

## THESIS INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS

A Thesis exhibition is the formal presentation of the student's artwork in which the student demonstrates advanced professional competence. The student selects the work in the final exhibition under the direction of faculty in their area of concentration. A written document, supporting the student's artwork and following the guidelines of the East Carolina University Graduate School, is also required. The final exhibition and the written documentation are the concluding requirements of an MFA as a terminal degree in Art.

The written thesis follows the format and procedures for thesis requirements, as defined by the East Carolina University Graduate School. The written thesis for the MFA degree is a support document to the thesis itself, which is the thesis exhibition of artwork.

Applications for all graduate thesis exhibitions (fall or spring) must be made through the Gray Gallery and the Graduate Program Director. To initiate the process for a Thesis exhibition, the student must submit a completed and signed Intent to Exhibit Form to the Graduate Program Director, two semesters before the anticipated exhibition.

Failure to do so will withdraw the option to exhibit. The Intent to Exhibit Form must be signed by the student, the thesis chairperson, the Graduate Program Director, and the representative of the exhibition venue. If a student intends to exhibit during the fall semester, it will be the responsibility of the student to find an exhibition space, provided the student has the approval of the thesis chairperson. The thesis committee must approve any exhibition venue outside of East Carolina University.

The Wellington B. Gray Gallery hosts an MFA Thesis Exhibition. Thesis students intending to exhibit at the Gray Gallery must comply with the procedures and regulations established by the School of Art and Design Galleries.

The School of Art and Design must approve all promotional material for group exhibitions in the Gray Gallery. If it is an exhibition outside of Gray Gallery, the thesis chairperson must approve all promotional material.

## Semester Before the Thesis Year

When preparing for the year-2 Review, the student will select a Thesis topic and Thesis Chairperson. The Thesis Chairperson must have a graduate or associate graduate faculty status in the student's declared concentration. Should the student wish to change their thesis director, the matter will be brought before the Graduate Program Director with the student and the Thesis Chairperson present. If not resolved then, the case will be brought before the School of Art and Design Graduate Committee.

The student will select thesis committee members in consultation with the Thesis Chairperson. The thesis committee is composed of a faculty member from the student's discipline who serves as the chairperson, two other graduate or associate graduate faculty from the School of Art and Design who serve as readers. Other members from another school, department, or specialists in the field may serve as consultants. All committee members, except for the consultants, must hold graduate faculty status (full or associate). Any subsequent changes in the thesis committee must have the approval of the thesis director and the student.

After the thesis topic has been selected and approved by the thesis chairperson, the student will write a thesis prospectus containing the following components.

- a. Problem statement
- b. Specific aims
- c. Methodologies and influences
- d. Projected outcomes
- e. A bibliography of materials on the topic

The student will submit the thesis prospectus to each thesis committee member. Shortly after that, the student will meet with the thesis chairperson and committee members for the year-2 Review. When approved by the Committee, the student will submit the Masters Pre-Thesis Research Approval Form and MFA Thesis Committee Signature Form to the Graduate Program Director. Completed forms will be forwarded to the Graduate School for approval, and a section of ART7000 thesis will be created for the student. Completing this process officially confirms the student's candidacy for the Master of Fine Arts.

When ECU or its affiliates are engaged in an activity that meets the definition of human research, UMCIRB review is required. All human research must apply protections for human participants as mandated by regulations and standards outlined in federal, state, and local laws and institutional policies. All proposed human research activities must be submitted to the UMCIRB prospectively for Review and approval. Investigators must obtain UMCIRB approval before beginning any human research activities. The UMCIRB also utilizes the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) guidance entitled "Guidance on Engagement of Institutions in Human Subjects Research" to determine when the institution is engaged in human research activities. Students whose thesis projects involve research with human subjects must submit, with the title of the thesis, a brief description of how said human subjects would be used for the study and receive IRB approval [<https://rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/>].

## Summer Before the Thesis Year

Working closely with the Thesis Director, the MFA Candidate will develop an outline for the creative thesis (exhibition) and the report (written thesis) based on the thesis prospectus. This step will help with the structure and organization of thesis work in the upcoming year.

## The Thesis Year

This final year is an exciting time when candidates' research during their graduate studies will yield much-anticipated results. All the preparation both in creative work and research will continue to inform the thesis process for the candidate. The Thesis Director and the Committee will help assess the candidates' work as well as pace their progress throughout the year. Successful thesis process is outlined with the following:

- a. Work: Thesis Exhibition
- b. Report: Written Thesis
- c. Review: Oral Defense
- d. Publish: Electronic Submission

Once again, the thesis doesn't have to be an obstacle. It is one of the most valuable moments during graduate studies as things fit into place; your work informs research, and your research informs work.

## The Thesis Semester

### 1. Thesis Timeline (Spring 2024)

- a. Exhibition Schedule / if Gray Gallery
  - Semester Week 8 Install
  - Semester Week 8 Open
  - Semester Week 10 MFA Artist Talks / suggested
  - Semester Week 11 MFA Thesis Defense / suggested
  - Semester Week 11 Reception
  - Semester Week 12 De-install
- b. Committee Meetings
  - Beginning of the semester, 3<sup>rd</sup> formal meeting with the Committee
    - review of thesis work
    - document writing, second draft
  - After thesis install, 4<sup>th</sup> formal meeting with the Committee
    - review of the thesis exhibition
    - document writing, the final draft
- c. Thesis Defense
  - Semester Week 11 MFA Thesis Defense / suggested
- d. Thesis Submission
  - Semester Week 15 Written document submission to SoAD Director for approval/signature
  - Semester Week 16 Written document submission to Vireo due [<https://vireo.ecu.edu>]

### 2. MFA Thesis Exhibition

The culminating experience for the School of Art and Design's Master of Fine Arts in Art (MFA) candidates is the thesis exhibition. After three years of hard work, this exhibition represents the development of their artistic voice and skills through a cohesive body of work through a conceptual, technical, and ideological discourse of the candidate's concentration area. It is a demonstration of the highest level of professional competency in the visual arts and design.

### 3. MFA Written Thesis

The MFA degree also requires the completion of a written thesis in support of the visual thesis. The written thesis must comply with the regulations of the concentration area as well as the general requirements of the Graduate School, as outlined in the Manual of Basic Requirements for Theses and Dissertations [<http://libguides.ecu.edu/vireo/etd>]. The written thesis may not serve as the final body of work and is secondary to, and in support of the thesis exhibition.

The written thesis must demonstrate the candidate's understanding of the history (conceptual, technical, ideological, etc.) of the specific concentration area relevant to the thesis topic and work, as well as how the candidate's art or design work builds on the knowledge of the discipline.

The document must provide a thorough background and context for the topic. There should be specific historical and contemporary examples of artists or designers and specific artworks or design works that have some relationship, impact or influence on the topic. If relevant, this background should include the same broad discussion in terms of technique, ideology, etc. Appropriate bibliographic citation of historical and contemporary references related to the topic and work is required.

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### 4. MAEd Written Thesis

The Thesis is a rigorous research and writing activity that conforms to scholarly standards and guidelines established by ECU's Graduate School. The thesis is a synthesis of your studies and documentation of your contribution to the professional art education body of knowledge.

You select a Thesis Director who will assist you in selecting your thesis committee, writing your preliminary thesis statement, and guiding you through IRB (institutional review board) approval as necessary. Your Thesis Director is designated as the teacher of record for ART 7000. The Manual of Basic Requirements for Theses and Dissertations is available on the Graduate School's Web site to guide your work.

The thesis writing process is intense and requires consistent communication with your committee, who will provide guidance and feedback on your ideas and your writing. Preparing a thesis requires continuous revisions of draft documents until you and your committee agree that your thesis document thoroughly presents your research and meets all University writing standards. If you wish to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD) or a Doctor of Education (EdD), the thesis option is suggested because it would provide practice conducting research and doing scholarly writing.

ECU Thesis Website: Vireo Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Submission Service [<https://libguides.ecu.edu/vireo/etd>]  
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5. Required Elements of Written Thesis [<http://libguides.ecu.edu/c.php?g=694874&p=4925841>]

Abstract

Blank Page

Title Page (first page counted but not printed in footer; lower-case Roman numeral i)

Copyright Page (second page counted but not printed in footer; lower-case Roman numeral ii)

Signature Page (third page counted but not printed in footer; lower-case Roman numeral iii)

Table of Contents (next sequential lower-case Roman numeral, but not listed in ToC)

List of Tables/Figures (as appropriate; next sequential lower-case Roman numeral; listed in ToC)

List of Plates (as appropriate; next sequential lower-case Roman numeral; listed in ToC)

List of Symbols/Abbreviations (as appropriate; next sequential lower-case Roman numeral; listed in ToC)

Preface (optional page with the next sequential lower-case Roman numeral; listed in ToC)

Body of Thesis (Arabic number; first page of each section is counted but no footer; listed in ToC)

References (Arabic number; listed in ToC)

Plates (as appropriate; Arabic number; listed in ToC)

Appendices (as appropriate; Arabic number; listed in ToC)

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6. Formatting of Written Thesis [[http://libguides.ecu.edu/vireo/etd/formatting\\_manual](http://libguides.ecu.edu/vireo/etd/formatting_manual)]

Inserting Leader Lines for Table of Contents [[http://libguides.ecu.edu/ld.php?content\\_id=34040817](http://libguides.ecu.edu/ld.php?content_id=34040817)]

Section Break vs. Page Break [[Office 365](#)]

Footer: Page Number [[http://libguides.ecu.edu/ld.php?content\\_id=34040738](http://libguides.ecu.edu/ld.php?content_id=34040738)]

7. Archive of SoAD Thesis Documents [<http://thescholarship.ecu.edu/handle/10342/29>]