

The MFA Student
Handbook

School of Art and Art History, Hixson-Lied
College of Fine & Performing Arts, University
of Nebraska-Lincoln

I. Entering the MFA program

- A. Each graduate student is assigned a faculty mentor in his/her/their discipline who serves as a temporary major advisor and is available to answer questions about the program, curriculum and teaching.
- B. New graduate students should plan to arrive on campus a week before their initial semester to confer with their assigned mentors about their course schedules and with the School chair about their studio assignments. All entering students are required to attend a University-mandated health and safety meeting and a School meeting in which they are introduced to the graduate faculty. Other meetings may be required, so students should check their email frequently.
- C. Incoming graduate students who are receiving a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) or any other money from the university must sign the required federal paperwork and bring required identification to campus. You will receive an email from the HR department during the summer before beginning classes. Please follow these instructions closely. In particular, you must bring your Social Security Card to our HR representative. If you have questions, please contact the Graduate Studies Office.
- D. Both entering and returning students who have been awarded assistantships should be available the week before the first day of classes. Students are required to attend university teaching workshops and other scheduled meetings during the week prior to the beginning of classes.

II. The MFA Degree Program

- A. The Grad College has several helpful sites with information about graduate degrees.
 - 1. Overview: <https://graduate.unl.edu>
Pre-arrival checklist: <https://graduate.unl.edu/relocate/pre-arrival-checklist>
Post-arrival checklist: <https://graduate.unl.edu/relocate/post-arrival-checklist>
 - 2. Graduate Catalog: <https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/>
 - 3. Forms and Deadlines: <https://graduate.unl.edu/academics/program-steps/masters-degree-steps-to-completion>
- B. The Master of Fine Arts degree is a NASAD (National Association of Schools of Art and Design) accredited, 60-credit-hour studio program. A full-time student can complete the degree in three years.

C. Areas of emphasis are: ceramics, drawing, graphic design, painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture.

1. An applicant must designate an area of emphasis.
2. Applicants can designate a single area or it is possible to pursue a combination of two.

D. Requirements for the MFA degree

Studio coursework: minimum 42 credit hours

- a) Minimum hours in an area of emphasis, including thesis hours: 26
 - b) Thesis hours in area of emphasis: 6-10
 - c) Studio elective credit hours: 16
 - d) These may include, but are not limited to studio courses in the area of emphasis. ARTP 997 (Colloquium) a seminar course, is also included in this category. It may be repeated for a maximum 24 credits
2. Art History: 9 credit hours in seminar or formal lecture courses (not independent study).
 3. General electives: 9 credit hours. These electives may be taken in art history (including independent study), graduate level courses outside the School, or studio courses.
 4. Thesis and oral examination (for details, see XIV, Finishing the MFA Program)

E. Passing grades for MFA candidates

1. The College of Graduate Studies sets the following minimum standards for grades:
 - a) A "B" in courses linked with undergraduate instruction (a 400-800 listing)
 - b) A "C" in courses offered exclusively for graduate students.
2. None of the courses intended to satisfy the degree obligation may carry a grade of incomplete. These grades must be resolved before the College of Graduate Study's deadline (normally the day after the Final Examination Report Form is due, or four weeks before the oral examination is scheduled to take place). It does not endanger graduation to have incompletes or grades lower than the College of Graduate Studies standard, as long as these courses are not required to meet the 60-credit degree requirement.

F. Students have **five years** from the oldest course listed on the

Memorandum to complete the degree. Courses exceeding this limit may not be used toward a master's degree. The only exception is for students who receive an approved academic leave, which extends the time-to-degree by the length of the leave.

III. Studio Space

A. The School provides individual workspace for graduate students as well as general workspace in each of the studio disciplines. Graduate studio spaces are assigned by the Director of the School, in collaboration with the School Graduate Committee.

B. Time Allotment for Studio Space

1. Studio space is normally offered for no more than six consecutive semesters and the summers in between.
2. Students whose advisory committee require them to do further studio work (beyond the 60-credit-hour requirement) will ordinarily be allowed to retain the use of their studios to satisfy that requirement.
3. Students who choose to extend their programs beyond three academic years are not guaranteed studio space.
4. Reallocation of studio space is considered every April for the following academic year. Requests for a change in studio should be sent, in writing, to the chair of the School's Graduate Committee.

Requesting a single studio or a move to a larger space

MFA students who wish to move to a single studio space can request permission to do this at the end of their first year. In a letter addressed to the graduate chair, students are asked to submit the following information in narrative form:

- Your reasons, both practical and professional, for seeking a solo studio at this time
- The specific space requirements you need for your work (such as a studio of a particular size, or a space with no windows)
- The scale of current and future projects
- If relevant, give an overview of the materials you are using in your work, and whether they may pose any hazards for someone sharing a studio with you

- Exhibitions or other upcoming opportunities, if any, that necessitate any specific working conditions
- How your needs are changing due to your future work plans

C. Students are required to keep their spaces neat and orderly. No architectural alterations are permitted. Students may not attach anything to walls, ceilings or the floor. Walls can be used to pin up or hang artwork but no shelving units or other installed or attached structures are permitted. Painting the walls is not permitted, except to touch-up damage or patch pinholes.

D. Students are required to adhere to safety policies of the University concerning the use of potentially hazardous materials and to obey School and university rules governing the handling of such substances.

E. Studio walls must be patched, sanded, painted and otherwise repaired to a pristine state before being vacated. Keys must be turned in by the Wednesday before commencement of the student's final semester. There will be an inspection to verify compliance. Failure to comply will result in the student's graduation being blocked.

IV. Transfer Credits

A. Graduate credits earned before entering our MFA program may be applied, under certain circumstances, toward the 60-hour requirement.

B. No more than 20 credits may be accepted for transfer.

C. No credits that were part of a previously completed graduate degree may be applied towards the satisfaction of the School's MFA requirements. (This is a college rule)

D. A request for transfer credits may occur only after the candidate has begun the program, at the time of the first-semester review.

E. Requests for credit transfer must be in writing, directed to the chair of the student's advisory committee, and accompanied by an official transcript of the relevant courses

1. Transferred art history credits must be approved by a UNL art history faculty member.

2. The advisory committee is required to follow the rules of the UNL College of Graduate Studies (as stated in the Graduate Bulletin), which reads:

No graduate credits will be accepted as transfer credits unless earned at an institution fully accredited to offer graduate work in the field of the student's major, nor should the student expect any graduate credits to be transferred unless the

graduate committee evaluates the quality and suitability equal to or superior to offerings available at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/policies/graduate-credit/>

3. Meeting the above standard does not guarantee transfer credit. The review committees have the prerogative and the responsibility to rule on the propriety of applying particular credits towards a student's MFA degree.

F. Notification of decisions about transfer credit:

1. Any decisions about transfer credit must be submitted, in writing, by the chair of the advisory committee to the chair of the School Graduate Committee.
2. The Graduate Committee, as the agent of the School graduate faculty, must ratify or reject these decisions and report either action to the School graduate faculty.
3. The chair of the School Graduate Committee must notify the student in writing of the final decision.
4. The College of Graduate Studies is notified of the approval of transfer credit when the student submits the signed "Memorandum of Courses" form.

G. All work to earn a graduate degree at the University of Nebraska must take place within a six-year interval. Therefore, to be eligible for transfer, courses must have been taken within six years of completion of the MFA degree.

V. The Reviews and The Advisory Committees

A. A student's Advisory Committee supervises and guides the MFA student throughout the program.

The School Graduate Committee will form each student's initial Advisory Committee. Students will be assigned a committee that consists of faculty members in his/her area, along with one Art History professor and one to two other graduate faculty members.

C. Procedure for forming the First Year Advisory Committee:

1. A temporary advisor is assigned to each incoming student from the faculty in the student's chosen area.
2. During the first semester, the School Graduate Committee will, in consultation with the graduate faculty, create each student's First Year Advisory Committee. The membership will include faculty from the student's area of emphasis, one Art History faculty member and 1-2 other Graduate Faculty members. The committee will total 5 members.

3. The School will notify students of their First-Year Advisory Committee members as early as possible in the fall semester. Students are strongly encouraged to contact their committee members and set up informal meetings. The School expects that the first review (at the end of the semester) will not be the first meeting (formal or informal) between the student and his/her committee members.

4. Membership on each student's First Year Advisory Committee will remain the same in the second (spring) semester. The student has the right to change a committee member if the student feels that the assigned member is not helping in the student's development. This change would normally be a rare one and should only occur after consultation with the student's assigned advisor. Details for changing membership are in section E.2.a-d.

D. Procedure for forming the Second Year Advisory Committee:

At the beginning of the third semester of the MFA, the student will select a committee chair and will work with that faculty member to select the members of their Second Year Advisory Committee. The student should contact each potential member to request participation on his or her Second Year Advisory Committee. This process must be completed by the announced deadline, usually in October. The student will continue to work with his or her Second Year Advisory Committee until the formation of his or her Third Year Advisory Committee.

E. Procedure for forming the Third Year Advisory Committee:

The Third Year Advisory Committee ordinarily has the same members as the Second Year Advisory Committee. However, this is an opportunity for the student to reconsider his or her committee membership and to select committee members who can best guide his or her thesis work and also to consider the composition of the student's (final semester) Examining Committee.

Students designate their Oral Examination Committee in their final semester (See Section XIII D). The School expects that the Oral Examination Committee will have the same members as the Third Year Advisory Committee.

F. Responsibilities of the Advisory Committees (First Year, Second Year, Third Year)

1. The Advisory Committee review the student's creative and academic progress in the program. Oversight activities include:

a) A (required) review at the end of each of the first five semesters of the program.

b) Additional reviews as needed. These would occur at the request of the student or of any member of his/her review

committee.

c) Advisory Committee members are expected to engage with the student on a regular basis (formally or informally) and not just at the review.

2. The Advisory Committee rules on requests for transfer of graduate credits.

3. The Advisory Committee recommends any student request for change in emphasis to the School Graduate Committee.

4. The Third Year Advisory Committee members ordinarily comprise the student's final Oral Examination committee.

G. Membership of the Advisory Committees

1. Only members of the graduate faculty may be members of an Advisory Committee.

2. The Second- and Third-Year Advisory Committees must have at least four members but may have more.

3. At least three members of any committee must be studio faculty.

4. It is recommended that at least one member of any committee should be an Art History faculty member.

5. The School recommends that an Advisory Committee include faculty members with whom the student is extensively involved in course work.

6. The faculty member who is a student's primary instructor ordinarily serves as the student's Advisory Committee chair.

H Changes in Advisory Committee Membership

1. Changes in Advisory Committee membership may be initiated by the faculty.

a) Faculty members have the prerogative to resign from an Advisory Committee.

b) If a departure reduces an Advisory Committee's personnel to below four, the student must add another graduate faculty member to the committee.

2. Changes in Advisory Committee membership may be initiated by the student.

a) A student may occasionally want to remove one or more members of the Advisory Committee and replace them with new members. For instance, an evolution of their studio work might lead the student to seek input from a different set of mentors

b) The student must fill out the appropriate School Graduate Committee membership and deliver it to the graduate chair.

c) A student-initiated change requires endorsement by the

student's Advisory Committee chair. This consent is necessary even if the committee member targeted for removal is the committee Chair.

d) If the Advisory Committee chair vetoes a request for his/her own replacement, the student may appeal that decision to the School Graduate Committee.

f) A student must notify his/her/their Advisory Committee members of any change in committee membership. This includes informing any committee member who is being dropped from the committee.

I. Occurrence of reviews

1. Each student must undergo at least five reviews during his/her tenure in the MFA program, one at the end of each of the first five semesters.

2. Each student must provide a written Artist's Statement to his or her Advisory Committee at least one week prior to a scheduled review. This statement is the precursor to the Thesis Written Supporting Document (see XIII-G), and the student should work to improve it each semester.

- In the statement, the student sets down the goals and intentions in his/her/their creative work and rationalizes and substantiates his/her/their aesthetic procedures. It would be the equivalent of an abstract in a scholarly discipline in which the degree candidate summarizes the thrust of his/her/their research

3. Reviews are normally held in the student's studio.

4. The chair of the School Graduate Committee schedules mandatory reviews.

5. Mandatory reviews usually occur on the third from last and the second from last Fridays of the semester, unless this is logistically impossible. In that case the student must schedule the review at a time convenient to all involved.

6. A request for an additional review by either the student or a member of his/her committee mandates that the review take place.

7. Additional reviews may take place at any time and the student or the Advisory Committee may schedule them as they see fit. Additional reviews are not a punishment but are another tool that an Advisory Committee can use to assist the student.

J. Guests

1. A student may invite guests to reviews. This would usually

be faculty members or visiting faculty members who are not members of the committee. This would not be fellow students, friends or family members.

2. Guests must have the approval of the Advisory Committee chair.
3. Guests may not participate in any vote the committee may take.

VI. Provisional Status

A. Graduate admission at UNL may be restricted by one or more provisions. Provisional status in the MFA program usually results from a need for additional course work.

Provisional status exists on a semester-by-semester basis. Provisional acceptance into the MFA program is good only for the first semester.

During the first or second semesters, the student's review committee has the options to recommend:

1. Converting provisional standing to full graduate candidate status;
2. Continuing it for an another semester; or
3. Dismissing the student from the program

C. A student may function with provisional status in the MFA program no longer than three semesters.

D. A student may hold a graduate assistantship appointment while on provisional status, but not while the number of semester credit hours of his/her studio deficiencies is greater than nine.

VII. Probation and Dismissal

A. The Graduate Faculty of the School has the power to dismiss candidates from the MFA program or impose probation on them. Either action may be taken if faculty members judge a student's work in the program to be unsatisfactory.

B. In case of a dismissal, the following procedure will take place:

1. The students advisory committee initiates a decision to dismiss.
2. The advisory committee must notify the chair of the School Graduate Committee in writing (with a copy going to the student).
3. The School Graduate Committee rules on the dismissal decision. If the dismissal is ratified, the grad chair notifies the College of Graduate Studies in writing of the decision with a copy going to the student.

C. When considered appropriate, probation may be offered as an opportunity for the student to recover his/her satisfactory status. The procedure for imposing probation is as follows:

1. The student's advisory committee initiates a decision to impose

probation.

2. Upon imposition of probation, the advisory committee must provide the student a clear written statement of:

a) The causes of the unsatisfactory evaluation

b) The actions required for the removal of probation

3. The committee must inform the graduate chair of any probation decision.

4. A follow-up review must be scheduled during the semester after the one in which probation is imposed.

5. A judgment in the follow-up review that performance is satisfactory will remove probation.

6. A decision that performance continues to be unsatisfactory may result in the student being dismissed from the program.

D. Details of Graduate Studies rules concerning Probation, Termination and Appeals may be found in the Graduate Studies Bulletin at:

<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/policies/academic-program-requirements/#probationandtermination>

VIII. Changes in Emphasis

A. A student may change his/her area of emphasis in the MFA program by permission. Two kinds of change are possible:

1. A change from one area of emphasis to another;

2. The addition or deletion of a second area of emphasis

B. A request for changes in area of emphasis should be presented to the student's advisory committee. The request will be processed in two steps:

1. The advisory committee will make a decision;

2. If the committee agrees with the proposed change, their decision will be forwarded to the School Graduate Committee, which will ratify or reject it.

IX. The Memorandum of Courses

A. The Memorandum of Courses must be filed before the student has received grades in more than one-half of the prescribed program. In the MFA program, this effectively means that the Memorandum must be submitted during the third semester.

B. The form must be signed (approved) by the student's committee chair, the School Graduate Chair and by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

C. Courses on the final transcript must match those listed on the

Memorandum of
Courses for graduation to take place.

D. If the initial memorandum submitted by the student turns out to inaccurate, then it must be corrected. To do so, the student should fill out and submit an updated Memorandum Form.

E. A student may NOT file a Memorandum of Courses and graduate in the same semester. This means that any changes in the Memorandum MUST be completed before grades are submitted at the end of the student's fifth semester.

F. Master's Degree Forms and Deadlines may be found on the Graduate Studies

<https://graduate.unl.edu/academics/program-steps/masters-degree-steps-to-completion>

X. Financial Aid and Graduate Assistantships

1. Funding sources that contribute to graduate assistantship awards include the State of Nebraska, Othmer Fellowship Awards, Regents Fellowships, Chancellors Fellowships, and Centennial Fellowships. These awards are provided by the College of Graduate Studies and awarded by the School. The Hixson-Lied College of Fine & Performing Arts awards also provides fellowships. Financial packages are assembled from these various funding sources and assigned at the time of acceptance into the graduate program. An assistantship brings a stipend and may also include a reduction in tuition charges during the period of the assistantship.

a) The duties of graduate assistants teaching and/or technical assistants requires 15 hours of work per week (.33 FTE)

b) First year teaching assistants usually help faculty members in the classroom for 12 hours a week with the other 3 hours per week assigned, as needed, by the School.

c) Technical assistants report to an area faculty member or to the School Director, depending upon their assignments. The Director supervises the gallery assistant.

2. Credit Hour Limitations: An assistant in the School must enroll for at least nine credit hours of course work per semester, but for no more than 12. The 12-credit ceiling is a College of Graduate Studies rule. It applies to any assistant assigned a 15-hour-per-week workload, which is the load for all Graduate Teaching Assistantships in the School.

3. Financial restrictions with assistantships

a) The College of Graduate Studies rule states that the

student an assistantship may not perform more than 20 hours per week (49% FTE) of income-producing work during the regular school year, including the 15- hour commitment imposed by an assistantship.

b) The 20-hour restriction covers all employment, whether at the University or elsewhere.

4. During the summer an assistant may be employed as a GTA up to a full time basis (1.0 FTE or 40 hours per week). Summer assistants are hired by the School Director as the need arises.

XI. Other Available Financial Aid and Competitive Awards

A. Endowed fellowships awarded by the Hixson Lied College or School

1. Graduate Students have the opportunity to apply for competitive research and travel funds through the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts. These competitions are described on the College website. Application forms may be found on Blackboard as well as the CFPA website.

2. **The Francis William Vreeland Award** is given each spring to the most outstanding graduating MFA student as determined by faculty vote.

a) Students may compete only one time during their MFA program, ordinarily during their final semester.

b) The date of the Vreeland Award is announced at the beginning of each spring semester.

c) December graduates may choose to compete either the spring before or the spring after graduation.

d) The applicants for the Vreeland Award compete by displaying a representative selection of their creative work. Work is displayed in the student's studio space.

e) In the event of a tie, a run-off vote will be taken on the Monday following the first vote.

f) Only full-time faculty members who view the displays during the prescribed time may vote. Each faculty member must vote for three candidates (in priority order).

3. The **Richard P. Trickey Award** is awarded by faculty vote

each spring. a) Students who have at least one remaining year in the program are eligible to compete.

b) Voting takes place at the same time as the competition for the Vreeland Award.

c) As with the Vreeland Award, only full-time faculty members who view the displays during the prescribed time may vote. Each faculty member must vote for three candidates (in priority order).

4. **The Dan and Barbara Howard Creative Achievement Award** is given in the spring and is determined by faculty vote. Judging is done on the same day as the Vreeland and Trickey awards. It is open to all graduate students in the MFA program, and the voting rules are the same as the Vreeland and Trickey awards.

XII. Teaching by Graduate Students

A. Duties of the Graduate Teaching Assistants

1. In the first year, students awarded graduate teaching assistantships usually do not teach their own classes but instead work as assistants/apprentices to full-time faculty members or are assigned technical or gallery duties by the School Director. This provides the student with an opportunity to observe and learn from an experienced faculty member. Additional teaching development can be attained through Graduate Studies and UNL Center for Transformative Teaching: <https://graduate.unl.edu/graduate-support/teaching-development> and <https://teaching.unl.edu>

2. In the second year, most graduate assistants begin teaching classes of their own. The 15-hour teaching obligation is fulfilled as follows:

a) The instructional segment consists of six contact hours of classroom duty per week. This takes the form of either one 3-credit course or a combination of classes which together meet for a total of six hours a week.

b) Six hours per week is allowed for course preparation

The remaining 3 hours per week is unspecified. Students may be asked to help proctor exams, substitute for a faculty member who is absent, give tours of the School for prospective undergraduates and their parents, or assist at School events.

c) A schedule posted in the School office records the on-call hours that GTA's work for the School. Each GTA fills in the dates and numbers of hours as they are completed. The office staff makes an effort to call upon the students who have served the fewest on-call hours that semester.

B. Evaluation of GTAs

1. Evaluation by the Faculty

- a) GTAs will meet with their advisors (or the assigned faculty member within each media area) to design a syllabus and assignments for whatever course they are teaching. This advisor will also provide guidance and feedback to the GTA, in order to help them become a better teacher.
- b) At the end of each semester, your supervising instructor or Lab Manager will provide a form, evaluating your performance in classroom and labs.

2. Evaluation by Students

- a) GTAs who teach their own classes (like all faculty members) are required to have their students complete an online Course evaluation through Canvas.
- b) The GTA should understand that their students have the right to submit their evaluations anonymously.
- c) The GTA must not be present in the classroom while the students are filling out the evaluations.
- d) The teacher may not see a class's evaluations until after the grades have been turned in. The evaluations are made available through the instructor's Canvas module.

XIII. Completing the MFA Program

A. Each student must pass an oral examination during the final semester of the graduate program. The "orals" are usually held during the time that the MFA show is on display.

B. Students can locate all forms and deadlines for graduation on the Graduate Studies site:

<https://graduate.unl.edu/academics/program-steps/masters-degree-steps-to-completion>

The office of Graduate Studies often changes due dates and forms so students should check the website for specific information.

C. Early in the final semester in school, each student must fill out the ***Application for Advanced Degree*** form and submit it to the Records Office. The exact date will be published on the grad studies web site about one semester ahead of time.

<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/masters>

- The name that you have registered with graduate studies must be used on all documents submitted to graduate studies.

D. The student has the responsibility to select his/her/their Oral Examination Committee. Except in unusual circumstances, the Oral Examination Committee would have the same membership as the student's advisory committee.

1. The committee must have at least four members chosen from the graduate faculty members of The School. The four must include at least one member who is from the student's area of emphasis.
2. The graduate faculty recommends that the committee include a faculty member from any area of secondary studio emphasis.

E. *At least four weeks before the oral exam*, each student must complete the student portion of the form ***Final Examination Report for the Masters Degree*** and submit it to the grad college. The oral examination must be scheduled in order to do this. The grad college will either approve the form and forward it to the student's committee chair, or they will return the form to the student for correction.

F. Present a Thesis Exhibition.

1. Students earning a masters degree in other fields are required to write a written Masters Thesis. In the MFA, the Thesis Exhibition takes the place of the written thesis. This exhibition takes place during the student's final semester and is shown in the Eisentrager-Howard Gallery in Richards Hall.

G. Write a Thesis Abstract and Written Supporting Document.

1. The Abstract is a short essay (350 words max) in which the student sets down the goals and intentions in his/her/their creative work and rationalizes and substantiates his/her/their aesthetic procedures. It would be the equivalent of an abstract in a scholarly discipline in which the degree candidate summarizes the thrust of his/her/their research thesis or dissertation. **In the Fall of 2024, the SAAHD graduate faculty agreed that the written supporting document should be a minimum of 3 pages to a maximum of twelve pages.** All of the specifics concerning the thesis are contained in the *Preparation a Thesis or Dissertation*. You can find the guidelines for the MFA thesis here: <https://graduate.unl.edu/academics/degrees/guidelines>

2. The thesis Written Supporting Document should be double spaced. The margins should be one-and-a-half inches (1.5") at the left and one

inch (1”) on each of the other three sides. The document must be approved by the student’s advisor (the chair of the Orals Committee).

3. The candidate must provide a copy of the Written Supporting Document to each member of his/her oral examination committee at least two weeks (14 days) prior to the time of the candidate's oral examination.

4. The candidate must post a copy of the thesis Written Supporting Document in the area where the candidate’s Thesis Exhibition is displayed.

5) The student must submit the title page and text of the thesis abstract to the Graduate Office for approval at least two weeks prior to the date of the oral examination. The document should be properly formatted and sent as an email attachment to Terri Eastin at teastin1@unl.edu

Clarification of terminology:

1. *Student Thesis: artwork presented in the gallery*
2. *Thesis Abstract: 350-word statement which is emailed to Grad Studies at least two weeks prior to the thesis oral defense and must follow the Graduate Studies formatting.*
3. *Written Supporting Document: 3-12 pages written statement that accompanies the thesis artwork in the gallery and is provided to the graduate advisory committee two weeks prior to the thesis oral defense. The final version of this document must also follow Graduate Studies formatting, will accompany Thesis Artwork images and will be uploaded to the UNL digital commons.*

H. Take the oral examination before the Final Oral Examination Committee in the presence of the thesis exhibition and any members of the public who wish to attend.

1. The committee will question the candidate for up to **three** hours. At an hour and ½ into the review, the committee will ask the candidate and any visitors to leave the room and will then decide if the student will graduate. In its discussion and deliberations, it will evaluate both the thesis exhibition and the written abstract. At least ½ hour will be allocated for advisory committee deliberation.
2. The committee chairperson will bring the *Final Examination Report for the Masters Degree* form to the oral examination. At the conclusion of the examination the committee members will each sign the form and designate “pass” or “not pass” in the proper space. From the Grad Bulletin:

a) *In the event that members of an oral examining committee*

are not unanimous regarding passing a Candidate, the student is to be approved for the degree if only one examiner dissents. However, in each case, the dissenting member of the committee will be expected to file a letter of explanation in the Office of Graduate Studies.

b) If a student fails to pass the final oral or written examination for an advanced degree, their committee must file a report on the failure in the Office of Graduate Studies and indicate what the student must do before taking another examination. Another examination may not be held during the same semester or the same summer session in which the student failed.

3. Guests at the Oral Examination

a) A student may invite guests to his/her thesis orals.

b) Guests must have the approval of the advisory committee chair. c) Guests may not participate in the discussion or in any vote the committee may take.

d) Guests will leave the room (along with the candidate) during the final committee discussion and vote.

I. Delivering the Thesis Abstract/ Thesis Images/ Written Supporting Document

1. Once you have passed your final oral defense, make any changes to your written thesis as required by your adviser or committee. Obtain the appropriate signatures of **all committee members** on your *Final Examination Report Form*.

2. Convert the final thesis abstract to a PDF file and send it (as an email attachment) to Terri Eastin teastin1@unl.edu for final review.

Once you receive email notification that the format of your abstract has been reviewed and approved, upload the file to the Digital Commons at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/gsdissinfo/>. Before doing so, there are two documents there that you need to download and read: ***Where to deposit your master's thesis in the UNL Digital Commons***, and the ***Step-by-step Guide to Uploading Your Master's Thesis in UNL Digital Commons***. Both are in PDF format.

- A **Deposit Fee**, thesis processing fee (required), must be submitted through **MyRed** by credit or debit card.
<https://graduate.unl.edu/academics/program-steps/masters-degree-steps-to-completion>

XIV. The degree checklist

A. First Semester

1. Write an artist statement (about one page in length) and distribute it to the Advisory Committee Members **at least one week** before your review.

- Consult with your advisor throughout the semester on the content of this document.
- AI-generated text will not be accepted. Please seek assistance at the UNL Writing Center. <https://writing.unl.edu>

2) Schedule 1-2 meetings with your advisory committee members individually, prior to end of semester review.

B. Second Semester

1. Rewrite and update your artist statement and distribute it to the Advisory Committee Members at least one week before your review.

2. Have your work reviewed by your advisory committee.

C. Third Semester

1. As outlined in Section V D, at the beginning of the third semester the student will select a committee chair and will work with that faculty member to select the members of their Second Year Advisory Committee.

2. Fill out the Memorandum of Courses form, submit it to your advisor, the School grad chair and the Grad College, in that order. It **MUST** be completed before grades are issued at the end of the third semester.

3. Rewrite and update your artist statement and distribute it to the Advisory Committee Members at least one week before your review.

4. Have your work reviewed by your advisory committee.

D. Fourth Semester

1. Rewrite and update your artist statement and distribute it to the Advisory Committee Members at least one week before your review.

2. Have your work reviewed by your advisory committee.

E. Fifth Semester

1. Confirm your Advisory Committee membership.

2. Work with the School Chair and the Gallery director to organize the schedule for the MFA Thesis Exhibitions.

3. Rewrite and update your artist statement and distribute to the

Advisory Committee Members at least one week before your review. Keep in mind that this is your last review before your orals and your artist statement should be approaching the final version that will be your Thesis Abstract.

4. Have your work reviewed by your advisory committee.
5. When you pre-enroll for your final semester, take a final look at your Memorandum of Courses and *make sure* that the courses you are taking will complete your degree, and that the memorandum is complete and correct. This is your final chance- *you cannot change your memorandum of courses in the same semester you graduate.*

F. The Last Semester

1. During the first month of the semester, fill out the ***Application for Advanced Degree*** form and submit it to Registration and Records, 107 Canfield Administration Building South.
2. Select your Oral Exam Committee. Except under unusual circumstances, this committee will have the same members as your previous advisory committee.
3. Work with the members of your committee to schedule the time of your Oral Exam. It is the candidate's responsibility to find a time and date that works for all. The Oral Exam should occur while the Thesis Exhibition is on display.
4. *At least* four weeks before your oral exam fill out the ***Final Examination Report for the Masters Degree*** form.
 5. Resolve all grades of Incomplete from previous semesters (if the courses involved are needed for graduation).
 6. At least two weeks prior to your oral exam, complete your Thesis Abstract and distribute it to the orals committee and to the Grad College.
 7. At least two weeks before your oral exam, prepare copies of the Thesis Abstract and submit a copy to the Grad College for approval.
 8. Present your Thesis Exhibition and take your Oral Exam. Make sure you post the thesis Written Supporting Document with the exhibition.
 9. Immediately after the Oral Exam, deliver the signed ***Final Exam Report*** to the Grad College. *Carefully* follow all the instructions contained in section XIII.I.
 10. Clean, patch and paint your studio and return your keys to the School office on or before Wednesday of the final exam week (the week before graduation). ***A hold will be placed on***

your graduation if you do not complete this.

XV. Letters of Recommendation

A. At some point in the program, you may need various letters of recommendation for fellowships or teaching jobs. In order to help you get the best possible letters of reference, here are a few guidelines that may help:

1. Contact the faculty member at least two weeks before the letter is due.
2. Ask the faculty member by email, in person or by phone for a recommendation, not by mail.
3. Describe the type of position or grant for which you are applying. Specificity will help the faculty member. If possible, provide a web link to the grant or position.
4. Provide the faculty member with a current resume, digital images of recent work or (in the case of Art History faculty members) copies of the papers that you wrote for his/her courses.
5. Give the faculty member all necessary information about the letter, including the name and title of the addressee, where the letter should be sent and any deadlines.
6. Provide any special forms that the prospective employer or granting institution requires.
7. Sign any necessary waiver releasing your right to read the recommendation.
8. If the letters are to be sealed and mailed by you, provide addressed, stamped envelopes.

XVI. Student Representation

A. Students are invited to elect a representative to attend faculty meetings. The representative serves as a liaison between graduate students and faculty members.

B. Steps for reporting concerns. Area Faculty Advisor- Graduate Chair- Director of the School. If you are not comfortable visiting with a representative from the school, please refer to UNL's Institutional Equity and Compliance webpage for reporting incidents. <https://www.unl.edu/equity/title-ix>

XVII. Addendum: copies of important forms

A. These forms are samples only: unlike the original PDF documents they are not interactive. Please download the latest versions from the Grad Studies website.

<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/m>

asters

B. Tips for filling out the **Memorandum of**

Courses

1. All spaces on the form are interactive, except the signature lines at the bottom. Fill out the form on your computer, then print it out and distribute it for signatures.
2. For *degree*, check MFA.
3. For *Option*, check **I** (option one is the only one available to MFA students)
4. For *Major*, write **Art**, not your media discipline. Leave *Minor* and *Specialization* blank.

C. Tips for filling out the **Application for Degree**

1. Fill in all blanks before printing it out.
2. Check either *May* or *December* for graduation and fill in the year.
3. The check box for the MFA is found under the Graduate College, not Fine and Performing Arts.
4. Your *Major* is **Art**. Leave *Minor*, *Option* and *Concentration* blank.

D. Tips for filling out the Final Examination Report

1. Fill out all of *Part 1: Student and Program information*. As with the Memorandum of Courses, check **MFA** and **Option I**, write **Art** in the line for *Major* and leave *Minor* and *Specialization* blank.
2. Leave *Parts 2 and 3* blank.
3. In *Part 4: The Oral Examination*, you need to fill out the *schedule* for the orals, and in the first column list all the members of your orals committee. If there are more committee members than blanks, then just do your best to squeeze in another name in the final blank.
4. In *Part 5: Thesis*, write the name of your MFA exhibition.

Graduate Student Resources:

University:

UNL Student Conduct and Community Standards:

<https://studentconduct.unl.edu>

UNL syllabus policy and template: <https://facultysenate.unl.edu/faculty-senate-policies-and-documents/unl-syllabus-policy/>

UNL Teaching Development (Teaching Development Program and CIRTL)

<https://graduate.unl.edu/graduate-support/teaching-development/>
ACE Course Instruction and Assessment: Please consult with your area
faculty and follow <https://canvas.unl.edu/courses/164013>
UNL Graduate Council : <https://graduate.unl.edu/about/graduate-council/>

Community:

First Friday Art Exhibitions:

<https://downtownlincoln.org/explore/first-friday/monthly-listings>

<https://turbineflats.org/first-friday/>

<https://www.luxcenter.org/>

Art Supplies:

<http://www.gomezartsupply.com/>

<https://glaserceramics.com/index.php?route=common/home>