

Master of Fine Arts Program Handbook
2023-2024

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Useful Links:

UMass Graduate School
<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/>

Enrollment, registration, education records, degree requirements, etc
<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/policies/handbook>

University Registrar Frequently Asked Questions
<https://www.umass.edu/registrar/faq>

MFA PROGRAM IN ART

INTRODUCTION

The University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass Amherst) is the flagship campus of the University of Massachusetts system and part of the Five College consortium.

The MFA program fosters a transformative, interdisciplinary education for makers and scholars who aspire to explore ideas that are hospitable for the well-being of individuals, communities and the planet. Our faculty encourage you to engage in clearly articulated, specific contexts so that your work will find relevance in the world. In our supportive yet challenging community of makers and thinkers, we collectively engage in art practice as an essential human endeavor, questioning and exploring what it means to be an artist and how to be in our times.

The program is well positioned for you to benefit from the academic excellence UMass and the Five College consortium offer. You are encouraged to take courses in other colleges, departments and programs that deepen your research interests. The three-year MFA program also offers a comprehensive overview of teaching art in higher education settings, an introduction to critical pedagogy, and a solid teaching experience.

MISSION STATEMENT

To imagine is to think otherwise. The department of art is committed to fostering a transformative, interdisciplinary education for learners who aspire to explore ideas that are hospitable for the well-being of individuals, communities and the planet. As we evolve to address the demands and opportunities of current and future creative practices, we will continue to use the invaluable experience gained over time to refine our Undergraduate and Graduate programs.

Art's inherent capacities to generate multiple perspectives and interpretations allows for a nuanced understanding of our increasingly complex world. We aim to nurture self-care, care of others and cultivate empathy, so that we can engage with communities both within our department and beyond. Through deep listening and close looking we seek to expand our perceptual capacities; creating new forms of making, being, and thinking towards sustainable practices in art and design. We believe in art's potential to offer alternative modes of thinking, representations, and models, as well as to embody and enact our aspirations.

Art is Made in Context. We will encourage you to situate your practices and your own creative identities within historical, theoretical, conceptual, geographic and institutional frameworks. We are fortunate to be a part of a tier one research university, enabling collaboration between artists and experts in other fields of inquiry. As such, we ask you to engage in a process of rich

qualitative research and reflection to locate the unseen work in the future, to hold collective ownership of our endeavors, and to envision and craft inclusive and equitable worlds for following generations.

VALUES

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We insist upon building and sustaining an equitable community of members that support each other. Of equal importance we support diverse learning and physical abilities, as well as cultivating divergent thinking and making. Please see our detailed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and accessibility statements below for more information.

Material and Craft

We value the unique learning opportunities that material engagement offers. We take our ideas, manifest them through our materials, and when those materials resist us in myriad ways, new ideas emerge. Skill-building is an important element for critical thinking *through* materials.

Interdisciplinarity

We encourage investigating/exploration of diverse materials and ideas, questioning and analyzing the effect these have on the production of meaning.

Sustainable Practices

We strive to build and encourage an awareness of the impact of materials on the environment by sourcing materials as ethically as is practically as possible. Sustainable practices as a value refers to creating awareness about working sustainably. For example, understanding where materials come from, the labor practices that enable their availability, the impact materials have on bodies and ecosystems, and also an understanding of what happens to these materials when projects are no longer of value and they end up in a landfill. This becomes a part of how and what we teach.

Community Building

We work towards building collective learning communities where inclusivity, open-mindedness, tolerance, respect, self-care and care of others is valued.

Collaboration:

We are committed to helping you build an awareness of the agency you have as collaborative cultural producers. For example, you have opportunities to apply for the UMass Civic Engagement and Service-Learning (CESL), by engaging in intermediate and advanced level community art and design projects in partnership with local organizations, and the option to pursue a Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Certificate alongside your creative studies. These opportunities prepare you for lives of active engagement with communities and partners on and off campus.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, and INCLUSION STATEMENT

We strive to create learning spaces that affirm the dignity of **all** people. We commit to continuously educating ourselves and you about the privileges and oppressions that people are subjected to, based on their race, class, age, cognitive and physical abilities, gender expression, nationality and religion. Honoring the voice of Audre Lorde in her essay “The Transformation of Silence into Action,” we support you and, remind ourselves, to have the courage to move from *silence into action*. We recognize that members of our community might experience rage, anxiety and grief that come from present day and ancestral trauma and we commit to holding space as allies and anti-racist educators. We commit to critical teaching that aims to understand the historical forces, root causes and conditions that make our present moment, personal experiences and worldviews possible. We commit to being vigilant about our biases as we question dominant narratives, ways of seeing and ways of being.

Actions

Student Recruitment and Wellbeing

- Actively participate in ongoing efforts of the university to increase the recruitment and retention of first-generation students, BIPOC students, students from racially concentrated areas of poverty
- Actively accommodate disabled students in our classes by developing a more proactive relationship with disability services.
- Connect students with the Center for Multicultural Advancement and Student Success (CMASS) for additional application, mentoring and support services.
- We will join our discipline’s diversity mentoring and recruitment programs and feature diversity resources and findings on our website.
- Work with Financial Aid to advocate for scholarships for students who want to study fine arts.

Hiring

- We will continue to review faculty and staff hiring practices so that they are aligned with our values for recruiting and retaining.
- We will actively seek opportunities to promote diverse faculty and graduate students for university awards, scholarships, and other forms of recognition.

Curriculum

- Support the research required of graduate students and faculty in order to teach new curricula.
- We will teach from the perspective that there are many art worlds, not one.

Engagement / Programming

- Support student-initiated activities that invite participation from BIPOC
- Intercultural competency training for faculty, staff, and students (link to [STRIDE](#) and LEED professional trainings)

Evaluation Accountability

- We commit to regular reviews of our program, reporting on faculty and student diversity within the university at large and, in comparison with similar programs in peer institutions.
- We acknowledge that our education system is fraught with inherent biases and inequalities. There is much unlearning to do.
- Collaborate with the office of Data and Reporting Research to collect data that accurately represents the demographics served by UMass Amherst Department of Studio Arts.

FACULTY

Our diverse makers and scholars bring a range of expertise and capacities to our programs. We consider ourselves to be both teachers and learners who cultivate openness, creative research, flexibility, and critical engagement, with an emphasis on situating our values within a social context. We prioritize each student's needs and challenges, keeping our classes small to engage in discussions, activities and critiques. We support and encourage peer mentoring and collaboration amongst ourselves and the student body.

VISITING ARTISTS and PRACTITIONERS SERIES

We recognize that creative practices are informed by research. As a tier 1 research university we emphasize the synergies among the many and rich fields of inquiry within the Five College Consortium and the importance of making and research working together as key components of creative practice.

Our Visiting Artists, Curators, and Practitioners program offers a vibrant series of lectures and studio visits. We are committed to inviting practitioners who are addressing relevant and pressing societal concerns. In addition, you are invited to attend and participate in the visiting artist series offered through the Five Colleges (Smith, Amherst, Mount Holyoke and Hampshire Colleges). You also have access to a wealth of visiting scholars whose research is aligned with your own.

Each semester, the Visiting Artist Program invites approximately three artists to campus to conduct studio visits with graduate students and lecture about their practice. These visits include longer term, (3-5 days) and short term, (1-2 days). In addition to the Art Department Visiting Artist series, the University Museum of Contemporary Art, as part of their exhibition programming, also invites artists to campus for lectures and critiques with graduate students.

Recent visitors include: American Artist, Katherine Behar, Eve Biddle, Lisa Dent, Craig Drennen, Eric Gottesman, Art Jones, Chris Klapper and Patrick Gallagher, Patrick Jacobs, Sharon Loudon, Larry Ossei-Mensah, Shreshta Rit Premath, Seph Rodney, Abigail Satinsky + Anthony Romero, Joanna Tam, Helen Toomer, Didier Williams, Martha Wilson, et al.

FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT

The Department of Art maintains facilities in three separate buildings: The Studio Arts Building (SAB), the Bromery Center and Clark Hall, where a number of graduate studios are located. The Department provides extensive facilities in Studio Arts: Foundations and Art Education classrooms, Mac and PC computer labs with large scanners, digital print center, studios in animation, analog and digital photography, printmaking, painting, drawing, wood, clay, metals and plaster, as well as a new CNC router and laser cutter. Shops and labs are maintained by highly trained technical staff.

Located in the basement of SAB, the equipment cage houses analog and digital cameras, tripods, audio equipment, etc., which you can borrow for a specified timeframe. The hours are posted on the door.

Graduate studios are located in the Studio Arts Building and Clark Hall. Studios are assigned to you based on material and space needs, as well as seniority in the program.

You must not alter existing architectural elements in the studios or public 'exhibition' spaces. Comprehensive clean-up is required before moving out of a studio. Non-UMass activities are not allowed on the property. Alcoholic beverages are not allowed in the buildings and UMass is a smoke-free campus.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Attendance at the Environmental Health and Safety training is mandatory in order to procure a studio in SAB or Clark Hall. You must observe all safety standards and procedures in the use of tools, materials, and equipment, including the CNC router and laser cutter.

The following link provides detailed information on roles and responsibility for safety, general studio practices, management and handling of hazardous materials and waste, proper PPE,

safety equipment, incident and injury reporting protocols, etc _

https://www.umass.edu/art/sites/default/files/assets/art/art_safety_presentation.pdf

STUDIO POLICY and CONTRACT

You are required to read the policy and sign the contract in order to procure a studio.

https://www.umass.edu/art/sites/default/files/assets/art/grad_studio_contract.pdf

From the contract: "... neither the Department nor the University is responsible for damage to or the loss or theft of items in your studio, and you understand further that your studio is subject to sight inspection at any time. You further understand and agree that any violation of a fire, environmental health, or general safety-related provision in this agreement or University guidelines may result in loss of access to all studio space until conditions are remedied. Decisions regarding the assignment of studio space and, if warranted, the suspension of privileges and assessment of fines for violations of this Agreement are made by a committee consisting of the Department Chair, the Graduate Program Director for Studio Arts, and the Building Manager."

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS

The University of Massachusetts campus boasts a total of five on-campus galleries, some of which offer direct experience in exhibiting your own work and all of which offer opportunities to view contemporary art:

[University Museum of Contemporary Art](#), Director, Loretta Yarlow

[Herter Art Gallery](#), Director, Nima Nikakhlagh

[Student Union Gallery](#), Director, Brendan McCauley

[Hampden Gallery](#), Interim Director, Sally Curcio

[Augusta Savage Gallery](#), Director, Terry Jenoure

There are museums and galleries at each of Five Colleges: the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College, the Smith College Museum of Art, the Mount Holyoke College Museum of Art, and Gallery at Hampshire College Art Gallery and Liebling Center for Film, Photography and Video at Hampshire College.

Along with the UMCA, the foregoing are members of [Museums10](#), a collaborative of ten museums that inspire, engage, and enrich their communities through shared experiences of art, literature, history, and the natural world. Other members include the Beneski Museum of Natural History, the Emily Dickinson Museum, the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Historic Deerfield, and the Yiddish Book Center.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art is interdisciplinary and supports and encourages working across all disciplines. The emphasis in the program is developing work through extensive critique, classes in theory and practice, and intensive studio practice.

The Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art program requires a 60-credit, three-year on-campus residency. This includes an 18-credit Masters' Thesis, (during the final year), Graduate Seminar, Teaching Workshop/Graduate Seminar in Art Education, Electives in studio, or art history/theory/criticism, or Independent Study. You are encouraged to devise your own plan of study, maximizing the opportunities of studying at a major Research University. You are further encouraged to take classes within the four liberal arts colleges located within the area: Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke, and Smith.

Incoming students enroll in the fall; there is no rolling admission.

DISCIPLINES

Although you are not admitted into a discrete discipline, the Art Department is home to the following areas of study.

Animation

The Animation discipline is tailored to meet the interest and self-directed needs of the individual student, and by its very nature, is cross-disciplinary. Courses in animation emphasize contemporary production processes and principles of animation that may be applied within traditional 2-D stop frame and 3-D digital time-based narrative animation. An emphasis on experimental applications is central to the pursuit of animation at the graduate level.

Ceramics

The Ceramics discipline is structured so that you participate in seminars and work independently in consultation with faculty until the enter thesis year. Knowledge of, and expertise in, all areas of traditional and contemporary ceramic concepts is stressed.

Drawing

In the 21st Century, drawing has taken center-stage as a means of communication and mode of expression, no longer second citizen to other material forms of art making. The immediacy of drawing, combined with its broader conceptual definitions, define drawing as an integral part of our graduate curriculum.

Integrative and Interactive Design

The discipline of design integrates visual art, creative technology, whole systems-thinking and problem solving, across various media, to prepare the next generation of forward-thinking creatives. In design studio courses, you can create posters, books, graphic identities, typography, infographics, products, mobile app concepts, websites and more. Focus is placed on experimentation and critical engagement with contemporary culture, emphasizing topics core

to design, such as: accessibility, equity, and sustainability. Coursework focuses on the aesthetic, technical, and intellectual skills necessary to pursue a design practice and career. You will undertake real world assignments in an internship and/or service-learning based course, honing your sense of art production and design in everyday contexts.

Intermedia

This discipline encompasses the overlapping areas of analogue and digital photography, video, performance, and installation engaging the methods and practices of captured image making using both digital and analogue formats. With the understanding that the computer itself is a meta-medium, in more advanced courses you are encouraged to incorporate different media into your projects. Theoretical and historical texts are studied in order to frame digital space as a means to an end rather than end in itself. Coursework focuses on a strong foundation of technical skills in relation to the history and theory of intermedia. You are encouraged to investigate concepts of time, space, and narrative within documentary and experimental practices.

Painting

The painting discipline offers you the opportunity to develop your creative skills and visual vocabulary in the painting medium, both traditionally and experimentally. Painting will be investigated on familiar and highly unfamiliar surfaces and in spaces both two and three dimensional. Emphasis is placed on both independent development of the personal, and larger critical frameworks within the discipline.

Printmaking

This discipline encourages experimentation and testing of the limits of both traditional and digital printmaking practices in relation to the realization of individual ideas and interests. You are exposed to a wide range of techniques and approaches to the multiple with an emphasis on strategies for creating unique, edition, and hybrid prints. Facilities and instruction are available in intaglio, stone, offset, and plate lithography, digital processes, silkscreen, relief, monotype and book arts. Archival large format pigment printing and oversize scanning facilities are also available.

Sculpture

The sculpture discipline is based on your self-directed needs. Every effort is made to provide and provoke inquiry in this field, including traditional media exploration of plaster and wood, as well as branching out into the realms of video and installation. As in most of our disciplines, Sculpture and Intermedia intersect and these confluence points are encouraged and embraced. Facilities in the Sculpture discipline include plaster, wood, mold-making, and metals. Recent additions to the facilities include a CNC router and Laser Cutter.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Art 505 Visiting Artists Lecture Series (1 Credit) Each semester, the Department of Art offers a series of lectures by nationally recognized artists, scholars, curators, critics, gallerists, and writers. In addition to the noontime public lectures, the guest speakers also conduct studio visits. Often based on your recommendations, the research and practice of the guests are pertinent to your own interests. Organized by the Visiting Artist Committee, which includes graduate student representatives, the lecture series broadens and deepens contemporary discourse in art practice and theory.

ART 671 WRITING SEMINAR (3 Credits) This required seminar will examine the elements of the essay form to prepare for the written component of your MFA thesis. The course will take you through the stages of researching and writing a thesis: defining the field of research, formulating a thesis question, developing a bibliography, detailing artistic process, organizing material, revising, and preparing a scholarly manuscript. The class will review research and style components of a well-constructed thesis text, making use of exemplary papers from past years. The course will also address thesis writing on an individual basis through both one-on-one consultations with the instructor and group work in class. You are encouraged to utilize the [Writing Center](#).

Throughout the semester, you will document your process using text, image, video, audio, etc. in your process journals. This material will be incorporated into your written thesis. The final product of the course is a complete (if early) *draft* of the thesis that includes the following components: abstract, thesis statement, artistic influence, project statement, process/artistic research, and an annotated bibliography.

Art 691A PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (3 Credits) This course will offer a holistic view of life after an MFA. It is divided into five main topics, each exploring an aspect of post-MFA life: Making Art/Making Community; Understanding Funding Ecosystems; Understanding the Exhibition Complex; Artistic Labor; and Artistic Research. In addition to learning necessary skills that one will likely have to acquire to survive as an artist, including how to craft cover letters, CV's, artist statements, mock grant and project proposals for exhibitions and residencies, we recognize that it is equally important to introduce the complex mechanisms that constitute the 'art world' in an effort to demystify it. Therefore we will focus on important practices, factors, and entities that are relevant to supporting emerging artists in navigating multiple art worlds and sustaining careers in the arts. The course will also address various professional capacities that artists may assume, such as educator, curator, writer, or organizer.

ART 795-01 GRADUATE SEMINAR (3 Credits) Required for all first- and second-year MFA candidates, the course is intended to serve multiple functions: a platform for developing and sharing ideas, concepts, and studio practice through reading, writing, discussion, on-going group critique; for engaging select issues in contemporary art through attending (invited) lectures in the Department and Five Colleges / Museums.

Course objectives include:

- To provide a forum for discussion of your work
- To deepen and broaden your understanding of art
- To introduce a range of contemporary critical paradigms
- To situate and contextualize your practice by examining and clarifying systems of understanding that inform your practice
- To engage in critical dialogues and learn how ideas, theories, and institutional framework inform the practice of art
- To learn about and assist your peers' studio practice and research interests
- To become part of a community of practicing artists

SAMPLE COURSE SCHEDULE

1st Year	Course	# of credits
Fall	Art 795C Graduate Seminar/ MFA Critiques	3
	Art 697W Teaching Workshop/ Art 792L Graduate Seminar in Art Education	3
	Elective studio, or history/theory/criticism, or Independent Study	3
	Art 505 Visiting Artists Lecture Series	1
		10 credits
Spring	Art 795C Graduate Seminar/ MFA Critiques	3
	Elective studio, or history/theory/criticism, or Independent Study	6
	Art 505 Visiting Artists Lecture Series	1
		10 credits
2nd Year		
Fall	Art 795C Graduate Seminar/ MFA Critiques	3
	Art 691A Professional Practice Seminar (offered every 2nd year) When not offered substitute with an elective.	3
	Elective studio, or history/theory/criticism, or Independent Study	3
	Art 505 Visiting Artists Lecture Series	1
		10 credits
Spring	Art 795C Graduate Seminar/ MFA Critiques	3
	Art 671 Writing Seminar	3

	Elective studio, or history/theory/criticism, or Independent Study	3
	Art 505 Visiting Artists Lecture Series	1
		10 credits
3rd Year		
Fall	Masters' Thesis 799	9
	Art 505 Visiting Artists Lecture Series	1
		10 credits
Spring	Masters' Thesis 799	9
	Art 505 Visiting Artists Lecture Series	1
		10 credits
	TOTAL CREDITS	60

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION:

Independent study credits cannot exceed **12**. Your electives/ art history/theory/criticism requirements **must be at the graduate level** and preferably taken during the first of second year. Outside the Art Department, but within the University, courses **must be at the 400-level**. At the four other colleges: Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke, and Smith, courses must be at the 300-level and approved by the Graduate Program Director. (see page 16-17 for instructions on how to sign up for one of these courses).

COURSE REGISTRATION

*It is important that you sign up for at least 6 credits by the end of the add/drop period in September to avoid delays in financial aid and health insurance. **Please note that you must enroll at least 9 credits in order to maintain full time status.***

Art Department Courses

Prior to your arrival on campus (if possible), register for Art 795C Graduate Seminar/Critique (3 credits) and the Art 697W Teaching Workshop/Art 792L Graduate Seminar in Art Education (3 credits), as both are required for the first semester in the first year. Then sign up for another graduate level course in either the Department of Art or in another department. However, you may find it necessary to complete the registration after your arrival on campus, if you wish to enroll in an Independent Study.

Independent Studies

In your first semester in the fall, you may, but are not expected, to undertake an Independent Study.

How it works:

1. Identify a sponsoring faculty and discuss your proposed studies.
2. Submit a written outline of your plan with the sponsoring faculty and revise it after faculty feedback. The plan is akin to a course syllabus, including detailed weekly plan of action, materials, reading list (if applicable), etc.
3. Fill out the independent study form (available in SAB 218 or [online](#)), and get it approved by obtaining signatures from the sponsoring faculty and the Graduate Program Director. **Submit to staff in SAB 218 and they will then enroll your Independent study on Spire on your behalf.** The course numbers Art 696 and Art 796 are for independent studies.

You can request a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 3 credits each semester. A typical workload for a 3 credit Independent Study is about 10 hours of work per week.

UMass courses

You may sign up for graduate level courses within Studio Art (500 and above) or other departments throughout the University (400 level and above, taught by a member of graduate faculty). Please note that graduate level *studio art* courses meet with undergraduates at the same time. If you wish to learn new materials and techniques, you might want to consider taking such courses. Faculty will expect you to complete advanced work at graduate level.

Five College courses

You will have to contact the faculty and get approval for graduate level study. The faculty has to agree to give you additional work for graduate level credit, and inform the Graduate Program

Director and Kim Graves, Department Administrator, in writing of their approval. At the end of the semester, the faculty must also provide a written memo to the Graduate Program Director and Kim Graves, Department Administrator, acknowledging the completion of your graduate level work. This will be forwarded to the Graduate School by the Graduate Program Director, as a part of your degree eligibility for your MFA.

The memo must include:

- Course title
- number of credits
- semester of attendance
- brief description of your completed work, and the scope of involvement and/or the nature of your contribution in class
- grade

Please feel free to contact Susan Jahoda or Kim Graves if you have any questions about the above. See this page for more information.

<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/policies/handbook/enrollment>

REVIEWS AND ACADEMIC STANDING

During the first and second years of study, before approval for beginning the Master's thesis, you are reviewed by the graduate faculty as a whole. These reviews or 'critiques' occur at the midpoint and end of the fall and spring semesters. The duration of the mid-terms is forty-five minutes per person and the final critiques are one hour.

Criteria for gauging progress and success differ slightly for 1st and 2nd year review.

1st Year Review:

- demonstrated ability to develop clear questions and strategies leading to projects that reflect conceptual cohesiveness.
- demonstrated ability to engage in an open dialog in response to faculty member's review questions.
- demonstration of sufficient experimentation (materials and conditions of presentation), as well as research, in order to develop work within stated intentions.

2nd year Review:

- demonstrated ability/promise to create a project for a Thesis Exhibition that reflects conceptual cohesiveness, creativity and a contribution to the field.
- demonstrated ability in response to faculty member's review questions to articulate, verbally and in writing, what concepts are informing the project.

- demonstrated ability to integrate research within stated intentions, including synthesis of technical, aesthetic, historical, and conceptual knowledge.

Grades and program reviews determine your standing and advancement to the thesis year. You must receive a 'B' or higher in all courses leading towards the completion of the degree. On the basis of two or more 'C' or lower grades, the faculty may recommend withdrawal. On the basis of a poor review, the faculty may recommend, in writing, that you be placed on probation. On the basis of two semesters of poor reviews, or following a second semester of work following the probation that is not of appropriate quality, volume or substance, the faculty may recommend withdrawal. If you are on probation, **the faculty may withhold the assistantship during the probationary period.** The standards for all recommendations, whether to pass reviews or advance to thesis, are determined by the professional and academic judgements of the faculty as a whole and will be delivered formally in writing.

MASTERS THESIS & EXHIBITION

The Graduate Program Director will approve the decision that you are ready to embark upon your thesis in writing. The Master's Thesis will occupy your last two semesters and is a three-part process that includes:

- a solo exhibition
- a written thesis paper
- an oral defense.

There is a separate departmental document (updated every academic year) with specific information and dates for completing the MFA thesis project.

See:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wUqz1x5umb6u3LePICtZzhq1OGQyOgVKLmTQwv3rVzs/edit>

Also see:

- Checklist of Requirements to Graduate:

<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/form/masters-degree-checklist-requirements-graduate>

- Thesis Guidelines:

<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/form/guidelines-thesis-and-dissertation>

ADVISING

In your first semester, you are assigned a faculty advisor. You are strongly encouraged to meet with your advisor at least twice per semester to seek advice on the following:

- Consultation on course selections and independent studies options
- Resources: people, facilities, funding
- Studio practice, research, references
- For third year: thesis advisor
- Professional practice, development

After the first year, you may choose to work with an advisor whose research is more closely aligned with yours. Please request this change through the Graduate Program Director.

STUDIO VISITS

You are strongly encouraged to invite faculty for studio visits throughout the entire three-year program. Forming your thesis committee may also depend on the nature and experience of working with faculty over the first two years. Additionally, you may also consider inviting faculty from outside the art department, if their area of expertise is relevant to your practice and projects.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees for full-time students (9 credits per semester), in-state, out-of-state and New England Regional, may be found

See: <https://www.umass.edu/bursar/tuition/graduate-tuition-rates>

Graduate Assistantship

Graduate assistantships in the Studio Arts Program are in the form of teaching, with the exception of one assistantship available in the Student Union Gallery, when available. Teaching assistantships augment the Program's pedagogy while providing excellent opportunities for graduate students to gain hands-on college-level teaching experience. As assistantship includes a stipend paid by-weekly, a tuition waiver, health, dental, and vision insurance coverage. (See

ASSISTANTSHIPS AND RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES) below.

Grants and Fellowships

UMass Arts Council Grants

Graduate students may apply for UMass Arts Council Grants for projects that will benefit the UMass and 5-college communities. There are two main categories: Single Project/Event Grants, which support a single arts-related project, event, or series; and Mini Grants, which support small art events on campus. Eligible projects include exhibitions, screenings, performance, or other events that are held on UMass campus. Though the awards are limited, ranging from about \$400 to \$1000, they help defray the expenses associated with the projects.

See:

https://fac.umass.edu:8070/Online/default.asp?BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::permalink=ArtsCouncilGrants&BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::context_id=&sessionlanguage=

Travel Grants

The Graduate School offers travel grants for conference presentations, professional meetings, exhibition presentations, and curatorial work, etc., subject to approval by the Graduate Program Director and The Graduate School.

See: <https://www.umass.edu/graduate/funding/internal-funding#return>

Research Enhancement and Leadership (REAL) Fellowship

The Research Enhancement and Leadership (REAL) Fellowship aims to enhance the recruitment, retention, and success of outstanding graduate students from historically underrepresented groups. The fellowships are awarded to top graduate students **seeking admission** to UMass Amherst doctoral and MFA programs and include 2–4 years of summer support (\$4,000 fellowship each summer), as well as mentoring, professional development, and community-building programs.

See:

<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/inclusion/research-enhancement-and-leadership-real-fellows>

Boscov Fellowship

Each spring the Graduate School invites nominations for the Joseph L. Boscov Fellowship. According to the terms of the endowment, it is awarded annually to a woman who is 35 or older, with financial need, “whose studies will equip [her] for increased service to the needs of people and/or the environment.” Every department or interdepartmental degree program is eligible to nominate one student for the Boscov Fellowship.

See: <https://umass.academicworks.com/opportunities/12106>

Other Financial Aid

Financial Aid services, located at 255 Whitmore (413) 545 0801, can help provide information about further financial aid for graduate students. You may supplement your income through Work Study. Information about this can be found at 243 Whitmore, (413) 545 1503.

External Grants

Each year the Dedalus Foundation seeks nominations for their annual MFA Fellowship in Painting and Sculpture (\$15,000). You do not apply for this highly competitive grant, but are nominated by the faculty. In this context, “sculpture” appears to be inclusive of digital media installation with sculptural elements.

<https://www.dedalusfoundation.org/programs/mfa>

RESOURCES

OTHER HELPFUL LINKS (compiled for The Living Handbook)¹

Graduate Employee Organization (GEO UAW 2322): <https://www.geouaw.org>

contract: <https://www.geouaw.org/geo-contract/>

Student Health Benefit Plan: <https://www.umass.edu/uhs/insurance/shbp>

UAW/UMass Trust Fund (Dental/Vision/Hearing Insurance): <https://www.uawumasstrustfund.org>

Center for Counseling and Psychological Health: <https://www.umass.edu/counseling/>

Disability Services Office: <https://www.umass.edu/disability/>

Ombuds Office: <https://www.umass.edu/ombuds/>

Dean of Students Office: https://www.umass.edu/dean_students/

Center for Counseling and Psychological Health: <https://www.umass.edu/counseling/>

Disability Services Office: <https://www.umass.edu/disability/>

Learning Resource Center (tutoring): <https://www.umass.edu/lrc/>

¹ In fall 2021 Trevor Leach, a first year graduate student compiled *The Living Handbook*, which includes all kinds of support information for your well-being while you are at UMASS, Amherst. This will be continually updated and contributed to by MFA cohorts. Please see https://docs.google.com/document/d/1H9WV09PW5AH7yqzBiDezP79ij4aCu_mxM-0UPCuUd4E/edit

Office of Equity and Inclusion: <https://www.umass.edu/diversity/>
Center for Women and Community: <https://www.umass.edu/cwc/about-us>
The Stonewall Center: <https://www.umass.edu/stonewall/home/about-us>
Veterans Services: <https://www.umass.edu/veterans/>
Student Success: <https://www.umass.edu/studentsuccess/>
Graduate student jobs: <https://www.umass.edu/graduate/funding/job-opportunities>
Graduate student funding: <https://www.umass.edu/graduate/funding/internal-funding>
Microgrants: https://www.umass.edu/dean_students/microgrant-short-term-loan
Student Care Supply Closet: https://www.umass.edu/dean_students/student-care-supply-closets
UCard Office: <https://www.umass.edu/ucard/>

IT Services

The office of Information Technology offers a huge range of services. It maintains: your University IT account and email, network connectivity, Moodle, Spire, and online storage; offers various instructional technologies, classroom technologies, blogs and web hosting, printing service, and discounts. It also offers workshops for instructors.

See: <https://www.umass.edu/it/>

The University Store

The University Store, located on the ground level of Campus Center, offers art supplies, Apple and Windows computer systems, peripherals, software, and accessories at educational rates. The store also occasionally offers sale items.

See: <https://www.umassstore.com/technology-department>

THE FOLLOWING SECTION OF THE HANDBOOK COVERS YOUR TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS AND RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP POLICY

Teaching Fellowships are an integral part of the MFA program. They offer a variety of opportunities to develop teaching and other professional experience through working with faculty and staff in the department, and, occasionally, in collaboration with University Museum of Contemporary Art. MFA candidates provide valuable support for the department both inside and outside the classroom.

By assisting and/or teaching courses in the department, you learn various practical and pedagogical aspects of teaching and learning in higher educational settings. You can also acquire certain technical skills by assisting in specific courses.

1. Types of Teaching Assistantships

In the Department of Art graduate students are generally assigned in three different capacities as teaching assistants. Generally, they involve:

- assisting and observing
- team-teaching (Foundations and other courses)
- instructor of record positions

For the first two types of TAs, the supervising faculty shall determine the responsibilities and communicate with the TAs. The third type is typically for courses such as Art 104 Basic Drawing, which serve non-art-majors from across the University and fulfill the General Education requirements. TAs as Instructors of Record shall rely on their experience of assisting and team-teaching, and the Teaching Workshop/Graduate Seminar in Art Education for identifying the responsibilities and for preparing for their courses. The Graduate Program Director and other faculty are also available for support and mentorship.

2. Responsibilities of the supervisor

The primary responsibilities of the supervising instructor or staff member are to negotiate and communicate the specific job description with and to the graduate assistant; to endeavor to make the work of the graduate assistant a worthwhile learning experience; and to integrate graduate assistantships with the undergraduate program.

3. Workload

Graduate assistants work shall be limited to **10 hours per week**, including the contact hours in the classroom.

4. Assigning Assistantships

The Graduate Program Director, with input from faculty supervisors and your advisors, determines the assignment of assistantships. The latter is a complex process that considers class rank, your requests and faculty preferences and areas of expertise. You will be informed of your assignment in a timely manner in order to prepare. There are some instances where your assignment might be changed. This usually occurs when courses and sections of courses are added or canceled and are often outside the control of the department. We will always do our best to work with you and support you when these changes occur.

5. Teaching Responsibilities for Graduate Teaching Assistants

There are different responsibilities associated with each type of position. In the cases of assisting and team-teaching, the supervising faculty shall determine the responsibilities and communicate with you. As the Instructor of Record you should rely on your experience of assisting and team-teaching, as well as the Teaching Workshop/Seminar in Art Education, for identifying the responsibilities and preparing for courses.

The specific job description for each graduate assistantship is determined in agreement with the supervising instructor or staff member.

Graduate assistant responsibilities may include any of the following duties:

- attending classes taught by their supervisor
- observing and participating in group and individual critiques
- developing and explaining assignments
- preparing classes including carrying out research, and setup of still-life, audiovisual equipment, technical demonstrations, and furniture
- preparing studio demonstrations
- collecting, organizing, and presenting slides and other media
- informal student advising
- evaluating artwork, papers, and exams
- making class presentations
- assisting faculty in organizing field trips;
- Attend field trips (provided that 10 hr. limit is observed by making necessary arrangements to compensate for time)
- monitoring upkeep of facilities
- monitoring the tools and equipment in labs/shops in off-hours and evenings, and ensuring proper closing of labs/shops
- reporting maintenance issues in labs/shops, e.g. repairs and updates needed
- monitoring EH&S standards to be followed
- managing and distributing supplies acquired through lab fees
- assisting with facility tours for prospective students, admissions, faculty searches, lecture series, and other administrative or other special projects
- other responsibilities specified by supervisor

The FAQ below provides basic information on the responsibilities of both faculty and TA's. For questions not addressed below, please direct your queries to the Graduate Program Director and/or the faculty assigned to work with TA's.

A portion of this section has been adapted from Carnegie Mellon University School of Art's Handbook.

FAQ for faculty and grads

Who assists TA's teaching General Education courses Art 104 Basic Drawing?

The faculty specializing in drawing and painting, and/or those who teach Art 110 oversee and assist TAs teaching Art 104. They shall provide guidance to TAs for writing course syllabus, devising curriculum content and projects, methods of critique, utilization of resources, etc. TAs are also encouraged to reach out to the faculty for help and suggestions. The Teaching Workshop/Seminar in Art Education is required of all incoming graduate students and covers various aspects of teaching Art 104 and other courses as the instructor of record.

What are the Department's syllabi guidelines?

There are various elements that must be included in the course syllabus, such as

- learning objectives
- course requirements
- evaluation criteria
- grading guidelines
- attendance policies
- accommodation policies
- academic honesty
- weekly course plan
- required materials

Faculty in the drawing and painting area will provide a syllabus for Art 104.

For the courses that are team-taught by full time faculty and graduate TAs, such as Art 131 Foundations Studio 1 and Art 142 Foundation Studio 2, the supervising faculty will devise the syllabus and the projects, which will be shared with the TAs, unless the faculty invites TAs to collaborate on creating a project(s).

Who is responsible for consistency of instruction?

For Art 104, the faculty specializing in drawing and painting, and/or those who teach Art 110 are responsible for consistency of instruction. In team-teaching in Foundations Art 131 and Art 142, both the faculty and TAs ensure the consistency of instruction across the sections. In some

instances, the primary contact may be a senior faculty in the given discipline. See the department website for the faculty contact info. <https://www.umass.edu/art/people/listings/faculty>