

DESIGN – M.F.A. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS
Revised: Spring 2013
Graduate Council Approval: June 10, 2013

MASTER of FINE ARTS (MFA) PROGRAM

1) Admissions Requirements

Applicants to the MFA in Design hold an undergraduate degree with a minimum of a 3.0 GPA in design or related field such as art, art history, or architecture. They should show excellent promise in design, as demonstrated by portfolio review (see below), and have had suitable course preparation in foundation areas such as two-and-three-dimensional composition, drawing, media, computer graphics, design and art history, and related social sciences, as well as in the area of study they wish to pursue. UC Davis Department of Design seeks applicants to its MFA program who are interested in design theory and human-centered design applications, and are highly motivated to study in our interdisciplinary program.

Application Requirements

- A completed online application submitted through the Office of Graduate Studies.
- Transcripts of all previously attended universities
- Three letters of recommendation
- Writing sample and statement of purpose in the form of a 600 word essay in response to the following: "Discuss how your past experiences and the opportunities you recognize at UC Davis (i.e. specific faculty and resources) will converge in the work you anticipate doing for the MFA degree in Design."
- Current CV
- A portfolio uploaded at the time of application of creative design work or written research into design that is relevant to the proposed course of study including no more than one Word .doc and/or 15-20 images or video segments (limited to four minutes total view time). The priority deadline for the application is December 15th to be fully eligible for fellowship funding and academic appointments, the final deadline is April 30th.

The decision to recommend admission to the Dean of Graduate Studies will be made by the Graduate Advisor in Design based upon the consensus of the Admissions Committee after discussion of all applicants' materials and portfolios during a faculty meeting. See section below on Committees for more information about the Admissions Committee.

a) **Prerequisites:** Undergraduate studies should include a minimum of 20 units of university level design or topics related to the areas of design taught at UC Davis.

b) **Deficiencies.** Some flexibility in the stated requirements is essential to incorporate candidates with broad experiential backgrounds. Students who are deficient in background academic preparation, but are otherwise well-qualified, may be admitted, but will be required to complete appropriate undergraduate courses at UCD to provide the necessary background for success with graduate studies in Design. These courses must be completed prior to or within the first year of enrollment in the Design MFA program by earning a letter grade of "B" or better.

2) Master's Plan I.

This UC Davis plan requires a minimum of 48 units of graduate and upper division courses

(the 100 and 200 series only). At least 12 of the 48 units must be graduate work in the major field. In addition, candidates shall submit a suitable project in lieu of a thesis. The project serves as the capstone requirement.

The requirements of the MFA in Design exceed these minimum requirements as follows: the Design MFA requires 72 units of graduate and upper division courses, of which at least 26 units of 299/299D are required. Not more than 12 units of upper division undergraduate courses are permitted to meet the 72-unit requirement. Supporting written documentation of the thesis project is required of each candidate.

3) Course Requirements - Core and Electives (72 units required)

a) Core Courses (46 units total):

- DES221 Seminar (4 units)
- DES222 Seminar (4 units)
- DES223 Seminar (4 units)
- DES225 Studio (4 units)
- DES290 Seminar (4 units)
- DES 299 Individual Study (14 units minimum)
- DES 299D Comprehensive Project (12 units total)

b) Elective Courses—students may choose from the courses below (26 units total):

- DES224 Seminar (limited to 8 units)
- DES225 Seminar (may be repeated as an elective)
- DES290 Seminar (may be repeated as an elective)
- DES299 (beyond the required 14 units)
- Upper division undergraduate courses (limited to 12 units)
- Graduate level courses in relevant areas -- due to the interdisciplinary nature of Design, students are highly encouraged to seek out courses in subject matters that could enhance the research knowledge base for Design.

c) **Summary:** A minimum course load is 12 units each academic quarter. Per UC regulations, students cannot enroll in more than 12 units of graduate level courses (200) or more than 16 units of combined undergraduate and graduate level (100, 200, 300) courses per quarter. Foreign language and art history courses are not required.

46 units core courses

26 units electives

72 UNITS TOTAL

4) Special requirements: Three oral presentations are required:

1. For first year students a progress review with their Thesis Advisory Committee is held **late in spring quarter** of the first year. Students are encouraged to present all of the work they've completed during the year, even work that won't be applied to their final thesis. After this review, the student will be informed if he or she will be permitted to continue to the second year.

If the results of the review are satisfactory, no notifications are made to Graduate Studies and the student continues through the program. If the results of the review show a student's progress to be unsatisfactory and the student is put on probation, the Graduate Advisor is notified by the student's Thesis Advisor and in turn notifies the Office of Graduate Studies. See Section just below on Academic Probation for more information on this process, as well at:

http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/programs/degReq/2012_GDRA.pdf or

2. For second year students an interim review is held **early-to-mid winter quarter**. The student shall meet with the Thesis Advisory Committee to evaluate the student progress in the program. Students are encouraged to prepare a brief visual presentation about their progress to date and plans for future work. The result of this review is permission to advance to candidacy, by filing the advancement to candidacy form, and to then begin work on the Design 299D (exhibition or thesis project) course in spring quarter. The official Thesis Committee is appointed at the time of advancement to candidacy. For more information, see #7 Advancement to Candidacy below.

3. A final review for second year students occurs in conjunction with the MFA exhibition, at the **end of spring quarter**, usually the first week of June. This review usually takes place in the exhibition space where the student can speak in detail about the exhibition and answer questions from the Thesis Committee. For more information, see #8 Final Thesis Project below.

Academic Probation

Pending the results of the first-year review, students whose academic performance is less than satisfactory or who are not meeting program requirements are placed on academic probation and given a timeline for removing their deficiencies and returning to good standing. Students on academic probation are subject to disqualification.

Disqualification

Disqualification means that, for one or more of the academic reasons listed below, a student is no longer eligible to continue graduate study at the University of California, Davis. A student may be disqualified **ONLY** by the Dean of Graduate Studies and in accord with the procedures outlined below. The term “disqualification” should **NOT** be confused with “dismissal.” Dismissal is removal from graduate study based on behavior or conduct.

Unsatisfactory Progress/ Probation/Disqualification

A student whose progress is judged unsatisfactory is regarded as a student on probation. This includes the student whose annual evaluation indicates unsatisfactory progress or the student who receives written notice from the Advisory/Guidance Committee or Graduate Adviser that progress is unsatisfactory. If the student fails to meet the requirements specified in the notices sent by the Dean of Graduate Studies or by the Advisory/Guidance Committee, the student will be subject to disqualification from further graduate study in the graduate program. For a full explanation of disqualification, go to http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/facstaff/policies/disqual_appeal.pdf.

Appeals

A student who is subject to disqualification, or who has been disqualified, may submit an appeal within 30 days for reconsideration for cause to the Administrative Committee of the Graduate Council. Such appeals will be considered only if based upon appropriate cause such as (a) procedural error, (b) judgments based upon non-academic criteria, (c) verifiable evidence of personal bias, or (d) specific mitigating circumstances contributing to the student’s performance. Questions of academic judgment or evaluation will not be considered as an appropriate basis for submission or consideration of a student’s appeal of disqualification. The Administrative Committee will make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Studies as to the disposition of the case and the Dean will make the decision. The Dean will review the appeal and a final decision rendered within 60 days. The outcome of the appeal is final. For appeal procedures, see the *Graduate Studies Adviser’s Handbook*.

5) Committees

a. Admissions Committee

The Faculty of the MFA in Design will constitute the Admissions Committee. The Graduate Advisor for the MFA Design Program will be the Committee Chair. The Admissions Committee will screen initial applications and select candidates for an interview. Faculty will determine the number of students to be admitted and compare the study interests of applicants to select a cohesive class group of students with varied discipline interests to complement faculty expertise. Faculty will then review final applications and vote on recommended admits. Applicants will be ranked and the number of applicants to be accepted will be notified of the opportunity to enter the program. Students who were not accepted and students in a "wait list" category will be notified at the same time. Graduate Studies will approve and notify selected students. A preliminary offer of department fellowship funds, non-resident tuition, academic appointments, and scholarships will be addressed in the initial letter to the applicant. Students will be expected to sign and return a statement of intent to register.

b. Advising and Thesis Committees

Incoming graduate students will be introduced to the entire faculty and research interests will be shared and discussed. The Graduate Advisor will assist each student with his/her initial program development and written study plan. At the end of the second quarter, each student will select a Thesis Advisory Committee composed of three faculty members, each committee must have two Design faculty members, but the third committee member may come from another campus unit. The student designates one of the Design faculty members as chair and major professor (Thesis Advisor). The official thesis committee is appointed at the time of advancement to candidacy, typically the Advisory Committee members become the Thesis Committee. The Thesis Advisor will sign off on paperwork at the culmination of studies and serve as the student's primary advisor. The committee will work with the student to review, modify, and finalize the program of study. The initial study plan and any committee-approved revisions will be kept on file in the advising office.

Any student may request a review at any time with the committee and invited others. Each student is subject to three formal reviews as stated above in #4 Special Requirements.

c. MFA Program Committee

The MFA Program Committee will be composed of three faculty members from various disciplines within the Department of Design in addition to the Graduate Advisor, and the Graduate Program Coordinator. Their term of service will be two years and their responsibility will be to coordinate administration of the MFA program with the Graduate Advisor and the Department Chair.

6) Advising Structure and Mentoring

The **Graduate Advisor**, appointed by the Dean of Graduate Studies, is a resource for information on academic requirements, policies and procedures. Students entering the MFA program will be introduced to the full Design faculty and their research areas. By the end of winter quarter, students should have selected their **Thesis Advisor** and their committee for the thesis project. The Thesis committee is comprised of at least three Senate faculty, including the Thesis Advisor. At least two committee members need to be Design faculty. The Thesis Advisor provides academic advice and direction and will usually be the faculty member most immediately concerned with their thesis project.

The **Graduate Program Coordinator** provides administrative and practical advice to all graduate students including advice on grants, funding, graduate student researcher opportunities, and registration for courses, teaching assistantships, and other areas of administrative direction. Information about deadlines for fellowships and related issues can be obtained through the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Should students not be able to resolve an issue or answer a question in consultation with their Thesis Advisor or members of their Advisory Committee or with the Graduate Program Coordinator, they should arrange to meet with the MFA Graduate Advisor. The department Chair should be contacted if the above stated contacts do not resolve the issue of concern. Between the Thesis Advisor, the Graduate Program Coordinator, and the Graduate Advisor, the full range of advising support is available.

The **Mentoring Guidelines** can be found in the graduate student *Design MFA Handbook* http://design.ucdavis.edu/graduate/forms/mfa_handbook.pdf.

7) Advancement to Candidacy

MFA students must complete the Advancement to Candidacy application after successfully completing the second year interim review with approval to proceed by their Thesis Committee. See #4 Special Requirements above. The result of this review is permission to advance to candidacy and to begin work on the Design 299D (exhibition or thesis project) course in spring quarter. Should the student not be prepared for advancement to candidacy, a clear outline of deficiencies will be provided to the student along with a timeline for rectification of deficiencies in the graduate work. If the student is unable to meet the timeline, he/she will be subject to disqualification from the program if they do not address deficiencies in the first year.

Need to include boiler-plate information from section 7 of the template regarding the university paperwork/procedure for advancing to candidacy. Every student must file an official application for Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts after completing one-half of their course requirements and at least one quarter before completing all degree requirements; this is typically done at the end of winter quarter of the second year, following the students second review. The Candidacy for the Degree of Master form can be found online at: <http://www.gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/forms/>. A completed form includes a list of courses the student will take to complete degree requirements. If changes must be made to the student's course plan after s/he has advanced to candidacy, the Graduate Advisor must recommend these changes to Graduate Studies. Students must have their Graduate Advisor and committee Chair sign the candidacy form before it can be submitted to Graduate Studies. If the candidacy is approved, the Office of Graduate Studies will send a copy to: the appropriate graduate staff person and the student; the Thesis Committee Chair will also receive a copy, if applicable. If the Office of Graduate Studies determines that a student is not eligible for advancement, the department and the student will be told the reasons for the application's deferral. Some reasons for deferring an application include: grade point average below 3.0, outstanding "I" grades in required courses, or insufficient units.

8) Final Thesis Project

The MFA in Design requires a thesis project (Masters Plan 1). The thesis project will encompass a minimum of 12 units of work and will be completed while enrolled in DES299D. The work may be the presentation a body of creative work accompanied by substantial written and visual documentation of the design process underlying the concepts of the work. This project might take several forms depending on the graduate student's area of interest, some possible examples include: a) a collection of original apparel or textiles, b) a series of graphic work in print or digital media, c) an interior architecture project presented in visual form or d) an exhibition/multi-media presentation based on a research topic. All thesis projects and documentation will be the result of original research and creative activities conducted by the student. The initial drafts of the thesis proposal are due during week five in Fall Quarter of the second year. The thesis project process is overseen by the student's Thesis Advisor. An illustrated abstract (approx. 300 words) is due to the student's Thesis Committee by May 1 of year 2. A written support paper of approximately 3000 words is due to the student's Thesis Committee by June 1 of year 2.

After observing the work within two weeks of the opening of the MFA exhibition (see Special requirement #3 above) and reviewing the final support paper, the Thesis Committee makes a recommendation about

awarding the degree of MFA. The Thesis Advisor completes the Form GS340 (see appendix for links to forms) and gives it to the Graduate Advisor for processing.

A candidate who receives a majority of “not pass” votes from the Thesis Committee will be provided with a written evaluation from the Committee with clear instructions on what is expected in preparation for a second exhibition/further work on the project. The second exhibition will be reviewed in the same manner as the first. The program typically allows for up to a two-year window for the remounting of the thesis show and the second thesis review. Should a student’s work not be accepted at the second review by the Thesis Committee, a recommendation for disqualification from the program will be made to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

9) Normative Time to Degree

The normative time to degree for the M.F.A. program in Design is six quarters (two years). Normally a student takes 5 quarters to advance to candidacy, and then is in candidacy during their sixth and final quarter.

10) Typical Time Line and Sequence of Events

FIRST YEAR SUGGESTED SCHEDULE:

FALL QUARTER

- DES 221 THEORIES AND ISSUES IN DESIGN (4)
- ELECTIVE (4)
- DES 299 (4) OR ELECTIVE (4)

WINTER QUARTER

- DES 222 RESEARCH METHODS AND CRITICAL WRITING FOR DESIGN (4) or DES 223 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND ETHICS IN DESIGN (4) (offered in alternate years)
- DES 225 (4)
- DES 299 (4)
- At end of winter student finalizes Thesis Advisor and Committee Choices.

SPRING QUARTER

- DES 224 (4) OR OTHER ELECTIVE
- DES 290 (4) OR ELECTIVE (4)
- DES 299 (4)
- First year review at end of spring quarter

SUMMER QUARTER:

- SUGGESTED DES 292 FOR SUMMER INTERNSHIP, VARIABLE CREDIT

SECOND YEAR

FALL QUARTER

- DES 290 (4) OR ELECTIVE
- DES 299 (4-8)
- ELECTIVE (4)

WINTER QUARTER

- DES 223 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND ETHICS IN DESIGN (4) or DES 222 RESEARCH METHODS AND CRITICAL WRITING FOR DESIGN (4) (offered in alternate years)
- DES 225 (4) OR ELECTIVE (4)
- DES 299 (4-8)
- Early winter quarter, interim review with full committee with recommendations to advance to

candidacy by January 30th.

SPRING QUARTER

- DES 299D (12) – MFA EXHIBITION
Final review end of spring quarter

Unit total 72

11) Sources of funding. Students are funded with Teaching Assistantships, Reader and Graduate Student Research appointments as well as fellowship funding through the Office of Graduate Studies. Students regularly apply for university travel grants, fellowships, and residency awards.

12) PELP, In Absentia and Filing Fee status. Information about PELP (Planned Educational Leave), In Absentia (reduced fees when researching out of state), and Filing Fee status can be found in the Graduate Student Guide: <http://www.gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/publications/>