs must supervise ART 777 Graduate Exhibition, including primary responsibility for editorial review of the thesis paper, as well as leading the oral defense.

All committee members are expected to provide guidance with the program of study, Advancement to Candidacy (Mid-Way), Thesis Paper, and Thesis Exhibition. All committee members are expected to participate in the Thesis Oral Defense. The degree of guidance on these matters from the graduate school representative may vary depending on how closely the graduate school representative is allied to the student's area of specialization. However, the graduate school representative is always charged to represent the Graduate School as a participant in the student's academic endeavors.

Graduate Faculty serving as the "outside" or Graduate School Representative on student thesis committees: The graduate school representative must be a member of UNR's graduate faculty from outside the home department or program of the other committee members. The graduate school representative may be chosen from a related area or may represent a minor area, if a minor is selected by the student. The Graduate School member serves to assure compliance with Graduate School regulations and procedures and to report any deviations from prescribed standards to the Graduate School.

In case of **interdisciplinary graduate programs**, the Graduate School Representative cannot have a primary appointment in the same department (or other appropriate major unit) as the student's committee chair.

Formal approval of all student advisory committees is made by the Graduate Dean

6. Comprehensive Exams

The MFA in Visual Art does not require comprehensive exams, however the Advancement to Candidacy (Mid-Way) Exhibition (at 30 credit hours) and the Thesis (at 60 credit hours) have pass/fail requirements. Please see Sections 2 and 7 of this handbook.

7. Thesis Requirements

The MFA in Art thesis requires four components: (1) Written thesis paper, (2) Thesis exhibition, (3) Public Artist lecture, and (4) Oral Defense. These components Graduate School and are fulfilled entirely in the Department of Art.

Thesis Exhibition:

During the final spring semester of the third year, after the completion of 51 credit hours, the student is expected to develop and produce a significant, cohesive body of art work for presentation in a public solo exhibition. The exhibition must be created, curated, installed/de-installed and publicized by the candidate.

The thesis exhibition should contribute in a significant way to the area of inquiry which the student has identified as his or her focus. Students are expected to exhibit sensitivity to and creativity with chosen medium(s), as well as present demonstrable technical skills, formal and conceptual awareness, and exemplary knowledge of the principles and theory that encompass the chosen area of concentration. The thesis exhibition (and written thesis) should speak with clarity and complexity to the area of investigation. The scope of the exhibition and caliber of artwork is expected to be comparable to the work of professionals in the field.

Requirements

- ◁ The candidate must present a written exhibition proposal to the Thesis Committee for review and the Thesis Chair for approval in the fall of the third year.
- ◁ MFA thesis exhibitions are to be presented on campus in Student Galleries South. Extenuating circumstances and/or alternative exhibition venues must be justifiable and pre-planned a year in advance in direct consultation with the Thesis Chair and MFA Graduate Director. In the case

◁ **Late January**

- Review artwork progress with Thesis Chair and Committee.
- Schedule and confirm location for artist lecture.

◁ **Early February**

- Submit design of Exhibition Announcement to Director of University Galleries.
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8. Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Teaching Assistantship Policy:

- ◁ First time GTAs must enroll and attend GRAD 701S orientation and training session held at the start of each semester.
- ◁ GTAs are required to fulfill Sexual Harassment, FERPA, and PeopleSoft training courses online.
- ◁ To be eligible for an assistantship, students must be admitted to a degree-granting program and be in good academic standing. GTAs must have an overall GPA of at least 3.0 and must be continuously enrolled in at least 9 graduate level credits (600-700) throughout the duration of the assistantship.
- ◁ GTAs must assist an assigned faculty supervisor for one semester prior to being assigned to instruct their own course as Instructor of Record.
- ◁ It is mandatory for GTAs to work ten hours per week for a part-time assistantship and twenty hours per week for a full-time assistantship.
- ◁ GTA report dates are the same as faculty reporting dates each semester. See Academic Calendar at

Information on Graduate Assistantship by the Graduate School:

- ◁ General information
<http://www.unr.edu/grad/funding/graduate-assistantships>
- ◁ Graduate Assistantship handbook
http://www.unr.edu/Documents/administration-finance/hr/hr-graduate/GA_handbook.pdf

All graduate students holding an assistantship (teaching GTA or GRA) are considered Nevada residents for tuition purposes. Non-resident tuition is only waived for the duration of the assistantship. To be eligible for an assistantship, students must be admitted to a degree-granting program and be in good academic standing. The student must have an overall GPA of at least 3.0 and must be continuously enrolled in at least 6 graduate level credits (600-700) throughout the duration of the assistantship.

State-funded assistantships (GTA/GRA) may be held for a maximum of: three degree students and five (5) years for doctoral degree students.

9. Health Insurance

All domestic degree seeking graduate students, who are enrolled in six or more credits (regardless of the course level) in a semester, will be automatically enrolled and billed for the University sponsored health insurance for each term they are eligible (fall & spring/summer). If a student has other comparable coverage and would like to waive out of the student health insurance, it is the student responsibility to complete the [University online waiver form](#) prior to the deadline. If approved, a health insurance waiver is good for the current academic year only. A new waiver must be submitted each academic year. All international graduate students are required to carry student health insurance, and the cost will be automatically added to your student account. Any international graduate students with insurance questions must contact the [Office of International Students a](#)

Leave of Absence: Students in good standing may request a leave of absence by completing a leave of absence form available on the Graduate School website (http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/leaveofabsencer_9.23.pdf) during which time they are not required to maintain continuous registration. Usually, a leave of absence is approved for one or two semesters. The leave of absence request may be extended by the student filing an additional leave of absence form. Students applying have a detrimental impact on their cumulative GPA. Requests for leave of absences must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the leave is to begin.

Reinstatement: When a student has been absent for one semester or more without an approved leave of absence, he or she may request reinstatement via the Reinstatement form (available on the Graduate School website <https://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/Notice-of-Reinstatement-Graduate-Standing.pdf>). This form allows the program the option to recommend the student be re-admitted to their graduate program based on their previous admission OR require the student to re-apply for admission which would require students to submit a new application for admission and pay the application fee. The Notice of Reinstatement to Graduate Standing must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the reinstatement is to begin.

11. Graduate Student Association

The [Graduate Student Association \(GSA\)](http://www.unr.edu/gsa/) represents all graduate students and promotes the welfare and interests of the graduate students at the University of Nevada, Reno. The GSA works closely with appropriate university administrative offices, including the Graduate School and Student Services and reports to the President of the University. The GSA government functions through the Council of Representatives, Executive Council and established committees. <http://www.unr.edu/gsa/>

12. Graduate School Forms

Please see Please see Required forms and deadlines section 4 of this packet.
Please refer to www.unr.edu/grad/forms for all forms available at The Graduate School.