

# ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PLAN

MFA in Studio Art

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## **Program Goals**

*(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 links to the mission of the university and college.)*

- 1) As the terminal degree in the field, the MFA in Studio Art (MFA–SA) Program will include achievement of the highest level of professional skill in the graduate student's area of study in visual arts and contemporary practices requiring:
  - a) A demonstrated formal and technical proficiency in the major studio area.
  - b) A demonstrated conceptual development supporting creative research.
  - c) An ability to locate the work within the context of contemporary and historical issues in art (including references to other artists and art movements influential to the development of the work) and placing the research within visual culture.
- 2) The MFA–SA Program asks students to rigorously deconstruct their practice. Risk taking and experimentation are employed towards the goal of expanding the scope and depth of their work. Study of art history, critical theory, and visual culture furthers understanding of the implications of the work in the contemporary context.
- 3) The MFA–SA Program prepares students to be contributors to an interdisciplinary art and design world as creative thinkers and inventive problem solvers who are cognizant of technological, social, physical, political, and cultural contexts.
- 4) The MFA–SA Program provides teaching, technical, and leadership experience through Graduate Assistantships, workshops, residencies, research stipends, and will make our students more marketable.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

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

- 1) Students will evaluate their own methodology through active research, analysis, and interpretation of contemporary art and design as it relates to their own research to solidify a foundation for their studio practice.
- 2) Students will demonstrate the ability to solve complex problems by employing art and design principles through requirements including the design and installation of a solo exhibition of thesis work in their third year.
- 3) Students will master technical processes specific to their concentration area and learn new skills towards an interdisciplinary practice.
- 4) Students will develop the ability to be successful collaborators using strong communication skills.
- 5) Students will demonstrate the ability to be lateral thinkers through experimentation and exploration during concept development.
- 6) Students will identify and describe historical precedents and contemporary practices as they relate to cultural production and employ critical theory in the justification of formal, technical, and conceptual decisions.
- 7) Students will learn the teaching and technical skills needed to apply for university-level teaching positions and other art-related careers.

#### **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 result of the assessment must be utilized as input for the improvement of the program.)*

#### **Timeline for assessment and analysis**

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

1. Direct methods are assessed by the School of Art Director of Graduate Studies, and MFA Graduate Committee at the end of every semester. At the end of every spring semester, Academic Progress forms are completed and sent to the Graduate School. Indirect methods are monitored by the Director of Graduate Studies, Director of the Studio Art Program, and Associate Director of the School of Art, Dean, Provost through the Annual Report. The Annual Report is submitted annually in July.

## **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.)*

### 1. Direct Methods

- a. Graduate Critiques: All MFA students are required to participate in regular reviews critiquing their artworks.
  - i. Midterm Studio Visits: For first- and second-year students Midterm studio visits are a time for faculty, students, and staff in media areas to connect and cultivate community through the review of student work. These studio visits are casual evaluations of works-in-progress. Students are encouraged to present in-progress works and seek help with problem solving currently happening in the studio and in research.
  - ii. Final Critiques: First- and second-year students complete end of semester reviews conducted by several graduate faculty members and attended by a select group of MFA peers. Faculty evaluate the work for the evidence of the above listed program goals and learning outcomes 1-7 via written evaluations with numerical scores. Evaluation responses are collected into a spreadsheet for review by the Director of Graduate Studies as well as returned to the individual student and their media area faculty advisors.
  - iii. Candidacy Review and Graduate Thesis Committees: Second-year students complete their candidacy application and review process to pass into their third year of residence. Third-year students meet with their Graduate Thesis Committee regularly for evaluation and input.
    1. Candidacy Application and Review: After completion of four semesters in the MFA degree program, the student will make application to be a candidate for completion of the MFA degree. A committee of graduate faculty members will conduct a formal review of the applicant's work and progress in the program. At least two regular semesters of residence must be completed after acceptance as a degree candidate. Students who do not pass the Candidacy Review will be allowed one additional Candidacy Review, held during the following regular semester. Students failing to pass their Candidacy Review the second time will be dismissed from the program. The awarding of candidacy will be

dependent upon a three-fourths majority vote by the student's graduate faculty committee based on the following criteria:

- a. Demonstrated formal and technical proficiency in the applicant's major studio area.
  - b. Conceptual development as demonstrated by growth in ideas supporting the applicant's creative research.
  - c. An ability to locate their research in the context of issues and practices within contemporary and historical art issues.
  - d. The ability to communicate the intention and basis of their research in coherent written and verbal form.
- iv. Graduate Assistant (GA) Evaluations: Teaching and technical skills (learning outcome 7) are monitored by the students' Graduate Assistant Supervisor(s), who submit evaluation reports twice per semester. Each GA is assigned to a supervisor(s) who writes a duty sheet describing the assignment and distributes and reviews them with GAs at the beginning of each new GA appointment. The MFA–SA Director of Graduate Studies collects GA Evaluations twice per semester at midterms and finals to assess performance in the GA Assignment area. Areas of assessment include quality of work performed, completing duties on time, punctuality, and reliability for the duration of duties, and faculty prerogative on continuance in the assignment. If a GA receives one evaluation in which they are not meeting the expectations of the assignment, it will be met with a warning from the MFA–SA Director. If a GA receives two consecutive evaluations from the same supervisor in which expectations of the assignment are still not being met, the MFA student may lose their GA per graduate faculty vote. An MFA student may also lose their GA at any time with 60-days' notice.

## 2. Indirect Method

- a. MFA students are required to maintain a 2.85 or higher grade point average overall, or will be placed on academic probation. After two consecutive semesters on academic probation, the student may be dismissed from the program and will lose their GA.

## Reporting of Results

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

- 1) Based on findings from assessment, a summary will be provided to the dean's office via the Associate Director of the School of Art each July in the Annual Report.

## Program Updates

*(Please see the MFA-SA Annual Program Review, Fall 2021-Spring 2022)*

- Midterm Evaluations: Effective Fall 2022, the MFA-SA Program updated the process for student midterm evaluations with the intentions of making improvements to the infrastructure to support evaluations, clarify student and faculty expectations, reduce stress for both students and faculty, and attempting to utilize the structure of the program as an opportunity for community building. The primary challenges the MFA-SA Committee found were large amounts of time dedicated administrative tasks for organizing evaluations, available space for evaluations becoming scarce, students expressing programmatic inconsistency in evaluation practices, and both students and faculty feeling fatigued by a constant cycle of critique evaluations. Prior to Fall 2022, the midterm evaluations were formal critiques consisting of an assigned committee of graduate faculty across the Studio Art Program. To alleviate the burdens, the MFA-SA Committee to a less formal format (studio visits) and changed these evaluations to be led collaboratively by media area faculty and graduate students.
- Student Governance: Over the last two years, the MFA-SA Committee has been diligently responding to student concerns addressed through the A.R.T. Student Movement. An immediate result of that movement was the creation of Graduate Representative positions in which MFA students actively participate as members of the MFA-SA and JEADI committees, attend both Studio Program and School of Art faculty meetings, and have open hours to serve as a liaison between students, MFA-SA Committee, and faculty and staff. In the last year, we have continued to refine the roles and responsibilities of these positions to make them a permanent component of the MFA-SA Program to make a program that is as student-centered as possible.
- Graduate Assistantships: The MFA-SA Committee has spent the last year evaluating our practices and policies related to Graduate Assistantships, scheduling, and supervision. This included the evaluation and updating of all GA Duty Sheets and collecting data from students and faculty to improve the GA positions, specifically the supervision of positions and creating realistic GA workloads. To continue this work, the MFA-SA Committee recommends working with GSIE and Fulbright College to ensure that the current MFA-SA Program GA practices and policies are in compliance with University expectations.

- Curriculum: In Spring 2021, the MFA–SA Committee submitted formal course changes for ARTS 5933 to switch from being our MFA Second Year Seminar to our MFA Third Year Seminar. In Fall 2021, the course learning objectives were updated to reflect a course that would assist third-year students prepare for writing their thesis paper and organize their thesis exhibition. Additionally, the learning objectives and course content for ARTS 5923 MFA First Year Seminar were also updated. Both courses will be offered again in Fall 2022 with the intention of submitting formal course description and learning objective changes in Spring 2023.