craft/material studies
mfa degree guidelines

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Graduate Curriculum
ALL COURSES MUST BE GRADUATE LEVEL CLASSES (500 LEVEL OR ABOVE)

MFA Degree Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Area Studio</td>
<td>30 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRAFT 681 Candidacy Studio</td>
<td>6 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRAFT 682 Thesis Studio</td>
<td>6 credits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Electives | 6 |
| Art History | 3 |
| Graduate Seminar | 9 |
| Total Credits | 60 |

Suggested Course Sequence

1st semester (15 credits)
3crs CRAFT 681 Candidacy
9crs CRAFT 601, 621, 641, 651, or 661 Studio Credits
3crs CRAFT 690 Graduate Seminar

2nd semester (15 credits)
3crs CRAFT 681 Candidacy
6crs CRAFT 601, 621, 641, 651, or 661 Studio Credits
3crs CRAFT 690 graduate Seminar
3crs Graduate Open elective

3rd semester (15 credits)
3crs CRAFT 682 Thesis
6crs CRAFT 601, 621, 641, 651, or 661 Studio Credits
3crs CRAFT 690 Graduate Seminar
3crs Graduate Art History

4th semester (15 credits)
3crs CRAFT 682 Thesis
9crs CRAFT 601, 621, 641, 651, or 661 Studio Credits
3crs Graduate Open elective

Graduate Learning Outcomes:

1) The students will demonstrate mastery in aesthetic and cross-cultural understanding
2) The curriculum of Craft and Material Studies is designed to provide students with a comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of their field
3) The students will be able to use knowledge gained from critique to improve creative work
4) The students will demonstrate mastery of advanced craft techniques within their field
5) The students will demonstrate leadership in their field in teaching and/or studio management
Graduate Academic Policies: To review the all-academic policies please visit the VCU’s Graduate Studies on-line Bulletin.

Attendance: Graduate faculty is responsible for clearly informing the student of the attendance requirements for each course and the consequences of poor attendance.

Concerning the major (area of concentration): Students must meet the minimum requirement of 30 clock hours per week of studio attendance. These hours of attendance are to coincide with the faculty’s teaching schedule.

Graduate Studios: Every attempt will be made to provide the graduate student a studio area while enrolled in graduate program. However, if a student remains in the program for a period of time longer than two years, a studio space is not guaranteed for the period of extended study.

At times, it may be made necessary for both graduate and undergraduate students to simultaneously use common technical areas within the major; and in such instances, it is expected that graduate students will be courteous and helpful to other graduates as well as to the undergraduates.

Studio Contract: Each student must read, sign, and return to the department chairperson at the start of the program. Then sign again during the studio move-out meeting at the end of the program.

Graduate Committee

Definition: The Graduate Committee is composed of three or more graduate faculty members. Their role is to provide guidance throughout the two years of the student’s graduate studies. The graduate committee supervises the candidate’s work for the M.F.A. degree and recommends whether the student should be allowed to mount a graduate exhibition.

Composition: Incoming graduate students will be assigned a committee consisting of a Committee Chair from their major concentration and at least two other faculty members.

Role of Committee Chair: The Committee Chair will act as the major advisor, and will work closely with the student until graduation. The Committee Chair shall relay any concerns related to performance to the student in a timely manner. The Committee Chair, in concert with the committee members, will supervise the student’s written thesis, exhibition, and exhibition documentation.
Evaluation of Graduate Student Progress
At the end of each semester, the graduate committee will write the end of semester review stating the graduate committee course work grade along with comments on relevant successes and concerns regarding the student’s performance in the program. The end of semester review is mailed to the student and the department chair.

The graduate committee will write a letter of concern regarding the student’s performance at any point during the semester provided circumstances needing such action arise. The letter of concern will be e-mailing to the student and the department chair.

Committee Changes: Each student has the option of changing the committee during the first two weeks of the second semester, but at least one committee member must be from the area of concentration. In order for a student to change his/her committee composition, the student must first discuss the changes with both the out-going and potential in-coming committee members. Once the changes have been made the student must e-mail the changes to the Department of Craft/Material Studies office and copy all outgoing and incoming committee members.

Meetings: The student is obliged to arrange (2) meetings of his/her committee during the fall semester to review current work. The student is obligated to arrange (1) meeting of his/her committee during the spring semester prior to the end of semester candidacy review or thesis defense. It is the student’s responsibility to arrange convenient time(s) at the beginning of each semester for all committee members to meet as a group. The students committee may require additional meetings during the fall or spring semester. If the meetings are not conducted during the semester, candidacy or thesis will be adversely affected.

1) One of the two fall semester meetings should take place at mid-semester and the other should take place at the end of the semester. (see Appendix B)

2) The spring semester meeting should take place at the beginning or mid-semester. (see Appendix B)
   a) Second year graduate students are required to arrange one final thesis defense meeting with his/her full committee

Individual meetings with committee members and students can be arranged periodically throughout the semester (at the mutual discretion of the student and committee members).

Thesis: The department chair and graduate committee are responsible for approving and signing off on the students thesis at the end of their graduate studies. (Refer to the thesis section for more details).
Candidacy

**Advanced Degree Candidacy:** After completion of the first 15 semester credits of graduate work and prior to the completion of 30 semester credits, the student will apply for candidacy.

The student initiates the procedure in concert with his/her graduate committee. The procedure will include a review to determine the prospective success of the candidate to proceed toward completion of the MFA degree.

**Application to Candidacy Criteria:**
1) Certification by the department that the applicant has met the departmental expectations including the attainment of the minimal 3.0 (B) average

2) The faculty feels that the student is adequately prepared to continue pursing the M.F.A. degree.

**Candidacy Review:** To determine if a student has meet Candidacy Criteria, students will mount an exhibition at the end of their second semester during which they will have their candidacy review by the faculty. The student will create, select and present an original, coherent body of work appropriate to the major concentration.

1) The graduate student is charged with responsibility of finding a space to mount the candidacy exhibition. (Usually a group exhibition with the other students applying for candidacy.)

2) The review will be held during the Reading Day at the end of the spring semester, usually at the site of the exhibit.

3) The entire Craft/Material Studies graduate faculty and potentially an outside reviewer will attend each candidates review.

4) Candidacy review is 45 minutes per student. This will consist of a 10 to 15 minute presentation by the candidate of work created during the first year of graduate study and review of artist statement, followed by a review of current body of work presented at the exhibit site.

***An admission to an advanced degree program does not constitute admissions to advanced degree candidacy. Likewise, an admission to candidacy does not insure the granting of an MFA degree.***

**Candidacy Review Determinations:** The Craft/Material Studies graduate faculty and department chairperson will meet to determine if the candidate has satisfied the criteria.

There are three possible candidacy review determinations.

1) Awarded: If the student is awarded candidacy, the student proceeds toward the completion of the degree
2) Denied: If candidacy is denied, the student will withdraw from the program at the end of the semester or be terminated from the program (See Termination section page)
3) Postponed for Re-evaluation: In borderline cases, candidacy is postponed for re-evaluation. If the second evaluation is unsuccessful, the student is denied candidacy (see number 2)

**Termination from Craft/Materials Studies Program:**
Craft/Material Studies Department follows regulations set forth by the VCU Graduate School in regards to graduate student termination and appeals process. For more information on the VCU Graduate School termination and appeals process, please refer to the on-line graduate bulletin.

The student’s graduate committee can initiate termination at the department level at any point during the school year. The termination process begins with the committee writing an official letter and filling out a special action form indicating the reason for termination with relevant documentation attached. The action form is forwarded to the school dean/dean’s designee; the formal letter is forwarded to the student.

The graduate dean/dean’s designee reviews the action, signs the form, notifies the Office of Records and Registration and sends a termination letter through certified mail to the student. This letter must include a statement of the student’s right to appeal and inform the student that appeals must be initiated at the program/department and/or school level within 14 business days after receipt of the letter.

Reasons for termination may include but are not limited to:
- Academic (a grade of C, D or F, GPA below 3.0, graduate committee withdrawing recommendation for candidacy review, denied candidacy at the end of the second semester)
- Discontinuous enrollment
- Exceeding time limit
- Honor policy violation
- Academic misconduct
- Professional misconduct
Thesis

The thesis consists of three components: Graduate Exhibition, Visual Documentation, and Written Thesis. An exhibition is required of each candidate for the M.F.A. degree in Fine Arts. The exhibition must be a coherent show of work and must have the approval of a simple majority of the graduate faculty for the degree to be awarded.

Graduate Exhibition: In the final semester of study, advanced degree candidates create, select and present an original, coherent body of work.

In anticipating the graduate exhibition, the candidate must work closely with his/her graduate committee.

Visual Documentation: The graduate exhibition must be documented visually. This should be done with a CD of 300dpi 8x10” jpg images, which comprehensively document the exhibit. These images should include documentation of work in the installation, overall views of the installation and details of work when needed.

Written Thesis: Coinciding with the graduate exhibition and its accompanying visual documentation is the submission of a written thesis. This is a requirement for graduation and the candidate’s committee must approve the final copy.

Thesis Submittal:
1) VCU Library (REQUIRED)
   a) Submit written thesis on-line to the VCU libraries EDT project
2) Graduate School (REQUIRED)
   a) Submit original signature approval sheet to the Graduate School
3) Craft/Material Studies (REQUIRED)
   a) Submit to the department office a final bound copy of the written thesis
   b) CD of images will be retained by the department of Craft/Material Studies
4) Personal Copy (OPTIONAL)
   a) Retain a copy written thesis and approval signature sheet for personal records
The written thesis is a document concerning the student’s graduate studies. It MUST address the following four topics:

1) Thought processes or ideas at the foundation of his/her thesis work, which may include an examination of motivations, aesthetic concerns and/or any involvement with related conceptual issues

2) Relationship of the candidate’s work influences, which may choose for example, to address, historical and theoretical influences on his/her work in this section

3) Process developed in the progress of graduate study in a detailed manner including technical inventions or innovations, equipment, materials and processes used

4) Historical development/progress during graduate studies

**Format:** The thesis format needs to be compliant with VCU Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation Manual available on the Graduate School Web site. It is expected that the statement conform to the rules of grammar using proper syntax and sentence structure. It is important that the statement be utterly clear to the reader. Clarity requires that the writer avoid jargon, vagueness, rambling, unsupported generalization and that he or she be precise and accurate, using sound reasoning. Good evidence should support all claims. The candidate should work with the graduate committee using their suggestions to edit and rewrite drafts of this statement to help achieve clarity. A Copy of the approved written thesis will be kept in the department of Craft and Material Studies where it will be made available for research purposes. An artist statement in place of an abstract, a bibliography, and a Curriculum Vita must accompany the written.

**Calendar for Written Thesis:** At the beginning of the candidate’s fourth and final semester, an outline for the written thesis is submitted to the graduate committee. The candidate’s entire graduate committee must grant approval of the written thesis outline. Candidates MUST also submit an application for graduation with the office of the Registrar before the announced deadline during final semester.

At the mid-semester committee meeting, the candidate’s entire committee will discuss a rough draft of the thesis statement.

The candidate MUST submit copies of the rough draft to each committee member one-week prior to the mid-semester committee meeting.

Copies of the written thesis final draft MUST be submitted to the candidate’s graduate committee and department chairperson two weeks before the final committee evaluation meeting, which coincides with the Graduate Exhibition. The entire committee is responsible for the evaluation of the project, its documentation, and written thesis. The final committee meeting will
occur at the time of the Graduate Exhibition. After the approval of the exhibition and the thesis statement, the student will proceed with the exhibition’s visual documentation and their final (definitive) copy of the written thesis. Both the documentation and written thesis MUST be submitted to the electronically to the EDT site through the VCU library. The Thesis Approval Sheet needs the following signatures: The student’s graduate committee chairperson, the all members of the student’s graduate committee, Chair of the Department of Craft/Material Studies, the Graduate Dean of the School of the Arts, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Final hard copies of the written thesis and visual documentation are due the Wednesday after commencement to the Craft/Material Studies Office.

Opportunities
Teaching: A graduate student must complete 18 credits prior to being assigned a teaching opportunity. Teaching opportunities for graduate students are based on merit. The department tries to award at least one teaching appointment during graduate studies. Usually, this occurs in the second semester of the first year, summer before the second year, or first semester of the second year.

Scholarship and Grant information can be found at: http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/

Graduate Teaching Assistantships:
GTA’s: Students awarded GTA’S are required to work 15-20 hours per week. This may include teaching, studio responsibilities, or office help.
APPENDIX A
MFA Timeline for Committee Meetings, Candidacy and Thesis Work

1st Semester
Beginning of semester student arranges graduate committee meetings

Mid-September/Mid October
1st committee meeting

End of November
2nd committee meeting

2nd Semester
Beginning of semester student arranges graduate committee meeting
Mid-February/March
3rd committee meeting

End of April/Beginning of May
Students mount candidacy exhibition
Candidacy Review-Spring Reading Day

3rd Semester
Beginning of semester student arranges graduate committee meetings

Mid-September/Mid October
4th committee meeting

End of November
5th committee meeting

4th Semester
Beginning of semester student arranges graduate committee meeting
January 15th
Written Thesis Outline Due to committee

End of January
Begin graduation check out

End of February
Graduation Application: 1st set of signatures due to the School of the Arts Dean’s Office

Mid-February/March
6th committee meeting
Due to graduate committee: written thesis rough draft one week before 6th committee meeting

April 1st
Graduate students send MFA Thesis Exhibition show card announcement to printer (RECOMMENDED)

Beginning/Mid-April
Final Draft of written thesis due to graduate committee members two weeks prior to Final Review in the Anderson Gallery
End of April/Beginning of May
MFA Thesis exhibition
Graduate student arranges final review with Graduate Committee

Beginning/Mid-May
Graduation application with final set of signatures due to the School of the Arts Dean’s Office
Submittal of completed thesis, approval sheet, and any supporting documentation due to the VCU Library EDT site and the department of Craft/Material Studies

**July 15**
Studio move-out and cleanup (MUST arrange a check-out time with Assistant Chair)
Keys due back to the office at time of check-out
Exit interview survey due at time of studio checkout
Update contact information on file in Craft/Material Studies Office