



MFA - Art Program Handbook

The three-year Master of Fine Arts (MFA) is studio-based, self-directed, and research-focused with an emphasis on interdisciplinarity, community engagement, and professional development. Each MFA student is provided with individual studio space. Graduate Assistantships in teaching, research, and professional development professionally advance students who have rare opportunities to engage in research, contribute to the development of curriculum, manage studios and shops, and work alongside community members, local organizations, and other departments on campus.

Through academic and public programming, the Department of Art collaborates with UNLV's Marjorie Barrick Museum of Art, a network of campus galleries, and the College of Fine Arts which boldly launches visionaries not only in art and design, but also in dance, film, theatre, set design, entertainment design, music, architecture, and related disciplines. Graduate students have the opportunity to work with a diverse art/art history faculty whose work engages a variety of media, including site-based installation, sculpture, ceramics, photography, painting, drawing, printmaking, performance, intermedia, graphic design, and digital art. The department regularly presents visiting speakers and hosts artists-in-residence. Engagement with faculty, peers and the Las Vegas cultural community creates an experience-rich environment that guides MFA candidates in their exploration of creative research activities.

The UNLV MFA - Art provides the graduate student a rare opportunity to conduct creative research within a dynamic studio art program. The campus and studios are uniquely located in close proximity to the Las Vegas Strip and the surrounding desert landscape, shaping a permissive environment where risk, experimentation, and transformation are encouraged.

The Department of Art strives to create a model for professional development in all areas of the arts, design and relevant histories, to teach the diversity of culture and identity in the US and its democratic values, and to prepare graduates for success in competitive and evolving communities through access to cutting-edge fabrication equipment, new critical and creative contexts, and opportunities for exhibition, publication, discussion, and critique linked with partners in Las Vegas and beyond.

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#), as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: valarie.burke@unlv.edu or gradassociatedean@unlv.edu.

Department Graduate Faculty

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Faculty must hold graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the [Graduate Faculty status web page](#).

Program Information

MFA - Art

Contact Information

Department of Art

Department Chair

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Graduate Coordinator
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Department Main Office
Ham Fine Arts 153, 702-895-3237.

Program Requirements

Program requirements [regarding admission, coursework and culminating experience are found in the graduate catalog.](#)

Advisory Committee Guidelines

Graduate students select and invite three Department of Art graduate faculty members to serve on their advisory committee by the end of the first year of their program. The committee chair, a tenured/tenure-track faculty member, in collaboration with the graduate coordinator, oversees the progress of the graduate student toward a successful midway and graduation thesis exhibition project.

Degree Program Benchmarks

MFA candidates must be full-time students and are required to enroll in a minimum of 9 credits per semester.* At the end of their first year in the program, students present their work to the Graduate Faculty in the first year review for assessment, discussion, and guidance. After completing 3 semesters or thirty credit hours in the program, the candidates submit their work in the form of a midway exhibition and a 500-word midway statement to their graduate advisory committee for evaluation. A successful midway exhibition is a prerequisite for continuing in the program. The capstone of the UNLV MFA - Art is a solo graduation thesis exhibition project accompanied by a written thesis, a thesis defense, a public lecture, and a digital thesis packet. **The MFA in Art thesis is considered a “non-thesis” by the Graduate College and is fulfilled entirely in the Department of Art.**

The thesis exhibition is scheduled at the Donna Beam Fine Arts Gallery or another approved venue by the end of the third year of research. The public thesis project must have the final approval of the student's advisory committee including a Graduate College Representative invited to serve as a fourth committee member and required to attend the candidate's oral thesis defense. Graduate students must complete a comprehensive project consisting of an exhibition of a representative body of creative work and a written thesis statement (2,000-word minimum) regarding the work's intent and underlying conceptualization. The exhibition or project must be created, curated, installed/de installed and publicized by the candidate.

The final thesis defense covers the intent and underlying conception of the student's comprehensive project. This examination is prepared and conducted by the student's graduate advisory committee and the Graduate College Representative.

Students are required to present a public lecture about their work in their final year in the program. This should discuss the intent and underlying conception of the student's comprehensive Thesis project.

Students are required to submit a Digital Thesis Packet for permanent record: including the following: high-resolution, digital documentation of thesis work and installation and accompanying image list; 2,000-word minimum thesis statement; CV; 200-word minimum artist bio.

The MFA in Art thesis requires five components: (1) Written Thesis Paper (2) Thesis Exhibition or Project, (3) Public Artist Lecture, (4) Oral Defense and (5) A Digital Thesis Packet. **These components are considered “non-thesis” by the Graduate College and are fulfilled entirely in the Department of Art.**

During their time in the program, students are required to apply for three professional development opportunities, including, but not limited to, artist residencies, exhibitions, and grants. These applications and the decision letters must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator by the end of the fifth semester.

Other Opportunities

There will be many opportunities for graduate students to participate in events that support professional development, their cohort, the Department of Art, and the various art and design communities in Las Vegas and beyond. These could include: studio area orientations, applying for GPSA sponsorship funding and other Scholarships, exhibitions, team travel, community meetings, open studio events, lectures, conferences, and group critiques.

Program Timeline

MFA in studio art is a 3-year program.

There are requirements for each year's individual benchmarks, as well as department requirements that repeat each academic year or semester throughout the course of the program. Each year, students will complete a (1) Graduate Student Profile outlining current research and coursework, Graduate Assistantship and course interests for the following semester, and academic and career goals, (2) Graduate Assistant Work Description, and (3) participate in Open Studios at both the end of fall and spring semesters. Graduate Program meetings are typically scheduled the week before classes begin each Fall and Spring semester.

During the Fall semester, students should keep their Thursday evening schedules clear to attend the Visiting Artist Lecture Series. Visits with the artists are typically scheduled Friday mornings between 9a.m.-12p.m.

SAMPLE FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE

In addition to academic coursework, students are responsible for scheduling introductory studio visits with Graduate Faculty as outlined in Art 721 to determine their Graduate Advisory Committee selections by the end of the Spring Semester. Students present a curated selection of their work and a written statement in the first year review presented in the Grant Hall Gallery at the end of spring semester for Graduate Faculty to assess progress and determine program standing.

Course requirements/recommendations: Art 721, Fall and Spring; Art History, Fall; Art 737, Spring; Art 710 Fall and Spring.

SAMPLE SECOND YEAR EXPERIENCE

In addition to academic coursework, students should schedule two-three one-hour meetings with their full Graduate Advisory Committee consisting of Department of Art Graduate Faculty each semester to share work and discuss midway exhibition planning. The midway exhibition is typically scheduled one year out for the Spring Semester of their second year in the program.

In the Fall semester, students attend the Midway and Thesis Exhibition Planning meeting with the Graduate Coordinator and the Galleries Director.

The midway exhibition requirements include: a 500-word artist statement to be posted in the gallery by the opening date of the exhibition, an oral midway review, and the submission of hi-resolution documentation and a list of works. Students are responsible for scheduling a 90-minute Midway Review in the Grant Hall Gallery with their full Graduate Advisory Committee. The student will present their work and writing and discuss the underlying intentions and conceptualization of the individual works and the installation as a whole. This review will determine advancement to candidacy. All gallery questions should be directed to the Galleries Director. Students are responsible for the appropriate promotion of their exhibition and are encouraged to schedule visits to the exhibition with undergraduate classes, faculty, and community members.

The Midway Review form is to be submitted by the student and their committee chair to the Graduate Coordinator following the review. Documentation of the work and the list of works should be submitted to the full committee, the Graduate Coordinator, and the Galleries Director.

Course requirements/recommendations: Art History, Directed Readings, Theory and Criticism, 600-level courses

in other departments. One or more sections of Art 710 in the Fall. One or more sections of Art 720 in the Spring. Independent studies are typically scheduled with Graduate Advisory Committee members though sometimes students work with Graduate Faculty outside of their committees on specific projects or areas of research.

SAMPLE THIRD YEAR EXPERIENCE

In addition to academic coursework, students should schedule two-three one-hour meetings with their full Graduate Advisory Committee each semester to discuss their thesis exhibition work, writing, and exhibition planning.

By the end of the Fall semester, students should submit their three required professional development applications and decision letters to the Graduate Coordinator and Committee Chairs. During the Fall semester or sooner, students identify and invite a Graduate College Representative to serve on their Graduate Advisory Committee and attend their thesis oral defense. It is recommended that students schedule a studio visit with the Graduate College Representative prior to the Thesis exhibition and that they share their written statement in advance of the defense.

In the Fall semester, students attend the Midway and Thesis Exhibition Planning meeting with the Graduate Coordinator and the Galleries Director. All gallery questions should be directed to the Galleries Director.

In the Spring Semester, students are required to create, curate and install a public solo thesis exhibition in the Donna Beam Gallery (unless another venue is approved) and to publish a 2000-word minimum thesis statement that will be on view in the gallery by the opening date of the exhibition.

Students are responsible for the appropriate promotion of their exhibition and are encouraged to schedule visits to the exhibition with undergraduate classes, faculty, and community members.

The 2,000-word minimum thesis exhibition statement, oral defense, and artist talk should discuss the intent and underlying conceptualization of the work. At the beginning of the Spring semester or sooner, the student should schedule the two-hour thesis defense with the full committee including the Graduate College Representative. The statement and defense should demonstrate an achievement of the following program learning outcomes:

1. Identify and articulate the ethics, motivations, and influences guiding artistic practice
2. Demonstrate a critical awareness of work within a broad and diverse context of contemporary culture, art, design, history and theory.
3. Demonstrate critical and analytical thinking skills

The objectives of the writing and talk should be discussed with the full Graduate Advisory committee during the Fall semester. A draft of the writing should be shared with the Graduate Advisory Committee for discussion at one of the committee meetings prior to thesis defense. Students should include images of their artwork and other references with image descriptions and citations as applicable.

If the student is not successful in their first oral defense, the student will be placed on academic probation via the Graduate College process. If the student is not successful after the second attempt, they may be separated from the program.

In addition to the required Graduate College forms, students should submit their complete Digital Thesis Packet to the Graduate Coordinator, full committee, and Galleries Director no later than two weeks following the close of the thesis exhibition.

Optional course requirements/recommendations: additional course in Art History, Directed Readings, Theory and Criticism, 600-level courses in other departments. Recommended: two or more sections of Art 720 in the Fall. One or more sections of Art 720 in the Spring. Required in the Spring: Art 777 with their Graduate Advisory Committee Chair. Art 720 should be taken with Graduate Advisory Committee members unless students are working with faculty members outside of their committee on thesis-related research and studio work.

Other Program Information

Students will be assigned studios in August and required to review and sign a contract outlining UNLV and Department policies and safety guidelines. Students will vacate studios by June 1 of their graduation semester.

*Summer Session Registration

Students who wish to use their full-tuition waiver should register for 3 credits each Summer. Summer course offerings include Art 710, Art 720, Graduate Internship, and 600-700 level courses in other departments.

Independent Study (Art 710/720)

Students must submit a proposal for independent study for instructor approval the semester prior. Please request the template from the Graduate faculty and the Graduate Coordinator.

Registration

Once registration is open and after students have connected and confirmed that faculty will work with them in Art 710/720 or another graduate level course in the department, they should email a screenshot of that email confirmation to the department administrative assistant and copy the instructor. Please include the following:

- 1) the screen shot of that correspondence that serves as permission to enroll
- 2) student NSHE ID number
- 3) the course number and section
- 4) a request to open enrollment

Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in the [graduate catalog](#).

Annual Review Procedures

Students are required to make adequate yearly progress towards degree completion.

The Graduate Coordinator oversees the student's progress in collaboration with graduate faculty in the first year, and the advisory committee oversees the progress of the individual student in coordination with the Graduate Coordinator in the second and third year of the program.

Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are required to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable goals for the year ahead. Reported student data is shared with students' graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students' strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner. Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data is also used to track metrics related to the annual productivity of all students.

Probation

If a student fails to successfully progress in their degree program, their department/school will recommend that the student be placed on probation by the Graduate College. Students on probation may be dismissed/separated from their program for failing to successfully meet the conditions of their probation by the deadline provided. Please see the [Probation and Separation](#) section of the [Graduate Catalog](#) for more information.

University Resources

The Graduate Academy: Innovative Leadership, Professional, and Career Development

The goal of the Graduate Academy is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as

graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

Alumni Engagement

With an alumni base 150,000+ strong, the UNLV Alumni Engagement offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the [commencement office](#) is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they apply for [graduation on time](#) and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College [Student Services Team](#) and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College [RPC Team](#).

Institutional Engagement and Experience

The vision of the [Institutional Engagement and Experience](#) is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's engagement mission: *to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment*. This Office is housed under the Division of Human Resources and also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The [DRC](#) is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

Graduate Appeals and Issue Resolution

The Office of Graduate Student Services at the Graduate College assists graduate and professional students with addressing concerns and overcoming personal, academic, or financial challenges that might hinder their ability to be successful in their program. The office also provides information and student-centered issue-resolution services and offers guidance, information, and assistance when regular channels have failed to provide graduate students with the information they need to solve problems. Please see website for more information: <https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/appeals-issue-resolution>

UNLV Global and the Office of International Student and Scholar Compliance

[International Student and Scholar Compliance \(ISSC\)](#) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

The Care Center

The [Care Center](#) is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

The Intersection

The Intersection is a one-stop resource for UNLV's highly diverse student body — a comprehensive multicultural center grounded in the academic life of our students. As an intersecting campus resource, the Intersection helps ensure students, particularly first-generation and students of color, successfully navigate their academic careers. Here, all members of campus can discuss their differences, discover their similarities, and build a shared sense of belonging.

UNLV Libraries

UNLV Libraries has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The Graduate & Professional Student Association serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141 and Gateway Building PDAC Room. The facility is a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities

The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the *UNLV Student Code of Conduct* by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

Military and Veteran Services Center

The Military and Veteran Service Center is staffed with veterans and veteran education benefits-experienced staff to assist more than 1,800 veterans, dependents, active-duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists attending UNLV. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

Writing Center

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the Online Writing Lab (OWL) page.

University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the [Graduate Student Handbook](#), and following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)
- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, based on sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Sposito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the online reporting form at [Title IX Reporting Form](#), by email at titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu, by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 451062, Las Vegas, NV, 89154-1062, or in person at Frank and Estella Beam Hall (BEH), Room 555.

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Catalog](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Degree Progression Policies & Procedures](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures. *Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.*

Handbook Information

Last revised	Revised by	Changes summary
April 2019	Wendy Kveck	Updated information
July 2019	Wendy Kveck	Edits for clarity