

Academic Assessment Plan
MFA in Studio Art
May 2025

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 linked to the mission of the university and college.

- As the terminal degree in the field, the MFA program will cultivate achievement of the highest level of professional skill in the graduate student's area of study in visual arts and contemporary practices requiring:
 - A demonstrated formal and technical proficiency in the major studio area
 - A demonstrated conceptual development supporting creative research
 - 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.
 - An ability to successfully articulate the basis of research in written and verbal form
- The 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.
- The 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.
- The program provides teaching, technical, and leadership experience through Graduate Assistantships, workshops, residencies, and competitive research grants, which 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 as a result of completing a program. These student learning outcomes are directly linked to the accomplishment 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 through the use of 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 career positions.

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.

- **Timeline for assessment and analysis**

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

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 the 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 Studio Art, Director and Associate Director of the School of Art, Dean, Provost through the Annual Report and through the external achievements of students continuing in the studio art and design fields. 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.

- Direct Methods

- Graduate Critiques

All MFA students are required to participate in regular reviews critiquing their artworks.

- For first- and second-year students, these reviews involve both a mid-term studio visits conducted by several faculty members and a final critique attended by a selected graduate faculty members and MFA students. Faculty evaluate the work for evidence of the above listed program goals and learning outcomes 1-6 via written evaluations with numerical scores. Evaluation responses are collated into a spreadsheet for review by the Director of Graduate Studies as well as returned to the individual student. Any student scoring below expectations on any of the criteria will have their scores and comments forwarded to the lead faculty member in their studio area, so that any weak areas can be addressed.

- Candidacy Review and Graduate Committees

Third-year MFA's who have attained candidacy will meet regularly with their thesis committee for input and evaluation.

- 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. 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:
 - Demonstrated formal and technical proficiency in the applicant's major studio.
 - Conceptual development as demonstrated by growth in ideas supporting the applicant's creative research.
 - An ability to locate their research in the context of issues and practices within contemporary and historical art issues.
 - The ability to communicate the intention and basis of their research in coherent written and verbal form.

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 Candidacy the second time will be dismissed from the program.

- Graduate Committee and Major Adviser: When the student has been accepted as a degree candidate, the student will select a major adviser from the graduate studio art faculty. The major adviser will serve as adviser to the student in planning the completion of the program of study. At least one semester before graduation, a four- or five-member committee of graduate art faculty will be selected. The student's major adviser will be chairperson of this committee, and one member of the graduate committee will represent the art history or criticism area. The degree candidate may select one additional committee member from a discipline outside the School of Art.

- Graduate Assistant 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 to the GA through the Graduate Coordinator along with the GA contract in the beginning of each semester. The Graduate Coordinator collects GA Evaluation sheets twice per semester at midterms and finals in order 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 Director of Graduate Studies. 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 Graduate Assistantship per graduate faculty vote. A MFA Student may also lose their Graduate Assistantship at any time with 60-days notice.

- Indirect Method:
 - 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 Graduate Assistantship.

- **Reporting of Results**
Must at least report annually to the Dean of college/school.
 - Based on findings from assessment, a summary will be provided to the Dean's office via the department chair each July in the Annual Report.

Report annually to the Dean of the college/school the following:

- **Results of analysis of assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

- On the Annual Academic Progress forms to be submitted to the Graduate School in 2025 for returning MFA's, thirty-one of thirty-one have made satisfactory progress towards completion of the MFA degree in Studio Art during the 2024/25 academic year.
- Six of seven class of 2025 MFA's successfully presented thesis exhibitions and graduated in May 2025. One student was forced to defer graduation due to receiving a semester long international residency during his second year and is scheduled to finish in December 2025.
- One student has deferred candidacy review due to being out on maternity leave.
- Nine of ten second year MFA's proceeded with Candidacy Reviews as scheduled in April 2025. All nine passed candidacy with unanimous faculty support.
- Fifteen of fifteen first year MFA students received composite evaluation scores from the faculty following midterm and final critiques indicating that they met or exceeded expectations in the below areas:
 - Conceptual Development
 - Craftsmanship/Technical Proficiency
 - Formal Qualities of the work
 - Productivity
 - Presentation, including visual, verbal, and written discussion of ideas and contexts supporting the work
- Of the thirty-one MFA students who were enrolled in 2020-21 courses, thirty-six received grades of As and Bs in Art Studio (major and studio electives) and Art History (including Contemporary Art History and Critical Theory) courses.
- Overall, the thirty-one Graduate Assistants (GAs) including TAs and instructors for our Foundations and Studio Art courses received strong scores, meeting and/or exceeding their supervisors' expectations. No unsatisfactory performances were noted in the 2020-21 AY. The majority of the evaluation scores from faculty supervisors were excellent.
- Many external achievements in 2024/25, and our MFA's have been very successful with securing external opportunities.

- **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

Program Updates

- The Studio Art Graduate Director, along with Studio Art Co-Directors and the MFA Committee have continued working to plan and implement curricular improvements to the Studio Art MFA Program
 - Adhere to NASAD limits on the number of independent studies while reducing burden on faculty.
 - Better support cohort development and an understanding of program expectations across all three years
 - Create a 2nd Year Graduate Seminar.
 - Develop better support structures for a student who wants to pursue teaching.
 - Create a course focused on pedagogy required of all students before being given an opportunity to be an IOR.
 - Consistently provide a range of opportunities for a grad student to learn skills in all media areas.
 - Standardize times for graduate seminars to minimize scheduling conflicts.
 - Grad Area “Studio” offered every Fall focused on studio visits and technical skill building, open to grads from any area. (Grad Area “Seminar” every Spring. Grads still required to enroll in their area “Studio” and “Seminar” in first five semesters).
 - Every media area provides at least 4 spots for grads in undergraduate courses every semester.
 - Increase grad course offerings while recapturing some teaching capacity.
 - Afford a student more dedicated time for their studio practice.
 - Graduate Area “Studio” offered every Fall and focused on studio visits/technical skill building with minimal reading, writing, and research required.
 - Add an optional “Lab” component to Grad Area Seminar.
- Open House Exhibitions – Hosted by the School of Art and the Studio Art MFA Program
 - During the fall and spring semesters, 1st and 2nd year Studio Art MFA graduates install their work throughout the Studio Art and Design Center and the Sculpture Building for their final critiques and candidacy reviews. Later in the evening, the Studio Art MFA Program hosts an open house exhibition which is open to the public, enabling students to exhibit their work.
- Foster community between the Studio Art and all School of Art Graduate Programs
 - Fall 2024 – The Studio Art MFA Program hosted an end of semester team building event in which we rented a bus to bring the full cohort to Crystal Bridges Museum in Bentonville, AR to experience the Forest Lights Exhibition.
 - Spring 2025 – The School of Art hosted an end of semester team building event in which the full graduate cohort was brought to Mount Sequoyah Center in Fayetteville, AR for pizza and a swim party.
- Studio Art MFA Handbook
 - Created in 2022/23 academic year
 - Continually updating