

Welcome to the University of Delaware's Master of Fine Arts Program. This handbook is designed to begin to answer some of the practical and programmatic questions you might have as a first-year MFA student. It is not exhaustive or complete, however, so please keep that in mind and give suggestions to your advisors so that we can continue to improve it.

Speaking of advisors.....who are your advisors and what should they be doing?

Graduate Students are assigned three advisors each semester who meet with them for a recommended hour every two weeks. These visits are intended to give varied viewpoints on the student's work and accomplishments and to make sure that, while there is a private studio practice, the student has consistent contact with the faculty. This process is conceived as an informal dialogue between working artists, and might consist of encouragement to pursue certain direction but does not result in assignments or structured requirements. The independent studio grade makes up 9 of the 15 credits that we require from our MFA students each semester, and consists of a single grade determined by each student's three advisors, with input from the graduate faculty as a whole, after the reviews that take place at the end of each semester.

It is important that you act to stay in contact with your assigned advisors and that you work to direct your education to get the dialogue that you need. You can, and should, take advantage of the feedback of professors who are not your advisors by setting up studio visits or inviting them to group critiques where your work will be discussed.

Second years get to select their advisors (dependent upon availability) and the advising of first years is divided according to the decisions of the graduate faculty.

Program Focus and Curriculum

The focus of the program is on the development of a solid and sustainable studio practice. It is the belief of the graduate faculty that strong work and active participation in the local and global discussion of creative activity is the key to succeeding in the highly subjective field of art-making and we work to keep a high-level discussion about what constitutes a powerful artistic practice and product. What constitutes success in the creative field, and particularly the field of fine art, is difficult to ascertain. We accept students on the premise that they want to build a studio practice and work to realize their personal visions.

The MFA curriculum consists of three distinct yet interrelated parts of the graduate experience and education. Our program is divided between research, practice, and discourse. Students are asked to take academic classes to encourage them to develop a language with which to discuss what they are doing; they are asked to keep up a dedicated studio practice where they are pushed to fully engage their interests; and they come together for critiques to put the language they are learning to use and to direct it towards the things they have produced. As a studio program the structure determined by the graduate faculty is oriented toward as much personal time in the studio as possible, with one-on-one discussions and supplemental dialogue with visiting artists.

What about dialogue and expectations

As a studio program we look for a dedicated commitment to the development and expansion of whatever line of research each artist has chosen to pursue. We work to support a variety of practices, from devoted attention to a particular medium or method, to more conceptual and dematerialized practices. The program does not commit to certain way of working but expects that the graduate students pursue their thinking—whether it is narrative picture-making, material investigation, or the global economy—with expansive research that can be demonstrated in studio visits (what type of research into an idea is being done), and in group discussion (how can one tie their research and work together). The thesis show is intended to reflect the development of each artist's work over their two years in graduate school and should suggest a set of investigations that are sustainable after graduate school.

We understand that creative practices will take on different forms, but we expect a consistent and dedicated pursuit of your personal work. We do not set specific required studio hours, but if you need something in the realm of numbers, the College Art Association determined that each credit of studio practice would equal three hours of work a week—that would bring your 9 studio credits to 27 hours a week in the studio, which, frankly, would be pretty low for any artist deeply engaged in their research.

The graduate program works to create artists who have a highly developed and sustainable studio practice upon leaving the University. The ability to independently research ideas, critically engage with important discussion within one's field, and to grow conceptually is essential for building a creative practice.

We have two classes developed within the department for first year graduate students that, in a seminar environment, introduce methods of research and the room to discuss and debate the validity of the proposed ideas. During the third semester of the MFA program we ask graduate students to look for a class

outside of the department to fulfill the last of their academic credit requirements, and also to make use of the University as a site from which to expand their thinking and personal research.

Our graduates take a group critique class each of their four semesters in the MFA program. This discussion brings the private studio practices of each graduate student into the public sphere so that they can begin to understand how their work is being received by those who are not engaged in its making. The program at Delaware brings together all the graduates, who engage in a variety of technical and conceptual practices, so that each student's work might receive the broadest range of feedback and to bring the discussion as close as possible, within the academic environment, to that of the "Art World" or world in general where works are discussed for the power they have as art rather than their fulfillment of some requirements of media.

Students are asked to put their knowledge to use by working to create a critical dialogue in group critiques and individual studio visits over the course of the two year program, and finally to show, by the end of their two years, that they can articulate a sustainable practice that demonstrates both clear direction in research and the possibility for future expansion and development.

REVIEWS

The graduate curriculum is anchored by four reviews that happen at the end of each of the semesters during the two-year length of the graduate program. These individual reviews include all of the graduate faculty engaging with each MFA student's work over the course of 30 to 45 minutes and culminate with feedback and a group recommendation of pass, pass with warning, or probation. If the student is put on probation he or she has a semester to change their effort according to the recommendations of the graduate faculty. Our G.T.A.-ships and Block Tuition Grants are merit-based and may be affected if a student in given warning or probation. Final second year reviews take place at the MFA thesis exhibition.

THESIS

For the written thesis we ask that our graduate students are able to describe, in depth and detail, their work and practice; and that they are able to place what they do within the context of art and cultural history as well as within a set of ideas that are foundational to their work. The thesis should demonstrate that the graduating student is able to communicate and connect the influences that frame what they do, and to use those connections to create a dialogue around their work that allows them to become self-critical and demanding of the work

they produce, as well as giving them the resources to present their work for exhibitions, grants, and other professional opportunities.

We conceive of the MFA thesis as a “support paper” that attempts to frame and defend the work that culminates in the thesis show at the end of the second year. The support paper demands many of the same things as a traditional thesis but with less writing (12-15 written pages plus documentation of work), as it constitutes one half of the degree requirement. The other half being the actual work that the MFA student has made during their time in school.

You must build a “Thesis Committee” by the beginning of your last semester. The committee can, but does not have to, be comprised of your current advisors. It should include a “lead reader” plus two other readers who should help direct you in the development of your support paper. A first draft is due the day before Spring Break. Your readers should get suggestions for revision back to you during the week following Spring Break—giving you adequate time to revise your final draft which must be handed in by May 15th.

In order to receive your diploma, you must submit an “application for advanced degrees” to the University’s Office of Graduate Studies by February 18. You can download the application from their website. <http://www.udel.edu/gradoffice>

Studio Areas and Responsibilities

First-year graduate students may move into their studios in early August. Second-year students should vacate their studios by the end of July with everything returned to “move in” conditions. All graduate students are allowed, and encouraged, to be in their studios over the summer and winter breaks.

Your studios are the property of the University of Delaware and, while it is *not* encouraged, may be entered by employees of the University of Delaware. Your studio is given to you with the understanding that it will be used as a space to conduct your M.F.A. research. Though it is understood that creative research can be extremely broad we ask that you respect the space allocated to you; that you do nothing to the structure that cannot be returned to its previous condition; that you do not bring pets into your space; and that your space not be treated as a residence—which is simply to say that you should take advantage of the studios to make work.

Graduate students are required to contribute ten hours a week to general upkeep and studio maintenance; the particular details of these expectations will be outlined by graduate faculty in charge of the various areas.

All graduate students with studios in the 3D areas (sculpture and ceramics) are required to get their certification on the forklift. This should be done within the

first couple weeks of school and requires a scintillating class taken through the facilities department. Please contact our studio technician for details.

Resources

Desks, chairs, and killer abandoned laser discs (among other things) can be found for FREE at Facilities. There is also a most useful dumpsite behind the Studio Arts Building.

Research into incredibly arcane subjects can be done in Morris Library. Be sure to check out the Special Collections and become familiar with the electronic databases. Especially JStor, which will allow you to find all of those killer obscure Deleuze articles that have been eluding your grasp.....

Questions about software and computer programs can and should be taken to The Present. Look for them online or visit them in person. They have thousands of online tutorials that UD faculty and students can use for free. <http://www.udel.edu/present/>

Policies

-The University of Delaware's policy on alcohol in the Art Department buildings.

The University policy prohibits the use of alcohol as follows: The possession, use, consumption, manufacture, sale, or distribution of alcohol in any University building, facility, or property except in the confines of a student's own residence hall room if the student is 21 years of age.

The use of your studio as a graduate student is a privilege. Abuse of the University alcohol policy can lead to a student being denied the use of their studio.

-MFA Graduate Student Funding Policy

The MFA Degree at the University of Delaware is usually a two-year program. Funding is awarded to applicants and continuing students on a competitive basis.

1. Incoming students are awarded funding on the following qualifications:
 - a. Quality of artistic work, artist statement
 - b. Letters of recommendation
 - c. Transcripts
 - d. Departmental priorities (including teaching and studio coordination)
 - e. Recommendation of the Graduate Faculty and Coordinator
2. Continuing second year students are awarded funding on the following

qualifications:

- a. Performance in the first year of the MFA Program
 - 1) Quality of artistic development and vision
 - 2) Successful completion of the 30-hour review
 - 3) Teaching evaluations when applicable
- b. Recommendation of the Graduate Faculty and Coordinator
- c. Departmental priorities (including teaching and studio coordination)
- d. Adherence to University, Department and studio policies

3. The Department does not award Funding to students who do not complete the program in the initial two years.

-Assignment of Teaching for Summer and Winter-session Classes

In the attempt to help each of our graduate students with the opportunity for funding and teaching experience we work to follow these basic guidelines for the assignment of Winter and Summer classes:

- Faculty have first choice teaching classes
- Second Year MFA's (in order from those who have received the least to the most previous funding) have first dibs to teach Winter-session classes.
- First year MFA's (again, in order, from those who have received the least to the most previous funding) have first dibs to teach Summer classes.

You need to let me know, as soon as possible during the year, if you are interested in additional teaching, so that we can compile a list and distribute any available classes accordingly.

-Contact Policies

You should try to follow a basic chain of contact so that we do not unnecessarily double up on information or on people's time. Most problems or other concerns should be able to be solved with your Advisors or Area Coordinators. If there are programmatic issues that cannot be solved with your Advisors then you should contact the Graduate Coordinator who will bring any broader departmental concerns to the Chair as needed.

Paperwork and financial issues need to be directed to Milene Johnson, the Assistant to the Chair.

We hope that this simple chain of communication (Advisors/Area Coordinators, Graduate Coordinator, Chair) will make it as easy as possible to get the information and help that you need.

-Basic Office Policies

Office Hours

The office is open from 8:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The office is covered by regular salaried or professional staff or a graduate student over the lunch hour.

No new work or requests will be processed after 4:00 p.m. in any one given day. The time from 4:00 p.m. till 4:30 p.m., when Angela leaves for the day, will be set aside for completing the work of the day, and clearing the desk of confidential materials.

Mail and UPS Deliveries

Campus mail is picked up and delivered to the art office around 10:30 a.m. every day. Again, we will be having one mail pick-up per day this year. UPS shipments are usually received between 12:00 and 1:00 p.m. each day. Please check your mailbox on a daily basis. The outgoing mailbox is located outside of my office on the bookshelf. If you are mailing a package or more than 10 first class (#10) envelopes at one time, the office must be informed of this for budgetary reasons.

Should you be expecting a large package, please check the office regularly to see if it has come in and remove it from the mailbox area as soon as it arrives. **We cannot be responsible for your packages, and we do not have the space to house large packages for more than 24 hours.**

Should you miss the morning mail pick-up, there is a large white mailbox located on the east side of Old College where you can place your outgoing mail. It will be picked up by the University courier at approximately 3:30 p.m. every day.

Photo Copying

The department copy machine is located near the mailboxes and is available only for small copying jobs. **No more than 20 copies are permitted per original and no more than two originals may be copied. Everyone has a security code.** Angela will give you your security code if you do not know it. Copies will be billed back to your budget.

Any photocopying beyond what is stated above should be taken to the Trabant University Center to the GCC copy center, located downstairs. You may also send it to the central GCC location by campus mail. Forms for this service are located in the art office near the mailboxes. Copies are usually ready at Trabant within 15 minutes to an hour, depending on the size of the job. Prior planning can make this a very easy process.