

Academic Assessment Plan

MA in Art History in Arts of the Americas

Program Goals (3-4)

(Program goals are broad general statements of what the program intends to accomplish and describes what a student will be able to do after completing the program. The program goals are linked to the mission of the university and college.)

1. The program will educate students in a multivocal and inclusive art history.
2. The program will give students the interdisciplinary training and robust work experiences they need to thrive with an MA degree in industries that value visual literacy, creativity, communication, collaboration, and research.
3. The program will offer a solid grounding in art's complex global histories while providing a specialty in arts of the Americas through six key themes that are essential to understanding the arts of the Americas and the social impacts of creative practice, historically and in the present: environment, heritage, power, circulation, structures and systems, and identity and community.

Student Learning Outcomes (6-8)

(Student Learning Outcomes are defined in terms of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students will know and be able to do as a result of completing a program. These student learning outcomes are directly linked to the accomplishment of the program goals.)

1. Ability to analyze works of art, visual culture, and related material
2. Ability to conduct advanced research using primary and secondary sources
3. Ability to situate works of art and related material in historical and cultural contexts
4. Ability to formulate original ideas and clearly articulate them in a variety of forms of writing and oral presentations for diverse publics and constituencies
5. Thorough understanding of methodological approaches informing art historical scholarship, including historical and contemporary critiques of the discipline
6. Critical understanding of key diversity, equity, and inclusion theories, issues, and orientations in the field of art history, particularly as they pertain to arts of the Americas

7. Capacity to approach art, visual culture, and related material from interdisciplinary perspectives that expand the canon and take a diverse and inclusive approach to the field

8. Practical experience in areas of art history related to student career objectives

Process for Assessing Each Student Learning Outcome

(A process must be defined and documented to regularly assess student learning and achievement of student learning outcomes. The results of the assessment must be utilized as input for the improvement of the program.)

1. Timeline for Assessment and Analysis

(Must include specific timeline for collection and analysis of assessment data.)

Direct methods are assessed by the Art History faculty at the end of every semester through student performance in course work; students are also required to write a self-assessment at the end of each semester.

Indirect methods are monitored through student success and achievement following graduation from the program and are evaluated annually by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Director of Art History during the preparation of the Annual Report.

2. Means of Assessment and Desired Level of Student Achievement

(Must include at least one direct and one indirect method of assessment for each learning outcome.)

Direct method:

Students in the MA in Art History in Arts of the Americas Program are evaluated in Art History MA courses at the 6000-level, which all require students to produce a significant written research project of 15-20 pages, or the equivalent; student performance in at least one graduate seminar per year on this assignment is used as a direct means of assessment of first-year students for all learning outcomes (1-8).

Students are also required to write a self-assessment at the end of every semester summarizing the ways in which they have explored one or more of the program's key themes in their coursework and research projects during that term. This self-assessment gives students a share in designating which courses fulfill which theme. A committee of Art History faculty will evaluate the student self-assessments each semester and provide guidance if a student does not adequately explain how they explored a given theme in a particular course.

For second-year students, the MA in Art History in Arts of the Americas program requires completion of a Qualifying Paper and completion of a Comprehensive Oral Examination, which are also used as a direct means of assessment of second-year students for all learning outcomes (1-8).

Qualifying Paper

In the required course Graduate Art History Writing Workshop (ARHS 6023), students expand upon and refine a research paper written in a previous course or develop a new project, drawing on previous research. By the end of the course, they submit a 25-page draft of their Qualifying Paper and form an Advisory Committee composed of three total faculty members, two of which must be in the Art History Program, including the Advisory Committee Chair. All three must hold Graduate Faculty status from the University of Arkansas, but the student may elect to have one additional member without UA graduate faculty status with the title “Ex-officio Member.” Feedback provided by Advisory Committee members is essential to the student’s revisions. Then, in the required course Art History Qualifying Paper (ARHS 6033), students further refine the 25-page Qualifying Paper draft through a thesis research/independent study course. The last 6 weeks of the student’s work on this project consists of editing the paper into a formal 20-minute talk. Students have two trial runs of their lecture with their Advisory Committee before a public presentation at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in a graduate student symposium, the capstone event of the degree program.

Comprehensive Oral Examination

A 1-hour Comprehensive Oral Exam will take place at the end of the student’s final semester, following the public presentation of research at the graduate student symposium. For the Comprehensive Oral Examination, students will prepare a brief presentation describing the Qualifying Paper, supporting literature, the rationale for the project, and what was learned in the process of researching, writing, and presenting their ideas to the public. Advisory Committee members question the student about the project; students who have given sufficient thought to developing an original research topic, who have thoroughly investigated the state of the discourse on that topic, and who have a strong grasp of interpretive approaches and are able to position their own intervention in relation to other thinkers, will experience the exam as an engaging conversation.

After reviewing the Qualifying Paper and considering the performance of the student during the Public Presentation of Research and Comprehensive Oral Examination, the Advisory Committee may: (1) accept the Qualifying Paper; (2) accept the Qualifying Paper, conditional to further changes to be overseen by the Committee Chair; or, (3) recommend that additional work be done before it is considered acceptable. The Committee Chair will deliver the Comprehensive Oral Examination

form to the Graduate Director in Art History, who will then file the form with the Graduate School at the University of Arkansas.

Indirect Method:

Student success and achievement following graduation from the program, including job placements in the field and graduate school placements at the doctoral level, are evaluated annually by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Director of the Art History Program.

3. Reporting of Results

(Must at least report annually to the Dean of college/school.)

A summary of findings based on this assessment will be provided to the Dean's office via the department chair each July in the Annual Report.

**Annual Academic Assessment Report
MA in Art History in Arts of the Americas, 2024-2025**

May 2025

Results of analysis of assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

First-year MA students were assessed through two written research projects in ARHS 60003: Art History's Histories: Critical Historiography and Methodology (fall 2024). These research projects included an object analysis and an institutional analysis, and together they assessed all Student Learning Outcomes. Both projects were graded on a scale from 0-100, with 90-100 equivalent to an A grade, 80-89 equivalent to a B grade, and so forth. Students received the following marks on the object analysis: 93, 93, 91, 90, and 86. Students receive the following marks on the institution analysis: 94, 93, 92, 89, and 85. These scores reflect good academic performance on these assignments, with especially strong outcomes for three of the students. The outcomes demonstrate satisfactory results on all learning outcomes for the MA in Art History in Arts of the Americas degree program.

First-year students also completed self-assessment each semester. Based on these self-assessments, all students are currently on track in their progress to degree.

Second-year students were assessed through a Qualifying Paper and Comprehensive Oral Examination, both completed in the final semester of the degree program. All second-year students passed the Qualifying Paper and the Comprehensive Oral Examination. Having completed all degree requirements, all second-year students were awarded the MA degree in May. Second-year student success demonstrates satisfactory results on all learning outcomes for the MA in Art History in Arts of the Americas degree program.

While students have just graduated and are therefore still seeking job and graduate school placements, many have already secured permanent full-time jobs at major arts institutions, including entry-level curatorial and research positions at Crystal Bridges Museum of American art and at Art Bridges Foundation. Others have secured short-term work in the field as research assistants. Many students intend to apply for advanced graduate degree programs in the fall. There will be more data with which to track student success through job and graduate school placements of our recent graduates in the coming year.

Any changes to degree/certificate planned or made on the basis of the assessment and analysis

None.

Any changes to the assessment process made or planned

None.