

PROGRAM HANDBOOK
M.F.A. IN VISUAL ART

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M.F.A. PROGRAM IN VISUAL ART HANDBOOK

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 Department's 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 degree program's 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), thesis, and oral comprehensive.

Timely production *and* presentation of completed, high quality artworks that display new insights and working methods are required in order to facilitate on-going instruction, assessment, and evaluation. The student must demonstrate proficiency in the utilization of a range of processes that encompass each student's chosen area(s) of specialization. Students are expected to exhibit

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.

- **Demonstrate a critical awareness of one's own works within the larger context of Art History, contemporary art, theory, and practices.**

Assessment and valuation of the student's ability to analyze, synthesize, and express knowledge 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.

- **Develop and assemble professional materials, documentation, and artist portfolio for post-graduate professional studio and creative practice, careers in college-level teaching, and/or employment in art related careers.**

The student demonstrates an understanding of the principles and elements of professional representation, including writing, visual documentation, and portfolio materials.

Students must produce highly organized, well written, and well-crafted professional materials including Curriculum Vitae, written artist biography, general artist statement, exhibition statement (relating to a specific body of artwork), and professional photographic documentation of visual artworks. Quality professional materials are required in applications for exhibition, scholarships, grants, artist residency programs, and/or art career employment.

Program Director:

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2. Degree Requirements

An MFA candidate must be enrolled as a full-time student (minimum 9 credits per semester). Candidates must maintain a minimum 3.0 grade-point average. The MFA program requires a public exhibition of a cohesive body of work after 30 credit hours to confirm the student's eligibility for advancement to MFA candidacy. At the conclusion of 60 credit hours, a public solo thesis exhibition

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: (3-6 units) Electives are not limited to Department of Art courses. All electives must be arranged and approved on an individual basis and must be 600-700-level coursework. See MFA Graduate Director for advisement.

MFA in Art Advancement to Candidacy (Mid-Way) Exhibition:

The MFA program requires a public exhibition of a cohesive body of work after 30 credit hours to confirm the student's eligibility for advancement to MFA candidacy (Midway Progress).

During the student's third semester, the student is expected to develop and produce a significant, cohesive body of artwork for presentation in a public exhibition. The exhibition must be created, curated, installed/de-installed, and publicized by the candidate. A written exhibition statement is required to accompany the exhibition. Visual documentation of the exhibition must be submitted to the MFA Graduate Director at the conclusion of the exhibition.

The Advancement to Candidacy (Mid-Way) exhibition should reveal the student's progress toward contributing 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 exhibition and written exhibition statement should speak with clarity and complexity to the area of investigation. The scope of the exhibition and caliber of artwork is expected to confirm the student's readiness to pursue the thesis.

Requirements

- 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 publicity materials must clearly state “University of Nevada, Reno MFA in Art Advancement to Candidacy Exhibition” and must meet University of Nevada, Reno printed and online 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-Way) Exhibition Timeline

Second Semester (Spring)

- **April**
 - Receive Gallery Exhibition Handbook from the Director of University Galleries. (<https://www.unr.edu/art/student-resources/forms>)
 - Confirm fall exhibition schedule, installation/de-installation, and gallery reception (on or off campus) with Director of University Galleries.

Third Semester (Fall)

- **August**
Exhibition proposal submitted to Thesis Committee for review and Thesis Chair for final approval.
- **September**
 - Committee approved exhibition proposal submitted to Director of University Galleries.
 - Consider artwork progress and review the character and content of the exhibition with Thesis Chair and Committee.
- **September**

- 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 under "[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, dissertation, S/U graded credits, and transfer credits have **no** impact on a student's GPA.

Dismissal: students whose cumulative graduate GPA is 2.30 or lower are dismissed. Dismissed students are no longer enrolled in their graduate program but may take graduate-level courses as a Grad Special. Dismissed students wishing to complete their degree must obtain approval to take graduate-level courses, raise their graduate GPA to at least 3.0, and then re-apply to their graduate program. Any courses taken in an effort to raise their GPA will be included in the graduate special/ transfer credit limitation (9 credits for master's degrees).

3. Transfer Credits

The MFA program in Visual Art does not accept any transfer credits from other institutions.

These are credits transferred from another institution. Credits completed at UNR in another program or as a graduate special do not need to be transferred. Transfer credit can be requested on the Graduate Credit Transfer Evaluation Request form available on Graduate School website <http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/GraduateCreditTransferEvaluationRequest.pdf>. and must be signed by the student, major advisor, and graduate director. Transfer credits applied to a master's program must comply with the time limitation on master's work (6 years). Thus, if a student took a course five years prior to admission, they would have to complete the degree within one year for the course to apply to the degree. Credits from a completed master's degree will be exempt from the 8-year time limitation for those students pursuing a doctoral degree.

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)

Mid-Way Advancement to Candidacy Exhibition and Review

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), Directed Readings (ART 747 - 3 credits), Elective (3 credits)

Third Year

FALL (9 credits)

- **Graduate Studio Practice (ART 710 - 6 credits)**
- **Directed Readings (ART 747 - 3 credits) – with Thesis Committee Chair**

SPRING (9 credits)

- **Graduate Studio Practice (ART 710 - 6 credits)**
- **Graduate Exhibition (ART 777 - 3 credits) – with Thesis Committee Chair (Written Thesis Paper, Public Presentation, and Oral Defense)**

Third year Thesis Timeline:

See Thesis Timeline in section 7 of this handbook

Required Forms and Deadlines:

First Year

FALL

Department Documents:

1. Graduate Student Studio Key Loan Form * Addendum C
2. Department of Art MFA Studio Agreement * Addendum D
3. MFA in Art Course Statement of Objectives (**prior to registration for the listed classes**)
* Addendum E (also available under "[Student Resources](#)" in the department website)

SPRING

Department Documents:

1. MFA in Art Thesis Committee Declaration (**no later than the start of this semester**)
* Addendum F (also available under "[Student Resources](#)" in the department website)
2. Graduate Teaching Assistantship Application
* Addendum G
3. Supplemental Scholarship Application (**complete the university application prior to this**)
4. MFA in Art Course Statement of Objectives (**prior to registration for the listed classes**)

University Documents:

1. University Scholarship Application (via MyNevada. **Prior to February 1.**) - You must complete this application in order to apply for the department scholarships.

Second Year

FALL

Department Document:

1. MFA in Art Course Statement of Objectives (**prior to registration for the listed classes**)

Graduate School Document:

1. Declaration of Advisor/Major Advisor/Committee Chair (**by the end of this semester**)
<https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines>

SPRING

Department Documents:

1. Graduate Teaching Assistantship Application
2. Supplemental Scholarship Application (**complete the university application prior to this**)
3. MFA in Art Course Statement of Objectives (**prior to registration for the listed classes**)

University Document:

1. University Scholarship Application (via MyNevada. **Prior to February 1.**) - You must complete this application in order to apply for the department scholarships.

Graduate School Document:

1. Program of Study and Requirements (**by the end of this semester**)
<https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines>
*Addendum H (This shows how to fill out this form.)

Third Year

FALL

Department Document:

1. MFA in Art Course Statement of Objectives (**prior to registration for the listed classes**)

SPRING

Department Document:

1. Thesis Completion form (**by the end of this semester**)
* Addendum I (also available under "[Student Resources](#)" in the department website)

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>

Master's degrees: All course work must be completed within six years preceding the awarding of the degree. **Doctoral degrees:** All course work must be completed within eight years preceding the awarding of the degree. Credits transferred into doctoral degree from a completed master's degree are exempt from this eight-year limit.

5. Committee Selection Guideline

MFA students are required to invite three Department of Art graduate faculty members to serve on the Thesis Committee. One of these members must be invited to serve as Chair (main advisor). The MFA Committee declaration form (found on the Department of Art website) must be filed with the MFA Graduate Director by the start of second semester enrolled as a MFA student.

The student will be provided a list of available Department of Art Graduate Faculty for Thesis Committee Service. Only faculty with Graduate Faculty status may be invited to serve on MFA Thesis Committees.

MFA students are required to invite one faculty with Graduate Faculty status from outside of the Department of Art to serve as the Graduate School Representative; this member is invited through close consultation with the student's established thesis committee and must occur by the end of the second semester of the first year.

Graduate Faculty can be found on the Graduate School website:

<http://www.unr.edu/grad/about/graduate-faculty>

Committee Selection Recommendations:

- Chose one faculty member from the student's specific area of discipline (i.e. if the student's emphasis is Painting, chose one faculty member from Painting to serve on the committee); this person may or may not be the student's selection for serving as Chair of the committee.
- Chose at least one faculty member from outside the student's area of discipline

Once the committee is established, the Chair of the committee serves as lead advisor and is expected to oversee the student's progress towards the completion of the degree. Although all committee 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 faculty member's inability to serve on a committee during extended absence or sabbatical leave; the candidate must arrange for an appropriate substitute.

It is the student's responsibility to maintain consistent communication with the Chair and each 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 student fulfill academic and studio requirements for the MFA/BFA Program throughout the student's 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.

Department of Art Graduate Faculty Status:

Graduate Faculty I: enables faculty (and those with appropriate terminal degrees and/or experience in their field, via review and recommendation of the Department Chair and Graduate Director, and approval of the Dean of the Graduate School) to serve as members of graduate student committees. Graduate Faculty I may, in consultation with the Department Chair and Graduate Director, teach specific graduate courses on a course by course basis. Course syllabus (including reading list if applicable) must be submitted and placed on file for record with the Graduate Director. Graduate Faculty I may not be the sole chair of a graduate student committee.

Graduate Faculty II: enables full-time academic faculty with the appropriate terminal degree to chair graduate student committees, and sit on committees. Graduate Faculty II may teach all graduate level course offerings. Course syllabus (including reading list if applicable) must be submitted and placed on file for record with the Graduate Director. Graduate Faculty II 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.

The Deadline for Forming Committees:

- **Department of Art Thesis Committee and Chair - no later than the start of student's second semester**
 - *MFA in Art Thesis Committee Declaration form must be submitted to the department's Graduate Director by no later than the start of student's second semester.
 - *Addendum F (also available under "[Student Resources](#)" in the department website)
- **Graduate School Representative (Outside Committee Member) - by the beginning of student's third semester** (prior to Advancement to Candidacy (Mid-Way) Exhibition.)
 - MFA in Art Thesis Committee Declaration form (with only outside committee member's signature) must be submitted to the department's Graduate Director by the beginning of student's third semester.
 - *Declaration of Advisor/Major Advisor/Committee Chair form must be submitted to the Graduate School by the end of the third semester.)
<https://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines>

Master's Programs: All master's programs (with a few exceptions for course-only degrees) require at least three advisory committee members. All must be graduate faculty members. At least one (the graduate school representative or "outside" member) must be from a department or program different from the department or program from which the student is graduating.

Doctoral Programs: Consist of a minimum of five graduate faculty members; the chair, at least two faculty members from the student's major department/program, at least one faculty member from a department in a field related to the student's major, and at least one Graduate School representative.

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 are considered “non-thesis” by the 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 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: Prior to the start of the fall semester, August of the third year)

- Whether exhibiting in Student Galleries South or an alternative location, the committee approved thesis exhibition proposal must be submitted to the Director of University Galleries for scheduling purposes. (Deadline: October)
- 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 thesis publicity materials must clearly state “University of Nevada, Reno MFA in Art Thesis Exhibition” and must meet University of Nevada, Reno printed and online publication standards. (Deadline: one month before the exhibition)
- The candidate must schedule and present a professional public artist lecture to be held on campus in conjunction with the thesis exhibition.
- The candidate must schedule an oral defense with the full Thesis Committee to be held during the run of the exhibition on site at the exhibition location. Academic rigor and originality in research and creative activity will be assessed and evaluated at the time of the exhibition and oral defense. Final review and pass/fail status of the completed thesis exhibition, written thesis paper, public artist lecture and oral defense is decided upon and stated by the Thesis Committee at the oral defense. If the student fails to meet full thesis requirements, the Thesis Chair will provide written notice to the student copied to the MFA Graduate Director no later than one week post the oral defense.
- The Department of Art Thesis Completion form and the Graduate School Notice of Completion form must be completed, including required signatures, at the oral defense.
*Addendum
- The final grade for ART 777 – Graduate Exhibition is determined by the full thesis committee and reported by the Thesis Committee Chair.

Third year Thesis Exhibition timeline

FALL

- **August/September**
 - Receive Gallery Exhibition Handbook from the Director of University Galleries. (It can also be found here: <https://www.unr.edu/art/student-resources/forms>)
 - Confirm spring schedule MFA Thesis Exhibition, public artist lecture, and gallery reception (on or off campus) with Director of University Galleries.
- **Mid-October**
Exhibition proposal submitted to Thesis Committee for review and Thesis Chair for final approval.
- **Late-October**
Committee approved exhibition proposal submitted to Director of University Galleries.
- **December**
Consider artwork progress and review the character and content of the thesis exhibition with Thesis Chair and Committee.

SPRING

- **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.
 - Schedule Oral Defense with Thesis Committee to be held during the exhibition run at the gallery/exhibition site.

Conduct the following during established dates

- Install exhibition
- Present public Artist Lecture and host public Gallery Reception.
- Present Oral Defense with Thesis Committee. (complete mandatory paperwork – Art Department Thesis Completion form and Graduate School Notice of Completion form)
- De-install exhibition.
- Schedule gallery walkthrough with Director of University Galleries.

Thesis Paper:

The final thesis paper is a required, tandem component of the final thesis show. It is an opportunity for MFA candidates to express in written form the theoretical and conceptual basis of their work as well as to evaluate the evolution of their practice and production over the course of the MFA program. Candidates are expected to discuss their work within a larger historical context, to consider concrete relationships between their work and relevant antecedents as well as contemporary art practices. The written thesis should reflect topics pursued in the courses: Directed Readings, Seminar in the Visual Arts, and Theory and Criticism.

Format

1. The text must be a minimum of 25 pages, typed, 1.5-spaced, 12-point font, and 1” margins. (Approximately 9,000 - 10,000 word minimum)
2. In addition to the minimum 25 typed pages, the thesis must include a cover page with title, annotated bibliography with a minimum of twenty sources (in MLA or Chicago Style), and cited images of the work discussed.

Failure to comply with the written thesis paper requirements and due dates will result in postponing the thesis approval and graduation.

Third year written Thesis timeline

FALL

- **By no later than November 15**
The candidate must submit an outline of the written thesis for review to his/her thesis chair.
- **By December 1**
The thesis chair must provide written feedback on the outline. Ideally, by the end of the fall semester, the candidate and the thesis chair will discuss the outline in person so that both the

candidate and the thesis chair are in verbal agreement as to the proposed content of the written thesis.

- **By December 15**

The candidate should also touch base with all additional committee members with regard to the character and content of the final thesis show and written thesis.

SPRING

- **By February 1**

The candidate, in consultation with the thesis chair and committee members, must schedule the time and date for his/her oral defense.

- **By February 15**

The candidate must meet with his/her thesis chair to discuss the progress of the written thesis.

- **No less than five weeks prior to the defense date**

The candidate must submit a full draft in hard copy of the written thesis to the thesis chair for review. At the committee chair's recommendation additional feedback from committee members may be solicited at this time.

- **Within two weeks of receiving the candidate's full draft of the written thesis**

The thesis chair must provide feedback and recommendations for any necessary changes to be made to the text.

- **No less than two weeks prior to the defense date**

The candidate must submit a final hard copy of the written thesis to the full committee.

- **By no later than May 15**

The candidate must file a final hard copy of the written thesis with the Graduate Program Director.

Public Artist Lecture and Oral Defense:

The **Public Artist Lecture** and **Oral Defense** are required components of the final thesis exhibition and written thesis.

The **Public Artist Lecture** is an opportunity for the student to present to the public a professional artist lecture featuring their thesis research and creative activity. MFA candidates are required to present, in a one-hour visual image lecture format (concluding with a question and answer session), the theoretical and conceptual basis of their artwork as well as the evolution of their practice and production over the course of the MFA program. Candidates are expected to present their work within a larger historical context, to consider concrete relationships between their work and relevant antecedents as well as contemporary art practices.

Following the public artist lecture presentation, the student's Thesis Committee will administer the **Oral Defense** of the candidate's thesis that serves as an examination of the student's knowledge and general understanding of the theoretical and conceptual basis of their artwork, the evolution of their practice, historical context, and relevant antecedents including contemporary art practices as articulated in the written thesis and presented in the public artist lecture.

* See Public Artist Lecture and Oral Defense timelines included in the Third year Thesis Exhibition timeline in this Section.

The Deadline for Required Forms and resources for Thesis:

After the successful completion of student's Thesis, Notice of Completion form must be submitted to the Graduate School.

The Department of Art Thesis Completion form must be filed with the Graduate Director by the close of the spring semester.

Please see "Required forms and deadlines" in the Section 4 of this packet.

Thesis Failure:

The MFA in Art thesis requires four elements: (1) Written thesis paper, (2) Thesis exhibition, (3) Public Artist lecture, and (4) Oral Defense.

Should the student fail to meet the stated expectations of the cumulative components of the thesis, the Chair of the Thesis Committee must issue a formal memo to the student (cc: MFA Graduate Director) stating the circumstance of the student's failure to meet "Thesis" requirements. Upon the Thesis Committee's discretion the student may have the opportunity to re-present identified thesis components within one year. In this case, the memo must include clearly defined expectations for which of the components must be re-presented; this may include all four components or any combination of the four as determined by the Thesis Committee. A final oral defense of the re-presented thesis component(s) is required.

The student must provide a written proposal that clearly articulates the scope of the re-presented thesis requirements in consultation with the Thesis Committee Chair and Thesis Committee. If an exhibition is required, the student must coordinate with the Chair of the Thesis Committee to arrange a date and location for the restaged thesis exhibition, as well as final dates for any other required component.

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 review and critique (oral defense) is required for the re-presented thesis components (including Outside Member/Graduate School Representative). The Thesis Committee must formally declare "Pass" or "Fail" at the conclusion of the re-presented oral defense. 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, a formal process will dismiss the student from graduate enrollment for failure to progress. (See Graduate School Academic Requirements on academic probation and dismissal)

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 <https://www.unr.edu/academic-central/academic-resources/academic-calendar>
- An assigned graduate faculty will directly supervise all GTAs.
- GTAs are required to submit a weekly work report to their supervising faculty every Friday.
- Supervising faculty are required to initial and submit copies of the weekly work report by-weekly to the Office of Graduate Director: calendar provided.

For International GTA

- International students serving as Teaching Assistants must meet a minimum Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of 550 (paper version), 213 (computer version) and pass the SPEAK Test with a score of 50. (To make an appointment to take the SPEAK test, please contact IELC at 784-6075. The cost of the test is \$60). If you have taken the iBT (internet based version) of the TOFEL you must score 79/80 total and have a score of 24 on the speaking section of the test. The International Language Testing System (IELTS) score of a 7 can substitute for the TOFEL. (A score of 50 on the Test of Spoken English (TSE) can be substituted for the Speak Test.)
- Students who register for nine (9) graduate credits or more in a semester are considered full-time.
- For graduate assistants on any contract, six (6) graduate credits or more constitute full-time.
- To be considered full-time for financial aid purposes, all graduate students, including those on assistantships, must be enrolled in nine (9) graduate credits, to be considered part-time for financial aid reporting purposes you must be enrolled in five (5) graduate credits.
- For those graduate students who are required to take Intensive English Language Center Bridge Courses, these courses can be considered part of full registration upon approval by the Dean of the Graduate School but these courses will not count for Federal Financial Aid purposes.

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 (3) years for master's 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's 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 and Scholars \(OISS\)](#) directly.

<http://www.unr.edu/grad/health-insurance>

10. Leave of Absence

Continuous Enrollment: To maintain "good standing" all graduate students are required to enroll in a minimum of three (3) graduate credits each fall and spring semester until they graduate. International students may be required to enroll in nine graduate credits each fall and spring semester depending on the requirements of their visa. All students holding assistantships (whether teaching or research assistantships) are required to enroll in a minimum of six (6) graduate credits each semester they hold the assistantship.

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 for a leave of absence should not have any “incomplete” grades which could be changed to “F” and 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 \(GSA\)](#) 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” in the Section 4 of this packet. Please refer to www.unr.edu/grad/forms for all forms available at The Graduate School.