

MFA THESIS AND GRADUATE REQUIREMENTS

THESIS INFORMATION

All second-year MFA students are required to develop a thesis throughout the year and present a thesis exhibition at the end of the year. MFA students will apply theory and method in a project, formulating a question and developing a potential answer that has a consideration of the broader implications of their practice (such as aesthetic, social, political, economic, and scientific, among others). A thesis is never a definite conclusion, but a moment within the student's development that demonstrates their ability to carry on their work outside the confines of the institution. The thesis exhibition work carries 6 academic SHUs (formerly "credits") in both semesters of the second year. The Thesis Committee awards the final three SHUs based on each student's exhibition.

Approval for Thesis

At each student's second Review Board, a determination is made as to whether a student can move on to his or her thesis year. This approval process is managed, and the specific faculty members participating in each Review Board ultimately determine approval. The outcome of the approval process is recorded in the student's Review Board folder and submitted back to the Registrar's Office.

Thesis Committee

The Thesis Committee is comprised of two graduate faculty advisors (the student's primary graduate studio advisor and a second graduate studio advisor), and is established in the fall semester of the second year. A third member, an arts professional, provided by SMFA at Tufts to participate in the student's final Thesis Committee meeting and review. At no time may a current faculty member teaching at SMFA at Tufts who is not a Graduate Advisor serve on the student's Thesis Committee. The student must establish their Thesis Committee, schedule the committee meetings, and submit the names of committee members and dates of the planned committee meetings to the Graduate Programs Office by the published deadline. The student must also provide a 1000-word thesis statement—a clear and coherent textual narrative of a student's process and intention of the student's artistic practice—to the committee at each meeting. This thesis statement should continue to develop and evolve throughout the course of the thesis year and the most up-to-date version presented at the committee meetings. The Thesis Committee meets three times over the course of the year in order to supervise the student's development and to bring support to their project. At the end of this first meeting, the committee will determine if additional meetings will be required beyond the mandatory meetings. The meetings are typically one hour long. Failure to stay on schedule may result in delay or cancellation of the student's thesis exhibition.

Final Thesis Review

Students are required to schedule a final review of their thesis with their Thesis Committee in their exhibition space. In the case of the large group exhibition, the Associate Director of Graduate Programs creates the Thesis Committee. Graduate Advisors serving on the student's Thesis Committee have the responsibility of extending or withholding credit for the exhibition. A grade of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory is noted, and each committee member provides a written evaluation.

Final Exhibition

The thesis year culminates in a final exhibition, typically held at the end of the final semester of study. A local venue, provided by SMFA at Tufts, is for students to present their exhibitions-this group exhibition includes all presenting MFA students. A student may choose to exhibit at another local venue at his or her own expense.

Thesis Visual Documentation

During the week of a student's third and final Thesis Committee meeting and Thesis Exhibition, they must submit 15 high-resolution images on CD of artwork created during their two-year program to the Associate Director of Graduate Programs. 10 of the 15 images must be documentation of their thesis exhibition. QuickTime, AIFF files, or DVDs of moving image and sound projects should be submitted.

THESIS AND REVIEW BOARD POLICIES

MFA candidates who are not making satisfactory progress as outlined below at any Review Board or Thesis Committee meeting may be placed on academic Probation or withdrawn from the program.

First Year Review Boards:

Review Board #1 (end of first semester):

- Students present their current research and art production
- Students demonstrate a growing ability to engage in discourse about their own work

Review Board #2 Approval for Thesis (end of second semester):

- Students present their current art production
- Students present a 500-word Thesis Statement based on their current work, research and practice (this will be placed in the student's official folder.)
- Students present a one-paragraph description of their proposed thesis with a 10-minute presentation of their proposed thesis plan (the written description will be placed in each student's official folder.)

Second Year Review Board and Thesis Committees:

Thesis Committee Meeting #1 (must take place by the mid-point of the third semester):

- 15-minute presentation of student's thesis plan
- Concrete work examples of student's proposed thesis
- Production schedule for proposed project, including dates and goals
- Draft #1 of 1,000-word Thesis Statement (this will be placed in the student's folder)

Review Board #3 (end of third semester):

- 15-minute presentation of student's thesis plan
- Evidence of thesis progress and concrete examples of thesis work
- Draft #1 of Thesis Statement

Thesis Committee Meeting #2 (must take place by the mid-point of the fourth semester):20-minute presentation of thesis plan with in-depth discussion of work and ideas

- Significant progress and demonstrated evidence of meeting benchmarks and goals for proposed thesis exhibition
- Updated production schedule for proposed project
- Draft #2 of 1,000 word Thesis Statement (this will be placed in the student's folder)

Final Thesis Committee Meeting (end of fourth semester):

- Students present Thesis Exhibition at the exhibition site
- 30-minute presentation of Thesis Exhibition with in-depth discussion of work and ideas
- Final 1,000 word Thesis Statement document (this will be placed in the student's folder)

REVIEW BOARD POLICIES:

Review Boards

The Review Board is an assessment and critique of a student's entire semester of work. The Review Board provides each student with the opportunity to articulate their intent, discuss process, and receive critical feedback and direction from faculty and peers. MFA students are required to have Review Boards in each of the first three semesters of the program. MFA students are required to peer-review one student in each of the three Review Board semesters. The Student Services Office communicates specific Review Board scheduling and procedural information each semester. Following each Review Board a written review from two Graduate Faculty members (including the student's Graduate Faculty Advisor) and one MFA student reviewer are placed in each student's file in the Student Services Office. Graduate Faculty Advisors sit on their advisees' Review Boards and Thesis Committees. At Review Board #3, Graduate Faculty Advisors determine whether each of their advisees has satisfactorily completed the Review Board and is making satisfactory progress on their thesis. At the conclusion of Review Board #3, Graduate Faculty Advisors sign a form that awards or withholds the six SHUs for MFA Thesis Exhibition that each student is attempting in the third semester of the program.

Approval for Thesis

Review Board #2 grants or denies approval to move on to the second year of the program and thesis by determining whether an MFA student is producing work at a graduate level. Any MFA student who is not meeting the graduate level work production standard will not be approved for thesis and may be put on Probation or withdrawn from the program. Approval is determined by each student's Graduate Faculty Advisor in consultation with the other faculty reviewer(s) on their second Review Board. The thesis approval decision is notated on a form that is submitted to the Student Services Office and filed in the student's Review Board folder.

Unsatisfactory Progress at Review Board #2 (Not Approved for Thesis)

MFA students who are not producing work at a graduate level as determined by the faculty members on Review Board #2 may be put on Probation or withdrawn from the program. For students placed on Probation, the faculty reviewers outline the following in writing at the conclusion of Review Board #2:

1. Clear expectations for returning to good standing and progressing to the second year of the program and thesis
2. Directives for work
3. Deadlines, which will not exceed the start of the following semester

A Probation Assessment Meeting (made up of the student's Review Board Faculty and a Senior Graduate Faculty) is scheduled for the second week of the student's third semester. At this meeting, the faculty determine if the student will be allowed to continue in the MFA program. If the student has made satisfactory progress, they receive Approval for Thesis. MFA students who have not met the standards outlined by the faculty at Review Board #2 will be subject to program withdrawal.

Failure to Make Progress through Thesis Year

At any point during the student's thesis year (second year), the Thesis Committee evaluating the student's work may decide not to approve a student to show their work in the final Thesis Exhibition if the student is not demonstrating proof of development of their thesis. In severe cases, evaluation of the student's work is discussed and evaluated by the SMFA at Tufts Graduate Steering Committee. Following the first and/or second Thesis Committee Meeting, the Thesis Committee gives students who are not making satisfactory progress the following in writing:

1. Clear expectations for returning to satisfactory Thesis Year progress
2. Directives for work
3. Deadlines

Thesis Exhibition Failure

- Students who have not successfully produced their proposed thesis project and final draft of their thesis statement on the day of their Final Thesis Committee meeting may be denied the opportunity to exhibit.
- Students must meet the expectation of the Thesis Committee in their final defense. If the Thesis Committee does not find the artwork and the defense satisfactory, students will be denied the opportunity to exhibit.
- If the student is denied the opportunity to exhibit, a committee is convened of three Senior Graduate Faculty (Final Thesis Committee Evaluators). This team of Final Thesis Committee Evaluators will evaluate the student's progress and make a final determination regarding whether the student should be withdrawn from the program.

Appeal Process for MFA Program Withdrawal

Individuals who are dismissed from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences for poor academic performance or progress may appeal the dismissal decision to the Office of the Dean. The full appeals process is detailed at:

<http://asegrad.tufts.edu/academic-dismissal-appeals-process>

Thesis Postponement for Non-Academic Reason

A student who must postpone their thesis due to external factors (non-academic reasons) will have the opportunity to exhibit in the fall at the Mission Hill Gallery or in an external venue chosen by the student at their expense. Students who postpone their thesis exhibition during the fall semester are not guaranteed a studio at the Mission Hill Building.

Please note: Any postponement that warrants a leave of absence must notify Tufts Student Services. The time to degree for the MFA program is two years. If a delay or postponement requires an extension of time, the GSAS Executive Committee must approve the extension. The form to apply for such an extension is available at:

<http://asegrad.tufts.edu/academic-dismissal-appeals-process>

GRADUATION

The Board of Trustees confers graduate degrees in August, February, and May. For information about applying for graduation, please visit

<http://students.tufts.edu/registrar/what-we-assist/apply-graduation/graduate-students>

Summer Session

MFA students may take a maximum of two of their four academic courses through the Summer Session. Course offerings during the summer are very limited and students are therefore strongly encouraged to complete their academic requirements during fall and spring semesters. Online catalogs are available in mid-February. For the summer session, MFA students register online following the instructions found on the Tufts Summer School website.

There are two Summer Sessions at Tufts:

<https://ase.tufts.edu/summer/session-registrationadmission.asp>

- Session 1 begins at the end of May and runs through the end of June.
- Session 2 starts the first week in July and ends in mid-August.

The same registration procedures apply for both sessions.

SMFA ATTENDANCE POLICY

- SMFA policy does not allow any more than two absences in any credit bearing course. If a student is absent from class twice without a reasonable (preferably documented) excuse, the student will receive a grade of NO CREDIT (NC) for the course in question, and this grade will appear on the student's transcript.
- Students taking a course for credit who are tardy to class three times (more than 20 minutes late) will not receive credit.

2 ABSENCES = No Credit Awarded

3 LATE ARRIVALS = No Credit Awarded

SMFA AT TUFTS TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

Teaching Assistantships (TA)

Graduate teaching assistantships in studio courses are available to students in the MFA program on a competitive basis. Although graduate teaching assistantships are considered an important part of the educational experience of the program, it is not mandatory and not all students are selected to be matched with teachers for assistantships. First year MFA students cannot TA in their first semester. Available positions are posted in the fall and spring for graduate students. Awarding of a TA is an application-based process. Faculty members request these positions through their department chair. These positions are submitted to the Graduate Program Office at the SMFA at Tufts for approval of a teaching assistantship.

The Graduate Program Office, upon recommendation of the area representatives, hires students approved for an assistantship after submission of a CV and application.

Awards are based on faculty recommendation and previous TA performance, when applicable. As part of the placement process, students apply directly to the areas of study. A first year graduate student interested in working as a teaching assistant in a specific area is advised to take at least one course in this area.