



MFA Handbook

Department of Art, Art History, and Design
Michigan State University

2021

Our graduate program is values-driven, meaning that the policies and curriculum described in this handbook are generated from the four principles articulated below.

Diversity and Inclusion

The Department of Art, Art History, and Design is committed to cultivating a diverse and inclusive environment where students and faculty will foster a culture of learning activated by difference.

Reciprocity

This MFA program is intentionally adaptive. We have as much to learn from our students as they do from us. Student growth, faculty growth, institutional growth – we are not here just to give students knowledge; we are here to seek, to travel, to discover together.

Learner Agency

This MFA program will set the stage for a significant studio experience without choreographing every move. We will ask graduate students to take an active role in determining the parameters under which they will thrive.

Campus Integration

This MFA program contains mechanisms for engagement with the MSU community at large. AAHD students, staff, and faculty will commit to building bridges with a diverse range of units at MSU while also serving as a center for collaboration. This centrifugal/centripetal relationship will enable provocative modes of thinking and making, while simultaneously braiding together the collective vision of our university, college, and department.

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Welcome to Michigan State!

The Michigan State University MFA program seeks highly motivated students who have the artistic and scholarly vision to guide us into equitable, sustainable, and creative futures. We encourage new forms of rigorous artistic expression, design innovations, scholarship, and community outreach that make meaningful contributions and transcend usual constraints.

The MSU MFA program provides full funding for all MFA students, covering the entire three-year program. Professional development grants, generous MFA completion fellowships, summer fellowships, and rich international programs/travel abroad opportunities are available as well as teaching assistantships, pedagogical development courses, and select research assistantships. The program draws from the unique expertise of faculty and technical staff from within the Department of Art, Art History, and Design (AAHD), combining it with that of other world-class faculty from programs across the campus.

Whether focused within or across disciplines, the MSU MFA student is characterized by a desire to push beyond the boundaries of existing art and design paradigms. Each MFA student therefore defines and customizes their own integrative, multi-disciplinary or media-focused program under the guidance of a faculty committee selected by the student. Utilizing a recursive approach, student artists/scholars work with their committee to refine their research and artistic goals and to develop a unique project and written thesis.

AAHD encourages our MFA students to deepen our understanding of the human condition through work that intersects productively with ideas of culture, identity, technology, and science. MSU is the pioneer Land Grant institution and, as such, has as its express mandate “to democratize higher education and expand its opportunities based on merit, not social class.” Our MFA program seeks to expand our empathic understanding, cultivate the voices of underserved populations and ideas, and mitigate and critique damage done to ecologies, marginalized cultures, and the environment brought about by several centuries of colonialist pursuits. Together, we ask how art and design can work with, through, or even against constraints like media, culture, science, technology, capitalism, and society to create sustainable futures built on strong communities that value and maximize the potential of every individual.

The MSU MFA program values and understands diversity. Diversity includes race, ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status, religion, and politics but also extends to include aesthetic orientation, educational background, job experience, and technical skills. The MFA program seeks students with vision and the potential for excellence, in whatever form that might take.

AAHD is led by a chairperson who is a member of the faculty. Working closely with the Chair is the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), who is the administrative head of the MFA program and the initial point of contact for all graduate students. The DGS is advised by a Graduate Committee of faculty that includes two student representatives. Students are also involved in committees regarding curriculum and, in some cases, hiring. The DGS is also a liaison to the College Graduate Committee, which is led by the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies in the College of Arts and Letters (CAL).

Both the DGS and the Associate Dean are liaisons to MSU's Graduate School, which sets overall [guidelines](#) for students' rights and responsibilities and negotiates the terms of [employment](#) with the Graduate Employees Union (GEU). Links to CAL and Graduate School documents are provided throughout this handbook. All of these people are here to assist, clarify policies, and otherwise make life easier for graduate students.

AAHD Faculty and University Programs

AAHD is home to more than fifty faculty and staff members, including more than twenty-five tenure-system faculty. AAHD faculty have particular strengths in design practice and theory, abstract, experimental, and figurative painting, print media, installation, sculpture, ceramics and materials studies, photography, art and science, digital fabrication and intermedia, apparel and textile design, art criticism, history, and visual culture studies, performative exhibition practices, social practice, and activism. Many faculty participate in interdisciplinary initiatives in and beyond the College of Arts and Letters, such as the Center for Interdisciplinarity; Experience Architecture; Digital Humanities; Arts and Cultural Management and Museum Studies; Film Studies; Women's and Gender Studies; American Indian and Indigenous Studies; Asian Studies; African Studies; African and African American Studies; and Global Studies. Plus, the MSU Archives has one of the best comic book collections in the world.

As a Research 1 university, MSU is committed to advanced study across an extensive range of fields with particularly strong programs in the humanities and music, the natural and social sciences, engineering and technology, agriculture, and education. The university also has two medical colleges, a veterinary college, law and business colleges, and a college of communication art and sciences. Faculty from any of these fields can also serve as external members to a student's guidance committee when appropriate to the student's goals.

Additionally, AAHD has a strong relationship with the new Zaha Hadid-designed Eli and Edythe Broad Museum of Art, one of only a few contemporary art museums to reside on a university campus. All graduate students have the opportunity to exhibit in the museum as a part of their thesis requirement and can apply for museum employment. In addition, there are several departmental galleries on and off-campus for which student assistantships are available.

The department brings artists, designers, and scholars to campus through our lecture series and artist residency [programs](#): the Visiting Artist & Scholar Lecture Series; the Bridge Artist-in-Residence Program which brings a group of internationally renowned artists, designers, critics, and scholars to campus each year to explore new artistic forms and transmedia projects; and the Critical Race Studies Artist Residency, which is designed to empower cultural transformation through a shared engagement with creative artistic practices.

Facilities

AAHD houses facilities to support work in apparel and textile design, art education, art history, and visual culture, ceramics, electronic art and intermedia, graphic design, painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture. All graduate students have access to all facilities for the making of art and

design, although some areas require special training. The ceramics, metal, woodshop, and Form from Thought Lab require annual safety training certificates (see MFA Forms), under the direction of technicians. All areas can be introduced to students through coursework or by special arrangement with faculty and/or specialists.

Students are invited to display works-in-progress as needed within AAHD spaces, but they are required to consult with the graduate secretary about where and when that work can be accommodated.

Graduate Studios

Every graduate student will be given the use of either a private or semi-private studio in consultation with the DGS. Of the semi-private spaces in KAC, there are five on the third floor, three on the second floor, one on the ground floor, four inside the ceramics studio, and two in the sculpture annex. There are also private studios on the second floor of KAC and the sculpture annex. Students are given 24-hour access to studios, which can be occupied by graduate students from shortly after orientation to June 1 on the year of graduation. There is a final walk-through procedure (see MFA Forms). Keys must be returned at the time of the walk-through.

Program Structure and Curriculum

The summary of degree requirements is found on the registrar's office [website](#).

Year One / Exploration

In the first year, graduate students work with their assigned exploration committees to explore the campus and all that it has to offer, including faculty expertise, facilities, and resources within and beyond AAHD. In addition to taking studio credits overseen by their assigned committee, students also have the option of taking courses including independent studies in integrated research electives. In the Fall semester, students take a first-year seminar designed to broaden their perspectives on art and design and contextualize their practice. In the Spring semester, students take a first-year seminar focused on the theory and practice of pedagogy, which they will complete alongside their first assignment as instructors-of-record.

10 Credits Each Semester

STA 890	<i>Master of Fine Arts Seminar: Exploring Research, Resources, and Context</i> (FALL)
STA 891	<i>Master of Fine Arts Seminar: Teaching and Pedagogical Practice in Studio Art</i> (SPRING)
STA 895	<i>Master of Fine Arts Studio: Exploration and Research in Studio Art</i> (FALL/SPRING)
STA 897	<i>Critique</i> (FALL/SPRING)
	Integrated Research (FALL and/or SPRING)

Year One Milestones

- ☒ Minimum 8 credits of STA 895
- ☒ 2 credits of Critique
- ☒ Minimum 1 Integrated Research credit external to AAHD

- ☒ Minimum 4 full committee meetings (2 per semester)
- ☒ 1 semester of non-teaching observation (two full rotations)
- ☒ Minimum 10 faculty visits, including minimum one external to AAHD
- ☒ A formative written statement on work at the end of each semester
- ☒ Identification of a guidance committee
- ☒ Optional summer study experience (away/abroad/residency, etc)

Year Two / Integration

In the second year, graduate students integrate their experiences. Continuing to work with mentors in and out of their primary modes of practice, students take two seminars in the theory and history of art and in research practices. These seminars, conducted by members of the art history faculty, also develop student skills in writing about artistic practice in context, including their own. The second-year marks the midway point through the MFA program. Students will present their work to be reviewed by their guidance committee. As part of the last review at the end of the second year and before the student's final year of work, the student will discuss with the Guidance Committee the focus of the final research project.

10 credits total per semester

HA 801	<i>Master of Fine Arts Seminar: Art Theory</i> (FALL)
HA 802	<i>Master of Fine Arts Seminar: Research Methods for Artists and Designers</i> (SPRING)
STA 896	<i>Master of Fine Arts Studio: Integration in Studio Art</i> (FALL/SPRING)
STA 897	<i>Critique</i> (FALL/SPRING)
	Integrated Research (FALL and/or SPRING)

Year Two Milestones

- ☒ Minimum 8 credits of STA 896
- ☒ Formative statement on work in conjunction w/ second yr review
- ☒ Optional summer study experience (away/abroad/residency, etc)

Year Three / Thesis

In the third year, graduate students prepare to complete their experience at MSU. Their primary projects include the preparation of their MFA exhibition project and a written statement. In the Fall semester, students take the professional seminar, which allows students to develop their skills and results in the production of a professional dossier. In the Spring, students present their final project for approval by their committee, mount their exhibition, and complete their written statement. The final elements of the degree are an oral final certifying defense, a public presentation in the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum co-organized by the museum and AAHD, and a deposit of documentation of work in the AAHD departmental archive.

10 credits total per semester

STA 893	<i>Master of Fine Arts Seminar: Professional Practice</i> (FALL)
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STA 898 *Master of Fine Arts Studio: Final Research Project* (FALL/SPRING)
 STA 897 *Critique* (FALL and/or SPRING)
 STA Elective (SPRING)

Year Three Milestones

- ☒ Finalize Professional Portfolio
- ☒ Minimum 13 credits in STA 898 for the final research project
- ☒ Outreach (exhibition, public presentation)
- ☒ Oral certifying defense

Course Descriptions

STA 890 (3 credits)

Master of Fine Arts Seminar: Exploring Research, Resources, and Context

A research-focused course designed to broaden perspectives on art and design. Exposure to diverse resources, media, techniques, and theories both, internal and external to art and design. Analysis and incorporation of varied philosophical, historical, and contemporary perspectives. Contextualization of individual artistic practice and integration of external knowledge into studio methodologies.

STA 891 (3 credits)

Master of Fine Arts Seminar: Teaching and Pedagogical Practice in Studio Art

Current issues and practices in Studio Art course/curriculum design. Approaches to course planning, critiques, and assessment. Development of course outcomes and expectations. Role of conceptual, formal, and technical issues. Diversity in studio art pedagogy.

STA 893 (3 credits)

Master of Fine Arts Seminar: Professional Seminar

Contemporary professional development in the visual arts: reading, writing, presentation, critique and revision, conferences, professional activities, and employment.

STA 895 (variable credit)

Master of Fine Arts Studio: Exploration and Research in Studio Art

Advanced study in Studio Art focused on exploration and intersection of ideation and form and extended development in chosen media(s). The chair of the first-year exploration committee serves as instructor of record, but the entire committee reviews and evaluates artistic and written work.

STA 896 (variable credit)

Master of Fine Arts Studio: Integration in Studio Art

Further study in Studio Art focused on the increased integration of form and content. Individual artistic development. The major professor serves as instructor of record, but the entire committee reviews and evaluates artistic and written work.

STA 897 (1 credit)Critique

Presentation of artwork to faculty, peers, and community in a group setting. Communication of essential ideas, and incorporation of criticism.

STA 898 (variable credit)Master of Fine Arts Final Research Project

Individual final research project directed by a major professor and guidance committee. The major professor serves the instructor of record, but the entire committee reviews and evaluates artistic and written work.

HA 801 (3 credits)Master of Fine Arts Seminar: Art Theory

Familiarize the students with key issues in the theory of art in the present. Students become proficient in reading art theoretical debates. Students gain mastery of art historical writing.

HA 802 (3 credits)Master of Fine Arts Seminar: Research Methods for Artists and Designers

Course introduces methods of research as used by contemporary artists and designers. The course includes a selection of artistic case studies, as well as practical sessions and projects implementing a series of methods for research.

Other Curriculum

Description of Graduate Credits

AAHD follows the national standard for the measure of credit hours in an academic program. Each credit hour is equivalent to 45 work hours, per semester, so a typical three-credit course should require 135 total hours of in-class and outside work. Graduate studio hours are often relatively independent, but there should be significant contact with faculty and the overall work time should follow the 45-hour rule. Students are able to shape their degree programs to a large extent by allocating different amounts of credit to different requirements across the three years. First-Year and Guidance committees, along with the graduate secretary and Director of Graduate Studies, should advise students about this aspect of the program.

Integrated Research Electives

Integrated Research is any elective within or beyond AAHD. These credits are intended to enhance the depth of studio practice. During the first year of the MFA, 1 hour of Integrated Research credits must reside in credit hours external to AAHD. A minimum of 4 credit hours over the entire degree program must be taken outside of AAHD, with graduate committee approval. Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the rich academic diversity in the department and across campus, while filling the Integrated electives component of their education and to use the experience to broaden and deepen their exploration, integration, and final research and creative practice.

Course work will be chosen from available MSU courses at the 400 level or above or developed through independent study under appropriate AAHD and non-AAHD faculty supervision and must be

approved by the student's graduate committee. Both AAHD and non-AAHD coursework are chosen to supplement, extend, or develop some aspects of the final research project or preparation for it. The student should consider how learning and research integrate into their studio and written final research project. In the last semester, students have the option to take elective course credits in studio art and/or critique.

Critiques and Reviews

Students should expect the critique of their work to be a significant aspect of their educational experience. In this MFA program, feedback loops will be facilitated in two distinct categories: the critique class and committee review. This MFA program is cohort-centric and as such, each class (ie first year, second year, etc) will progress through the program together. The critique class is intended to bring all graduate students together for formative discussions on works-in-progress. These crits are designed to allow students to define the parameters under which they will thrive and set a tone of productive and healthy debate. A faculty member will be assigned to facilitate this one-credit course and to manage the logistics of the students' gatherings.

Committee-led progress reviews are separate from the critique class and happen individually with graduate students and their committees (first-year and guidance committees). These reviews center on the graduate student's work and progress toward completion of the MFA degree. It is expected that the committee reviews will happen no fewer than twice per semester in all years of the program, preferably at the mid-term and the end of the semester.

Writing Portfolio

Each semester, students will prepare a self-evaluation of their practice and pathway of study. These formative efforts combine cumulative writing of 3-5 pages of reflection and analysis per semester, drawing upon feedback from faculty in critiques, studio coursework, seminars, and integrated research electives. This process will be central to the preparation of the written statement, which reflects upon and integrates parts of the portfolio.

Review Timeline

Students must meet with their exploration or guidance committees twice per semester to discuss and evaluate their work and progress. Please see the section on committees for further information.

Final MFA Project

The culminating artistic project for the graduate program has two major parts: one, the MFA exhibition, which is held each Spring at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, two, the written statement. Students also perform a final oral certifying defense of their exhibition project, give a public presentation of their work at the Broad Art Museum, and deposit documentation of their work in the AAHD department archive.

MFA Exhibition and Defense

Students work with faculty and Broad staff to develop a proposal for the exhibition, according to a schedule that is negotiated between AAHD and the museum. The exhibition process takes the better

part of the third year. Student proposals are shaped by ongoing discussions with faculty and museum staff. Sample materials for the preparation of the exhibition proposal are included as an appendix to the handbook but are subject to change.

Two weeks before installing their MFA exhibition students must present their final project for approval by their committee. After the exhibition is mounted, a final oral certifying defense will be held (before the deadline set by the Graduate School for oral exams). One week before this final oral certifying defense, a final written statement will be given to members of the Guidance Committee.

Final Written Statement

The statement draws upon the portfolio of writing produced over the course of students' time in the department and is a substantial statement of artistic intent and research. At the time of the review, the student should be prepared to discuss critically and defend the hypothesis and results of both the art work produced and their statement.

Work Documentation to be Retained by the Department

To complete the requirements for the degree, you must electronically submit up to twenty images, a written summary statement, and a current CV (a D2L Link will be made available). The visual materials must be of high quality and accompanied by a label information document (name, title, size, date, and medium) and will be cataloged in the Visual Resources Library of the Department of Art, Art History, and Design. Students retain copyright to all art and design work created in the Department of Art, Art History, and Design, but they grant a non-exclusive license to exhibit, display, or reproduce these works at the discretion of faculty.

Committee Formation and Structure

Graduate students work with two types of committees during their time in the MFA program. **The first-year exploration committee** is deliberately multi-disciplinary in its make-up, as a group designed to facilitate the student's introduction to the department and campus. This committee automatically dissolves at the end of the first academic year to allow the student the opportunity to select their own mentors. **The guidance committee** works with students in their second and third years. It is chosen by the student and is more focused, facilitating the development and integration of the student's work and their progress towards completion of the program. Students evaluate the committee members' teaching each semester (see MFA Forms).

Students are assigned an initial four-member, first-year exploration committee upon matriculation to the MFA program. The selection of first-year exploration committees is the responsibility of the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the admissions committee.

Faculty participating in first-year exploration committees are expected to engage with students about their work and to facilitate students' exploration of human and other resources in the department and across campus. The primary advisor is responsible for organizing full exploration committee meetings with reviews twice a semester, and providing written feedback from the committee at least once a semester. Written feedback addresses student development and engagement in a summative manner.

More formative feedback comes through one-on-one or smaller group meetings, which can and should occur on a more informal basis, along with visits with other faculty. Students are expected to follow through on faculty offers of assistance and to work with individual members of the committee to develop a broad understanding of the campus and all it has to offer. By the end of the first year, students will be expected to have met with a minimum of ten faculty (inclusive of their first-year exploration committee), including one faculty member from outside of AAHD.

Faculty members participating in first-year exploration committees should have teaching responsibilities across the entire academic year, because committee service is classified as teaching and because regular attendance on campus is so important to the correct functioning of the committee. Students are of course welcome to meet with faculty on temporary research assignments as part of their exploration of the campus.

Before the end of their first year, the student is responsible for selecting a Major Professor and a guidance committee. Major professors should be an art or design voting and teaching faculty member in AAHD. The guidance committee should consist of up to five members and must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. Guidance committees can include a faculty member from outside of AAHD, and, under special circumstances, from outside of MSU. External committee members must commit to attending the student's thesis defense at the end of the third year, and to attend yearly committee meetings at least by electronic means. External committee members should also be encouraged to attend at least one exhibition review during the thesis year.

Guidance committees must meet at least twice each semester. Some full-committee meetings constitute important reviews of student work, including the first-year review, the midway review, the second-year review, and the final oral certifying defense. More formative feedback comes in other full-committee meetings. One-on-one or small group meetings can and should occur on a more informal basis.

Faculty serving on guidance committees are expected to assist students in the development and integration of their work across aspects of their practice, helping to shape their progress toward the final project. This includes a review of work-in-progress, reading of formative reflective writing, and assistance in building a professional portfolio in the final year. The major professor should spearhead the scheduling of full-committee meetings. Students are expected to meet regularly with committee members and to make their written and artistic work available, keeping in mind the time needed to adequately assess and comment upon work. In general, a minimum of two weeks for the preparation of written comments on writing or letters of recommendation is required.

Changes to Committees

The graduate student has ultimate control over the makeup of their committee as guided by the parameters of the program and graduate school policies. When a change of membership of a student's guidance committee would best serve the progress of the graduate student in their program, the student should meet with the major professor and the graduate director to select another committee member. If the student feels that a change in major professor would best serve their progress, the student should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies to initiate a change.

For more information about MSU's procedures for committee formation can be found in section 2.4 of the [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities document](#).

Funding

Graduate students at MSU receive two types of funding: graduate [assistantships](#) and graduate [fellowships](#). An assistantship is employment related to teaching or research, while a fellowship does not involve work. Assistantships offer tuition waivers and health insurance: students are automatically enrolled in a health insurance plan with the premium paid by the university. Enrolled students may insure an eligible spouse and/or dependent children residing with the insured. Whatever the form of support, the MFA program provides full-tuition waivers that cover ten credits per semester and sixty credits total over three years. While funding for the year is guaranteed, it is contingent upon good standing in the program.

A general discussion of funding for graduate students can be found [here](#). This section of the graduate handbook discusses rules and policies associated with both assistantships and fellowships.

The primary form of support for most students is assistantships. During the first semester, students are employed as teaching assistants, and thereafter they are most often employed as instructors-of-record. Other graduate assistantships include work in the department-run gallery spaces.

Other Financial Resources

Students apply for summer support, as well as smaller grants and awards throughout the program. The College of Arts and Letters summarizes the various forms of other funding available to graduate students [here](#). Grants include the College of Arts and Letters SCRAM (Summer College Research Abroad Monies) and the Varg-Sullivan Award for outstanding national/international exhibitions or publications. Students can also apply in their second year for the AAHD Selma & Stanley Hollander Fellowship, which assists students in the final year of study, and the DCF (Degree/Dissertation Completion Fellowship) from the graduate school, which releases students from teaching for one semester in their final year.

What to expect each year:

Incoming and First Year Graduate Students

For the Year: first-semester graduate students receive an assistantship for teaching, and will assist and observe faculty mentors in the classroom. Most can expect to be instructors of record beginning in their second semester. Competitive research funding support is also available.

For the Summer: competition for funding for research from the Graduate School

For Travel: competition for conference and research travel from the College of Arts & Letters and/or the Graduate School; [read more here](#)

Second Year Graduate Students

For the Year: most graduate students can expect to be instructors of record for both semesters. Competitive research funding support is also available.

For the Summer: competition for funding for research from the Graduate School or for Summer College Research Abroad Monies (SCRAM)

For Travel: competition for conference and research travel from the College of Arts & Letters and/or the Graduate School

Third Year Graduate Students

For the Year: many students compete for a Dissertation Completion Fellowship to replace one semester of teaching assistantship. Otherwise, students can expect to be instructors of record for both semesters. Competitive research funding support is also available.

For Travel: competition for conference and research travel from the College of Arts & Letters and/or the Graduate School

Financial Aid

Students are also eligible to apply for financial aid through the Federal Student Aid system. Students should be aware that if they file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, take the full amount and then receive additional funding from the department or graduate school, that could unnecessarily trigger a re-evaluation of need at any time during the program. If students find themselves in this situation, they should contact MSU's Financial Aid [office](#) and the Director of Graduate Studies for more information.

Emergency Loans

Students experiencing financial hardship should contact the graduate secretary and Director of Graduate Studies. Every effort to assist students will be made, within the regulations of the graduate school and university.

Teaching

Students spend their first semester in the program as teaching assistants working with faculty primarily engaged with the Foundations program. Students will have more than one experience across the semester, in which they will not only observe, but work to create and implement parts of assignments and assist in assessing the work of students. They are also invited to observe faculty teaching outside of the Foundations program. **Tasks will vary depending on assignment.**

From the second semester of the program forward, students can serve as instructors-of-record in courses or hold other graduate assistantships in the department. Student preferences for appointments are solicited (see, for example, MFA Forms) and balanced with the needs of the department. Training and supervision specific to instructor course assignments are provided throughout the program.

AAHD, CAL, and the Graduate School are all committed to student development in the area of teaching and learning. MFA students' initial training in pedagogy comes in the first year through their teaching assistantship, introduction to curriculum, and through a seminar taken in the second semester. Further opportunities to develop a teaching portfolio include the University Graduate Certification in College Teaching (**CCT**), which is facilitated in CAL by the Dean's Office and includes training in online **pedagogy** and course design. The professional seminar, taken in the third year, guides students as they finalize their teaching portfolio.

Professional Conduct and Conflict Resolution

The Department of Art, Art History and Design is a community that values inclusion. Faculty and graduate students are expected to uphold these values both within and outside the classroom. Professional conduct includes collegial, non-abusive conduct and respect of others' viewpoints. All members of our creative community are expected to be responsible, self-motivated in the pursuit of their research, and demonstrate a willingness to share and cooperate with others.

As faculty in an academic program, we share some common standards about what constitutes appropriate professional conduct, and it is our responsibility to share these standards with graduate students. Our collective understanding of these professional standards comes from our own practices as respected professionals in the disciplines and fields that constitute Art, Art History, and Design, and from our common belief that humans in general should treat each other decently, with respect and generosity.

In general, we believe that appropriate professional conduct includes:

- A. respect for others' personhood and diversity of personhood, including but not limited to race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, style of dress, manner of speaking, political viewpoint, etc.;
- B. a shared commitment to basic values such as fairness, equity, honesty, and respect;
- C. honest and accurate representation of one's identity, credentials, and professional background (e.g., no inflation of status or experiences on one's vita, and accurate representation of contributions to committee work or to collaborative projects and publications);
- D. awareness that appropriate professional conduct does not entail the transfer or appropriation of the work of others without shared decision-making, credit, and benefits—a standard for how to work appropriately within a community and to collaborate professionally;
- E. acknowledgment of the collaborative and social nature of the scholarly enterprise, which extends beyond use of formal scholarly citations to an acknowledgment of how fellow scholars have helped one to form ideas, review drafts, suggest revisions, etc.;
- F. respect for one's intellectual and creative ancestors, especially for those who created the discipline within which one works;
- G. actively and respectfully listening to and engaging with people, their ideas, and how they experience (and represent) cultural and intellectual institutions;
- H. respect for human subjects involved in research;

- I. explicit training of graduate students in sound disciplinary practices (including appropriate methodological instruction) in core courses and in the interactions that we have with one another as colleagues.

Occasionally, problems between faculty and students may arise. Section 5.3 of the “[Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)” document counsels the following: “If problems arise in the relationship between instructor and student, the parties shall attempt first to resolve them in informal, direct discussions. If the problem remains unresolved, then the student shall consult with the unit administrator.” For MFA students, “unit administrator” should first mean the Director of Graduate Studies and then, particularly if the DGS is involved, the Chair of the Department. In all cases, an informal resolution is preferred. If it is not possible to achieve a resolution, students may approach the Office of the [Ombudsperson](#), who can help to resolve the question. If no resolution can be found, then a grievance may be filed according to the guidelines laid out by the Graduate School.

Ethical Mentoring

Mentors are faculty members who take a special interest in helping students develop into successful members of the profession by helping them optimize their education experiences, assist their socialization into interdisciplinary culture, advance their personal growth as professionals, and help them find a job when their degree is finished.

Effective mentoring is characterized by mutual trust, understanding, and respect for students’ professional and personal needs. A successful mentor is prepared to deal with population-diversity issues, including ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. Mentoring should be oriented around the guiding principles of the graduate program.

Good mentoring practices include the following:

- careful, patient listening,
- building a relationship with a student beyond the classroom,
- using authority ethically,
- nurturing self-sufficiency,
- establishing focused time for one-on-one mentoring engagement,
- sharing work and professional ethics,
- providing introductions to important artists and scholars in the field,
- offering constructive feedback, and
- providing personalized training and advice about the formation of a professional profile and the formation of a professional ethos in the student’s chosen field/discipline.

Academic and Program Policies

Residence

The MSU MFA is a fully residential program of three academic years. Students are welcome to travel during summers and other breaks but are otherwise required to remain in residence in East Lansing unless they participate in an approved exchange program. The student must earn a minimum of 6

credits in the degree program in residence on campus during the final two semesters of enrollment in the program. Exceptions to this policy must have the prior approval of the student's Guidance Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Off-Campus Study

Opportunities to study outside of MSU exist, whether at peer institutions in the [Big Ten](#) or through international institutions. Students are invited to consider such opportunities in consultation with their guidance committees.

Study Abroad / Study Away

Where there is an exceptional fit of a study abroad/study away experience with the development and progress of MFA candidates, the Director of Graduate Studies should be apprised of their admission to ensure rationale is being considered in consultation with guidance committees. MFA students should work with the study abroad/study away instructors, the Office of Education Abroad, their major professor and/or committee, and the CAL Dean's office to ensure their experience comes at as low a credit load as possible. Not more than three credits outside of an instructor's area of expertise may be offered to graduates. Graduate study abroad should generally be independent study appropriate to level and circumstance. For further information, please see the AAHD Study Abroad/Study Away Policy.

Summer Experience

Students are encouraged to conduct research on and off campus which could include residencies during their first and/or second summers. Students should consider such opportunities in consultation with their exploration or guidance committees.

Transfer Credits

Transfer credits are not accepted, unless they have been completed through an off-campus plan of study approved by the major professor and/or guidance committee, Director of Graduate Studies, and Chair. Credits must be completed within the time limit for the degree.

Time Limit

The time limit for the completion of the requirements for the MFA is six calendar years from the date of enrollment in the first course included for degree certification.

Probation, Termination, and Withdrawal

Probation in the program of study occurs:

- a. Upon accumulation of 4 credits below 3.0
- b. As a result of a failed first attempt at an annual review
- c. As a result of a failed first attempt at Final Review

Termination from the program of study occurs:

- a. Upon accumulation of the 7th credit below 3.0 in courses counted toward the degree
- b. As a result of a second failed attempt at an annual review
- c. As a consequence of any probationary review
- d. Upon failure to meet College and University degree requirements

- e. Upon accumulation of 9 credits of deferred credit, not including STA 898
- f. As a result of research misconduct or dishonesty
- g. As a result of a failed second attempt at Final Review

A letter of warning will be sent to a student by the Graduate Director when termination is being considered. The letter will explain the expectations, procedures, and timeline necessary to remain in the program.

Withdrawal from Michigan State University must be initiated by the student. The student is expected to communicate withdrawal with their Major Professor and AAHD Graduate Director prior to initiating withdrawal procedures.

Academic Standards and Grading Policies

During the semester leading to the completion of the first year, students must participate in the first-year review. At the end of the second year of study, students will participate in a Second-year review. A student may accumulate no more than 9 credits with a grade below 3.0 in courses that are to be counted toward the degree.

Incompletes may be taken for medical reasons. Students are required to complete the work for the course by the midpoint of the semester following the incomplete.

Application to Graduate

Candidates for the Master of Fine Arts program must complete the [online graduation application](#) form on or before the end of the first week of the semester you expect to complete your degree requirements.

Graduate School Policies

Integrity and Safety in Research and Creative Activities

Each student and graduate advisor is provided with document guidelines for Integrity in Research and creative activities. For more information about MSU's policies on copyright, plagiarism, and intellectual property, etc, refer to the graduate school's website found [here](#).

All students must follow [Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities](#) including academic honesty, crediting of published and unpublished work of others properly, collegiality in scholarly interactions and sharing of resources, and compliance with institutional requirements.

All students must adhere to the Office of Radiation, Chemical, and Biological Safety (ORCBS) regulations and policies concerning safety and security in materials use. Approval from University Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) and/or from the All-University Committee for Animal Use and Care (AUC/AUC) must be granted in advance of any project using animal or human subjects if needed. Information on how to comply can be found at humanresearch.msu.edu and aucauc.msu.edu.

While it is the responsibility of the student to be aware of and comply with such requirements, practical assistance on material safety and security can be offered by departmental safety officers and faculty advisors.

Responsible Conduct of Research Requirements (RCR)

Integrity in research and creative activities is based not only on sound disciplinary practice but also on a commitment to basic personal values such as fairness, equity, honesty, and respect. These guidelines are intended to promote high professional standards by everyone—faculty, staff, and students alike.

Students are required to complete all RCR requirements in order to graduate. Those requirements include the following:

1. Verification of successful completion of all four CITI Modules: Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research, Authorship, Plagiarism, and Research Misconduct, must be printed/saved and emailed to AAHD Graduate Secretary, LouAnne Snider, by the end of the first semester of enrollment.
2. Faculty initiate six hours of discussion-based training in RCR in the following courses: STA 890, the first MFA seminar, STA 891, the MFA pedagogy seminar, and STA 893, MFA Professional Seminar.

CITI Module Navigation

- Go to the [MSU Office of Regulatory Affairs website](#)
- Login to [CITI](#)
- Go to "[Add a Course](#)"
- Select "[Not at this time](#)" for sections #1 & #2
- Select "[MSU Graduate School RCR Program](#)" in #3
- Select "[Not at this time](#)" for section #4
- Do not select anything in section #5
- Select "[no](#)" for #6

Go back to the [CITI](#) home page and click on the MSU Graduate School RCR Program course. Once you open the course, it will take you through all the required modules. Remember to print/save your successful (passing) completion of the module(s).

Other University Services and Policies

Office of Institutional Equity

[The Office of Institutional Equity](#) (OIE) reviews concerns related to discrimination and harassment based on age, color, gender, gender identity, disability status, height, marital status, national origin, political persuasion, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, and weight under the University's Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP) and Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (RVSM). OIE staff is available to provide information on the policies, connect MSU community members to resources, investigate complaints, and provide training.

Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (RVSM)

Most MSU employees are mandatory reporters of violations of the Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct [policy](#). Employees are obligated to promptly report incidents of sexual harassment, sexual violence, sexual misconduct, sexual exploitation, stalking, and relationship violence that (1) are observed or learned about in their professional capacity; and (2) involve a member of the university community or occurred at a university-sponsored event or on university property. Employees are only required to report relationship violence and sexual misconduct of which they become aware in their capacity as a University employee, not in their personal capacity. If, as a student or employee, you need to file a report of RVSM, you can do so [here](#). Such complaints are handled through the MSU Police and/or the Office of Institutional Equity ([OIE](#)), which reviews concerns related to discrimination and harassment based on age, color, gender, gender identity, disability status, height, marital status, national origin, political persuasion, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, and weight under the University's Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP) and Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (RVSM).

Accommodations for Disability

The Resource Center for People with Disabilities (RCPD) is committed to lead Michigan State University in maximizing ability and opportunity for full participation by persons with disabilities. Students may work with RCPD to identify and [report](#) a disability, generating an accommodation plan that assists faculty and students in their work together without disclosing personal information.

If conflicts should arise from issues of disability, an informal resolution is preferred. If, as a student or employee, you need to file a report regarding discrimination on the basis of disability, please follow the regular departmental grievance policy first, by informing the DGS and, if appropriate, the Chair. If no informal resolution can be found within the department, then the [OIE](#) will review such concerns under the University's Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP).

Student Parent Resource Center

The [SPRC](#) provides support, resources, campus, and community connections for all MSU student parents through graduation and beyond. In addition, this office helps non-traditional students achieve their goals, create two-generation success, and establish long-term connections with the University.

Religious Holidays

Michigan State University has long had the policy to permit students, faculty/academic staff, and support staff to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith. Information on the religious holiday calendar and how to accommodate religious observation in instructional activities is available [here](#).

Grief absence policy

AAHD is sensitive to the bereavement process of students who have lost a family member or who is experiencing emotional distress from a similar tragedy and we work to accommodate students so that they are not academically disadvantaged in their classes or other academic work. The university [policy](#) emphasizes the student's responsibility to notify the guidance committee chair and the DGS, if needed, to provide verification, and to complete all missed work. The guidance committee chair will work with the student to determine the length of the absence, to receive verification, and to make reasonable accommodations so that the student is not penalized for the absence.

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