| MFA Written Component: Thesis and Non-thesis options | All M.F.A. candidates produce a written component as part of the requirements of the degree. The student’s graduate committee will determine whether the written component is to be a formal thesis or a non-thesis.  

The **formal thesis** is a scholarly research project on the objectives, theoretical context, and/or historical and cultural points of reference of the M.F.A. work. Candidates writing a formal thesis must register for six hours of A&D 698 (Research MFA Thesis) in addition to the 60 hours required for the M.F.A. They must also adhere to the Graduate School thesis requirements.  

The **non-thesis** written component might be a process paper, a research paper, or other written creative endeavor, such as an artist book. Candidates not required to write a formal thesis are also **not** required to take research hours in addition to the 60 hours required for the M.F.A.  

*The written component (whether thesis or non-thesis) does NOT constitute nor substitute for the exhibition of the final body of work.* |
| Graduate School Thesis Requirements | The Graduate School has specific guidelines regarding title page format, margin requirements, order of sections, page numbering, etc.  

If you do not meet these requirements, the Graduate School will not accept your thesis and you will not complete your degree.  

For Graduate School Thesis Office workshops, guidelines, and checklists go to:  
| Thesis Appointment | **The last Friday of exam week** is the last date to submit the MFA thesis via Electronic Thesis Deposit (ETD) with the Graduate School.  

MFA candidates must also turn in all required forms (including GS-9 and GS 32 originals) at mandatory, scheduled final appointment in the Thesis/Dissertation Office, Room 170, Young Hall (YONG).  

You **MUST** make an appointment to deposit your thesis online at:  

The four forms that you need to complete before your thesis appointment can be found here:  
Department Thesis Checker

Make an appointment with the Department of Art and Design thesis checker well in advance of the Graduate School due date, but no later than **3 weeks prior to your oral exam.**

The A&D Department thesis checker will check for formatting errors, if any, but does NOT guarantee that the Graduate School will accept the thesis.

The A&D Department thesis checker is not responsible for content, grammatical or typographical errors.

---

**Suggested STRUCTURE and KEY COMPONENTS for Department of Art and Design MFA Thesis**

All decisions regarding content and specific components of your thesis are to be determined in discussion with your graduate committee. The following is provided as a possible structure only, not as rules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main criteria</th>
<th>Text Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • originality of research  
• significance of contribution to knowledge/practice in art & design discipline | MFA Project-based Thesis: approximately 15 (fifteen) pages  
Research-based Thesis: approximately 50 (fifty) pages |
| 1. Title page  
2. Dedication (optional)  
3. Acknowledgments  
4. Table of Contents  
5. List of Tables (if any) | 6. List of Figures (if any)  
7. Abstract  
8. **TEXT** (15-50 pages)  
9. Bibliography  
10. Appendices |

**Department of Art and Design approved style formats**

  [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)

- **Chicago**  *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed.  
  [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/02/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/02/)

- **MLA**  *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed.  
  [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/ MLA style](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/ MLA style)
# MFA Thesis Guidelines

## Research-Based Thesis
(independent of MFA Exhibition Project)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract (max 350 words)</th>
<th>MFA Exhibition Project Thesis (related to MFA Exhibition Project)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• State research proposition/argument</td>
<td>• MFA Project proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss</td>
<td>• Discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background (how, why, what)</td>
<td>Background (how, why, what)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Contextual/Literature Review**
- Describe structure and scope of the review
- Critical review of key references in relation to argument
- Demonstrate gap in knowledge
- Position your research

**Methodology**
- Cite rationale for methodological approach
- Describe use of methods for generating/gathering and analyzing data/information

**Outcomes and analysis**
- Describe outcomes from application of methods
- Give critical evaluation of methods
- Analyze and interpret outcomes

**Conclusions**
Discuss:
- Extent to which objectives have been fulfilled
- Contribution to discipline
- Conclusions
- Strengths and limitations of the research
- Relationship of new knowledge to existing research
- Directions for future research
- Summary of thesis

**Appendices (optional)**

---

## MFA Exhibition Project Thesis
(related to MFA Exhibition Project)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract (max 350 words)</th>
<th>MFA Exhibition Project Thesis (related to MFA Exhibition Project)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• MFA Project proposal</td>
<td>• Discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss</td>
<td>Background (how, why, what)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Contextual/Literature Review**
- Cite work of others (cite references and use illustrations where appropriate) who work/have worked in a similar genre or whose work has inspired/informed your work.
- Locate your work in terms of historical and theoretical bases and contexts

**Methodology**
- Cite methods for gathering and generating information relevant to project
- Document development of new (or improvement of existing) techniques/processes if applicable.

**Production and analysis**
- Describe completed work both verbally and visually.
- Document process and technique
- Evaluate, analyze and interpret finished work

**Conclusions**
Discuss:
- Extent to which objectives have been fulfilled
- Contribution to discipline
- Conclusions
- Strengths and limitations of the project
- Relationship of new knowledge to existing research
- Directions for future research
- Summary of thesis

**Appendices (required)**
- List of works in MFA exhibition (title, date, dimension, medium)
- Printed visual documentation of works in MFA exhibition
MFA THESIS GUIDELINES, page 4 of 5

GRADUATE SCHOOL THESIS Deadlines

For further details, go to: http://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/about/calendar/deadlines.html


Two Weeks before Oral Exam

Last date for Graduate School to receive Form GS-8, Request for Appointment of Examining Committee. (Graduate secretary will initiate electronic form)

Friday before deadweek

Last date for students to pass the final examination (GS-7)

Friday before deadweek

Last date for Graduate School to receive final examination report (GS-7)

Friday of deadweek

Last date to submit MFA thesis via Electronic Thesis Deposit (ETD) with the Graduate School. Go to the following link for filing instructions:

http://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/research/thesis/process.html

Make an appointment to deposit thesis online at:


MFA candidates must also turn in all required forms (including GS-9 and GS-32 originals) at mandatory, scheduled final appointment in the Thesis/Dissertation Office, Room 170, Young Hall (YONG).

WARNING: DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DEADLINE TO MAKE APPOINTMENT. If the Graduate School finds that your thesis does not meet formatting requirements, your graduation date may be delayed.

https://www.cla.purdue.edu/ad/mfa/index.html

January 6, 2016
### REQUIRED VERSIONS OF THESIS

**DEADLINE:**
Friday of dead week

Five versions of the thesis are due by Friday of dead week. A sixth copy for the candidate is optional.

1. Electronic copy to Graduate School (via ETD; see guidelines above)
2-4. Three copies to A&D Visual Resource Library with Form 9 attached before title page:
   2. Archival-bound copy*
   3. Non-archival spiral-bound copy*
   4. Electronic copy on CD or DVD (No Form 9 on E-version, use Form 30 for the upload)
5. Archival-bound copy to Chair of Graduate Committee*
6. Optional: Archival-bound copy for candidate

**Archival and non-archival guidelines**

Archival requirements
- 100% cotton rag paper
- 20# weight, minimum
- Thesis binding (Thesis Binding, similar to a hard cover book, consists of 3 metal screw posts holding the cover, contents, and spine together.)

Non-archival requirements
- Regular office paper
- Coil binding
- Clear plastic cover
- Black plastic back cover

[https://www.cla.purdue.edu/ad/mfa/index.html](https://www.cla.purdue.edu/ad/mfa/index.html)  
January 6, 2016