

# MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN STUDIO ART: MANUAL FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

---

TAKE CHARGE:

**YOU'RE THE BOSS OF YOUR PROGRAM!**

---

CHECKPOINTS,  
GENERAL THESIS GUIDELINES, AND PROGRAM  
CHECKSHEET

---

**RADFORD**  
UNIVERSITY  
Department of Art

**UPDATED 8/2018**

## GRADUATE STUDENT CHECKPOINTS

DATE COMPL.	<b>FIRST SEMESTER OF ENROLLMENT</b>
	1. Meet with advisor to review program requirements and plan program of study.
	<b>SECOND and/or THIRD SEMESTER</b>
	2. Submit completed Program of Study form, no later than the end of second semester or following completion of 18 graduate credit hours. Form is included in this manual.
	3. <b>Prepare for and complete form for participation in the first-year review.</b> The date will be announced well in advance for all students. Full-time students beginning in the fall semester should expect to have the 1 <sup>st</sup> -year review near the end of the second semester. Students who do not pass will sign up for the next scheduled first-year review (the following fall semester). Successful completion of the review will be reported to the Graduate College.
	<b>THIRD AND/OR FOURTH SEMESTER</b>
	4. Complete program core requirements (art history 550 and 555, instructional design (DSN619) and critical writing (611). Completing these earlier rather than later will assist you in planning your thesis and free up your time for concentrated studio work. Many students wait for the studio management (702) but it is also required and should be taken prior to the thesis.
	5. <b>Following completion of 36 graduate credit hours, register for the fall or spring <i>Second-Year Review</i> (determined by the date of passing the 1<sup>st</sup>-year review). It must be passed in order to begin thesis credits. Students who fail the second review twice will be ineligible for graduation.</b>
	6. In addition to passing the two reviews, you should complete most of the core sequence of courses before enrolling in ART699. You must prepare a thesis proposal and form a thesis advisory committee (complete the "Request for Convening a Thesis Advisory Committee" form available from the <a href="#">Grad. College Student Forms</a> page). As you form your thesis committee, sign a contract with each member indicating how you will share your work and what you will expect from each member. See sample form later in this manual. When your thesis proposal is submitted to the Graduate College, you will be registered in ART699.
	<b>SEMESTER PRIOR TO GRADUATION</b>
	7. The "Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Defense" form must be filed along with a copy of the Thesis Proposal. The proposal must be approved by the entire Thesis Advisory Committee and the Dean of the Graduate College before enrolling in the final 3 credits of ART699. The form is available from the <a href="#">Grad. College Student Forms</a> under <a href="#">Thesis Manual appendix</a> . The Graduate College web site also lists due dates for all of the required forms.
	8. Enroll in ART699 for 3 credits.

	SEMESTER IN WHICH DEGREE WILL BE CONFERRED
	9. File the "Graduation and Participation Application" form no later than two weeks after the beginning of your last semester. The form is updated with precise dates annually. Notify the museum director early in the semester of graduation that you will be participating in the MFA show.
	10. Submit the completed written Thesis to the Thesis Advisory Committee. Following their approval, submit the corrected and final Thesis to the Graduate College, no later than three weeks prior to graduation.
	11. Obtain the "Report of Final Exhibition" form from your advisor and the "Report of Final Comprehensive Examination" form from the Graduate College. The comprehensive examination refers to your thesis defense. Bring these forms with you to the defense.
	12. Work with museum director and registrar to ensure that the exhibition is carefully hung. Schedule your defense with your committee and defend your thesis while the exhibition is up. Following a successful defense, your committee will sign both Report forms and return them to you.
	13. File the signed Reports and copies of your thesis no later than three weeks prior to graduation. Make sure that all incomplete grade changes and program change forms have been filed in the Graduate College.
	YOU MUST BE IN RESIDENCY DURING THE FINAL SEMESTER!!!
	ATTEND GRADUATION AND CELEBRATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS!!!

## MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN ART: Studio Art Concentration

### Progress Evaluation Procedures

Students are accepted into the program in an area of concentration with a specific specialization such as painting, photography, water color and/or pastels, drawing, ceramics, metalworking and jewelry, or graphic design. Meet with your advisor if you plan on changing your specialization. You may need to retake your reviews; you and your advisor (new and old) will determine this.

1. New graduate students are automatically assigned to the Graduate Coordinator prior to their first semester. Upon beginning the program, students select a new advisor related to their area of concentration and directions they wish to pursue in their work. At the beginning of the fall semester, there will be a required meeting of the graduate coordinator, graduate faculty and all graduate students (old and new) to discuss such things as program requirements, the check sheet of required courses and distribution of credit hours, preparation for the thesis exhibition and written thesis. Ideally this will take place before the second week of the semester.
2. All students will have a first-year review after completing 18 hours of graduate study. A date for the first-year review for all first-year students will be set. It will either take place late in the spring semester or early in the fall. Each student will be expected to select work that best demonstrates his or her progress and prepare an electronic presentation of the art works along with a written work statement. Some works may also be put on display on easels at the presentation. Students will present their digital slide show to an audience of all the art faculty and other professionals, and respond to questions from the audience. The student's advisory committee will be responsible for determining a pass or fail grade and giving this feedback to the student. Failing the first review may lead to a delay in moving on to more advanced studio courses as recommendations for specific studio course work will be made by the advisor. The first review must be taken a second time if it is failed the first time. This review will provide evidence of aesthetic and technical progress in the student's specialization and the ability to verbalize goals and concepts underlying his or her work at this stage. This information will also assist in the awarding and/or continuation of assistantships. **A written summary of the First-Year Review is kept in the student's file for future references and an official acknowledgement of completion of the First-Year Review will be sent to the Graduate College.**
3. The second-year review will generally take place after 36 credit hours have been completed. It is conducted in the same format at the first-year review. A date for the second-year review will be

set. It will either take place late in the spring semester or early in the fall. Each student up for review will be asked to prepare an electronic portfolio of work completed at that point in the program and a written work statement. All art faculty will be invited. Each student will present his or her work individually and respond to questions asked by faculty and other guests. The student's advisory committee will be responsible for determining a pass or fail grade and giving this feedback to the student. Students will not be allowed to register for ART699 Thesis Exhibition credits until they have passed the second-year review. If failed the first time, it will be retaken at the next scheduled 2<sup>nd</sup>-year review. **Failure a second time will prevent you from completing the program. The Graduate College will be notified of results and subsequent eligibility to continue with the program.**

Upon passing the second review:

Prior to registering for *ART699: Research and Thesis*, the student must write a thesis proposal and form a **thesis advisory** committee. The concentration advisor generally chairs this committee and the student selects two additional faculty members with complementary interests and skills for the thesis committee. Before writing the proposal, graduate students are advised to take *ART611: Critical Writing and Thinking in Art*. This course is designed to aid graduate students in art-related writing, such as the formation of a thesis proposal, grant applications, and letters for job applications. Upon approval of the proposal and submission of the graduate college form for a thesis committee, the student may enroll in *ART699*. The written exposition is prepared under the guidance of the candidate's advisor and other committee members. The candidate enrolled in *ART699: Research and Thesis* should confer with supervisory members throughout the exposition writing process (See the Timeline in the section on the Exhibition and Thesis for more details.)

---

Sign an agreement such as the one that follows with each member of your thesis committee.

### MFA Committee Member Contract

As a member of your MFA committee I expect

- You will arrange a meeting with me at least once a semester to update me on your work
- You participate in the annual review process, providing at least one week notice to schedule the review
- You will arrange to coordinate the feedback you receive from all members of your committee
- You will give me a paper copy of your thesis, two weeks before your orals

- Although committee members may provide some proofing of your writing, they are not your proofreaders. They will advise you on content. For thorough proofing, you must hire a professional proofreader.

If these parameters are not met, I will recuse myself from your committee.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The exhibition and written thesis (also referred to as the written exposition) are interrelated projects and they may be completed during the same academic semester(s). A total of 6 credit hours is dedicated to preparation for and completion of the exhibition and written thesis. Most students allot their entire last semester to this work; some students begin ART699 one semester before the last semester.

All works intended for the exhibition must be reviewed and approved by the candidate's committee prior to the exhibition opening. Students who fail to receive approval may not participate in their exhibition and will need to resubmit their work the following semester.

The written exposition is the candidate's final step in the Master of Fine Arts program. The student has successfully passed *ART699: Research and Thesis* after completing the following the Written Exposition, Oral Defense and the Final Exhibition with the approval of the committee.

Students may not change their thesis committee members once the Thesis Proposal Defense Form and the proposal itself have been signed and approved by the graduate school. Change in committee membership will require an additional review of work with the new committee members and resubmission of the thesis proposal.

## EXHIBITION AND THESIS

The MFA Studio Art exhibition consists of work executed by the student during his/her tenure at the University and should be representative of the student's major studio concentration. As the primary focus of the program, the exhibition must be a major collection of works demonstrating a high level of artistic, conceptual, and technical competence. The work made during this period should allow the student to show his/her serious involvement in the art-making process and reflect a high level of maturity and professional competence in quality and quantity.

In the visual arts, the word "thesis" applies to the exhibition as well as the written exposition of the visual work produced for the exhibition. This makes the M.F.A. thesis a little different from a thesis written for disciplines in the social sciences or history, for example. Instead of a literature review and a research question, the purpose of the visual arts thesis is to identify and clarify aesthetic, technical, and expressive concepts and intentions of significance to the student's work and reflected in the works of the exhibition. The thesis also includes a discussion of methods used by the student and any discoveries or innovations in the student's work.

In general, the M.F.A. written thesis or exposition consists of a statement describing 1) the larger and more specific artistic problems that generated the student's body of work (what new or unexpected techniques, content, or approaches to media will be seen in the work and why); 2) a discussion of the methods, media, and format used by the student in producing the work; 3) if relevant, the relationship of the student's work to the influences of other artists and styles, and other issues (such as social or psychological questions) of relevance to the work; and 4) the student's personal assessment of success and plans for future directions in art. Each of these areas may be a page or two, with the most emphasis given to the discussion of the student's aesthetic and technical accomplishments. Reproductions of the student's art – often in the form of a CD or an electronic portfolio – are included in the thesis.

The written exposition should be prepared under the guidance of the student's advisor and thesis committee members. Feedback and consultation with all members is necessary to ensure successful completion of the project. Advisors' expectations for the format and length of the thesis may vary; discussion about expectations should take place before the work begins.

As stated, the thesis includes visual documentation of the exhibition and is submitted to the Graduate College in fulfillment of the requirements for graduation in the Art Department's Master of Fine Arts degree program. The format, date for registration and other requirements must conform to the general guidelines required by the Graduate College. Be sure to consult the Graduate College's most recent guidelines – electronic submissions are replacing paper copies.

**Note: Four weeks into the final exhibition semester, the student must meet with his/her thesis committee for approval of works that will be in his/her final exhibition. The student will inform the Art Museum Director and Registrar of the status of this review immediately following this meeting.**

## TIME LINE FOR THESIS/WRITTEN EXPOSITION

The first draft of the thesis/written exposition **must** be submitted to the advisor no later than the end of the first month of the exhibition semester. Before you begin, you should meet with your advisor to discuss the correct format for your thesis. He/she will probably give you a general outline to help you with this process.

The second draft of the thesis/written exposition **must** be submitted to all the members of the supervisory committee by the middle of the second month of the exhibition semester. This allows the committee to offer advice on the writing and content of the thesis/exposition.

Students should allow reasonable periods of time between each submission. Faculty often have other obligations and will not be able to devote complete attention to last minute submissions.

Reviews on theses cannot be guaranteed during the last week of classes. Signatures on theses are unacceptable by the Graduate School after the last week of classes.

Students should confer with their committee members regularly after the second draft. It is strongly recommended that students develop a system for getting advice from all committee members and tracking their different contributions. If the work is done electronically, readers' comments can be read by all members, eliminating redundancy and contradictions, as much as possible. If it is done on paper, a color-coded system may be useful (if each committee member is asked to use a different color of ink). A final alternative is to provide each member with a separate copy of the draft and schedule a meeting for all members to come together and share their comments. The student should choose a system that meets his/her needs as well as those of the committee.

Students are advised to utilize the facilities provided by the Radford University Writing Center (for professional proof reading), if necessary. (The Writing Center will look for grammar, punctuation, sentence construction, etc.).

*As stated previously, do not forget that committee members may not be changed once the thesis proposal has been signed and approved by the Graduate School. Deviations to this policy will be considered only in the case of a faculty member's illness or absence due to sabbatical leave or retirement. Adjunct faculty cannot chair a supervisory committee although they can serve on a committee. Only faculty members with Full Graduate Faculty status may chair a thesis committee.*

4. A complete schedule for students' oral and thesis preparation as required by Radford University, along with further information about thesis writing, can be found in the [Graduate Student Forms and Applications](#) online. It is also helpful to read the theses of previous graduates from Radford University in McConnell library to see specific examples of theses in the visual arts. Changes to any of this must be discussed with and approved by committee members.

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

### Master of Fine Arts in Art

The Comprehensive Examination for a student in the Master of Fine Arts in Art program consists of satisfactorily completing three components: Student's Exhibition, Oral examination, and an Accompanying Thesis/Written Exposition.

**The Oral Examination must be conducted while the candidate's exhibition is hanging.** This examination has three purposes: one, to assess the extent to which technical and expressive objectives of graduate study have been met; two, to assess the candidate's ability to communicate and explore the means and meanings of the graduate exhibition in light of aesthetic goals, expressive intent and contemporary art concepts; and three, to engage in positive critical dialogue.

Additional information about procedures and requirements of the comprehensive Examination is published in the Radford University Graduate Catalog.

**Time Frame: Barring extenuating circumstances, students must complete their program in 6 years (most do so in 2-1/2 - 3). Not doing so will force the student to reapply for admission to the program.**

## GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

Whenever possible, a graduate student will be awarded an assistantship for two years. In most cases, the GA (grad. Assistant) is awarded to new students, the GTA (graduate teaching assistant) or GTF (graduate teaching fellow) is awarded to second-year students. All come with a stipend but the GA does not come with tuition credits. See the graduate college web page for an explanation of the differences. As a rule, a student receiving an award in the first year will also receive an award in the second year. There are several factors which may make the continuation of an award not possible.

- 1) The number of assistantships in the art department is determined by the graduate college. As a rule, we receive 9 full-time assistantships. The only way that the department can increase the number of awards is by dividing an award between two students, in which case each gets half of the stipend and works half the hours. The number of students in the program generally exceeds the number of assistantships, making it impossible to give everyone an assistantship, full-time or half-time. It is an honor to receive something.
- 2) Some assistantships do require special skills or interests that may not be shared by all MFA students.
- 3) Performance on the required MFA reviews can impact a student's eligibility for an award.

- 4) A student who has had an award for one year will be evaluated for performance in the assistantship – has the student carried out assignments? Shown up for work at regular and expected times? Do other faculty, in addition to the student’s advisor, perceive this student as someone who will be a good worker and problem solver and pleasant to work with?

This list of criteria should convey to you the fact that a second year award is an even greater honor. Not all students will get one – those who do have distinguished themselves in their studio art, their readiness to contribute to the program, and their flexibility when it comes to working. Because expected functions vary with each award, it is important to establish a productive working relationship with your advisor and request feedback, if it is not provided, so that you can modify your work habits and performance if necessary. You will receive an official evaluation each year.

## PROGRAM OF STUDY REQUIREMENTS MASTER OF FINE ARTS

1. NAME (Last) (First) (Middle)			2. Student ID		
3. PRESENT ADDRESS (Street) (City) (State) (Zip)			4. PHONE		
5. DATE OF START OF GRADUATE COURSE WORK: Month: Year:		6. CATALOG YEAR:		7. E-MAIL	
DEPT.	NO.	COURSE TITLE	CREDITS	SEM/YR	GRADE
<b>AREA OF CONCENTRATION: 30 S.H.:</b> take ART600 more than once, ART605, ART698, and at least one section of ART600 that is not cross-listed with an advanced undergraduate course. 12 credit hours must be in ART605 unless extenuating circumstances make it necessary to substitute another 600-level studio.					
ART605					
ART600					
ART					
ART					
<b>MFA CORE - 9 S.H. (graduate only)</b>					
ART/DSN	550	International Art History I	3		
ART/DSN	555	International Art History II	3		
DSN	619	Instructional Design	3		
<b>Studio Core (12 credits) (graduates only)</b>					
ART	611	Critical Writing and Thinking in Art	3		
ART	702	Studio Management	3		
ART	699	Research and Thesis (proposal development)	3		

ART	699	Research and Thesis (exhibition and thesis)	3		
ART ELECTIVES - 9 S.H.: choose from ART601 (graduate only), advanced museum studies, and other ART600s (these may be cross-listed), ART 698 if not already taken					
<i>TOTAL graduate only CREDITS (should be at least 33)</i> <i>TOTAL MFA credit hours (should be 60):</i>					

Non-degree course work					
Date of passing First-year review:			Date of passing Second-year review:		
Comprehensive Exam/Thesis is Required. Expected Date of Completion			Advisor's Signature:		Date:
Other Departmental Requirements:			Dept. Chair/Prog. Coord Signature: Date:		
Student's Signature:		Date:	Dean, Graduate College, Signature: Date:		