



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
Department of Art and Art History

Updated: August 2023

Master of Fine Arts (MFA)

**HANDBOOK
2023-24**

INTRODUCTION

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ART HISTORY (DAAH)

The [Department of Art and Art History](#) website is one of your primary links to program information, upcoming events, contact information, and resources!

MFA PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Master of Fine Arts program engages students in six semesters of intensive creative and conceptual research and critical analysis. Students work with a range of media or focus on a specific medium (such as Sculpture, Print Media, Photography, Painting, Drawing or Digital Art), and are given studio space and full access to the resources of the Department. In addition to studio work, historical and theoretical research, written analysis, scholarly critiques, and oral presentations form an essential part of the overall MFA program. The MFA program culminates in a final exhibition accompanied by a written support paper.

MFA HANDBOOK

This handbook provides information about the policies, requirements, and procedures of the MFA program. It supplements the policies and procedures of the [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#).

Faculty and graduate students should be familiar with the contents of the following Faculty of Graduate Studies documents:

- Calendar: ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/gs.html
- Academic Regulations: ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-academic-regulations.html
- Grad Assistants: ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-b-1.html
- Guide for Current Graduate Students: <https://grad.ucalgary.ca/current-students>

Any inquiries may be made to the Graduate Program Director: Trevor Stark trevor.stark@ucalgary.ca or from August 2023 onwards Judy Anderson judy.anderson@ucalgary.ca. You should also connect regularly with the Graduate Program advisors by emailing artsgradsc@ucalgary.ca.

ARTS GRADUATE STUDENTS' CENTRE (AGSC)

For more information on graduate programs in the Faculty of Arts or for general inquiries contact [AGSC](#).

GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (GSA)

The GSA is the voice of University of Calgary graduate students at the UCalgary and to all levels of government. The GSA supports UCalgary graduate students to succeed academically and socially through valued programs and services and responsive communication channels: <https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/>

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SECTION I - FACULTY AND STAFF

DEPARTMENT HEAD

Joelle Welling, Interim Department Head

GRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Judy Anderson

FACULTY MEMBERS – MAJOR AREA OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH

Faculty Member	Major area of Teaching and Research	Email
Anuradha Gobin	Art History / Northern Renaissance	anuradha.gobin@ucalgary.ca
David Simmonds	Photography	david.simmonds@ucalgary.ca
Denis Gadbois	Photography / 3D Fabrication	dgadbois@ucalgary.ca
Dona Schwartz	Photography / Social Life & Culture / Visual Narratives	dona.schwartz@ucalgary.ca
Erin Sutherland	Indigenous and Canadian Contemporary Art/Performance Art	erin.sutherland@ucalgary.ca
Gerald Hushlak	Painting, Drawing, Media Art	hushlak@ucalgary.ca
Heather Leier	Print Media / Installation	heather.leier@ucalgary.ca
James Parker	Media Art / Technology / Game Design	jparker@ucalgary.ca
Jean-Rene Leblanc	Digital Art / Media Art	jrlleblan@ucalgary.ca
Jennifer Eiserman	Developmental Art / Art Theory and Aesthetics	jreiserm@ucalgary.ca
Judy Anderson	Indigenous Art / Painting and Installation	judy.anderson@ucalgary.ca
Kim Huynh	Print Media, Drawing, Installation Art	khuynh@ucalgary.ca
Michelle Hardy	Heritage Studies / Visual Art, Culture, Textiles and South Asia	mhardy@ucalgary.ca
Rob Furr	Digital Media / Interactivity & Design	rsfurr@ucalgary.ca
Robert Kelly	Developmental Art / Curriculum Development	rkelly@ucalgary.ca
Susan Cahill	Canadian Art History / Art of War & Surveillance	susan.cahill@ucalgary.ca
Tia Halliday	2D Studio Art / Performance	thallida@ucalgary.ca
Trevor Stark	Art History / Twentieth Century Art	trevor.stark@ucalgary.ca

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Staff member	Position	Email
Alexandra Lyons	Administrative Assistant	daah@ucalgary.ca
Constantina Caldis Roberts	Academic Program Specialist	constantina.caldisro@ucalgary.ca
General Advising	Graduate Program Advisor	artsgradsc@ucalgary.ca
Mary Lou Mendyk	Manager, Operations	mmendyk@ucalgary.ca
Rosabel Choi	Academic Program Specialist	rosabel.choi2@ucalgary.ca

TECHNICAL STAFF

Technician	Position	Email
Alex Linfield	Multi-disciplinary Technician	alex.linfield@ucalgary.ca
Anthony Reimer	IAML Technician	areimer@ucalgary.ca
Louie Villanueva	Photography Technician	lhvillan@ucalgary.ca
Steve Nunoda	Workshop Technician	steven.nunoda@ucalgary.ca

SECTION II – DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The program requires registration as a full-time graduate student for six consecutive terms in residence. All requirements for the degree must be completed within four years from the time of registration in the program. Studio space is only guaranteed for the first 24 months.

The program core for all Master of Fine Arts students is a minimum of 24 units culminating in the thesis exhibition at the Nickle Galleries or an alternative space sourced by the student and approved by the Graduate Program Committee. The final exhibition is accompanied by a 25 – 50 pages written support paper. A successful oral defense, assessed by an external examiner and the student’s supervisory committee completes the degree requirements.

Within the first twelve months of the program each student must complete 6 units of 600-level studio courses and 9 600-level graduate seminar. In the second twelve months of the program 3 units of 600-level graduate seminar and 6 units of 600-level studio course must be completed. In some circumstances, the Department may require a student to complete more than the mandatory 24 units.

Typical course sequence is the following:

Year 1 Fall

- [Art 611](#) Research Methods in Art
- [Art 661.01](#) Advanced Studio Practice

Year 1 Winter

- [Art 609](#) Art Theory and Criticism
- [Art 661.02](#) Advanced Studio Practice

Year 1 Spring or Summer

- [Art 605](#) Critical Study and Research

Year 2 Fall

- [Art History 615](#) Conference Course in Art History
- [Art 661.03](#) Advanced Studio Practice

Year 2 Winter

- [Art 661.04](#) Advanced Studio Practice

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

B- is the minimum passing grade for any one course; however, an overall GPA of at least 3.00 (B) must be maintained in each year of the program. If, after consulting the Department and Supervisory committee, the Faculty decides that a student is not making satisfactory progress in either coursework or research, the student may be required to withdraw. If a student fails a total of two or more courses within the total program, the student will be required to withdraw. Also, students who accumulate two grades of B- or lower can be required by the Faculty of Graduate Studies to withdraw from the program regardless of GPA.

A grade of A+ can be awarded to a student. The GPA associated with this letter grade will be 4.00.

SECTION IV - SUPERVISORY ARRANGEMENTS

Supervisory arrangements in the DAAH are based on the Faculty of Graduate Studies supervisory regulations. ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-j.html

Upon admission, an interim Supervisor will be assigned by the Graduate Program Director and approved by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The interim Supervisor will guide the students through procedures and help orientate them to the Department, specifically to the area of the student's specialization. During their first term of study, students are encouraged to meet with several faculty members to determine a suitable permanent Supervisor.

The selection of a permanent Supervisor is made by mutual agreement between the student and faculty member and is approved by the Graduate Program Director. A permanent Supervisor should be appointed by January 1 of the first academic year of registration. Supervisors are full-time continuing term faculty members with supervisory privileges.

The Supervisor, in discussion with the student, will select two other faculty members (from any department, program, or faculty) to serve as Supervisory Committee Members and the composition of the committee will be approved by the Graduate Program Director. To facilitate selection of committee members, students are encouraged to meet with faculty whose interests and expertise correspond to the student's research. Graduate students may be co-supervised by two faculty members, who will act as primary and secondary supervisors. If a student is co-supervised by two faculty members only one additional supervisory committee member is required. It is recommended and appropriate for students to meet with and utilize the expertise of each member of the Supervisory Committee. Students and Supervisors have a shared responsibility to ensure that there is an adequate opportunity to meet on a regular basis, at least once every two weeks, including the summer months. The Supervisory Committee, once appointed, will have a formal meeting with the student at least four times per academic year. Supervisory committees are normally finalized at the end of the second term.

Within two months of the appointment of a permanent supervisor, the graduate student and Supervisor must complete and discuss the [Student-Supervisor Checklist](#) and the [Intellectual Property Awareness Checklist](#), if applicable, and file their signed copies with their program office. The relationship between supervisor and the graduate student is an academic one, conducted in a professional manner and in accordance with the Faculty of Graduate Studies [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) and the University of Calgary [Research Integrity Policy](#)

SECTION III - EVALUATION PROCEDURES & STANDARDS

GRADUATE STUDENT APPRAISALS

Performance in Course Work

Standards of performance in course work are the responsibility of individual Departments and Faculties. The Faculty of Graduate Studies requires a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 to remain in good standing. See the Graduate Grading System in the Calendar: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-1-2.html>

Judgement of Student Performance

Graduate students are expected to maintain adequate progress, or they will be required to withdraw from the program. Adequate progress includes timely completion of required course work, steady and meaningful work on the thesis project, and successful completion of the final appraisal at the indicated time. The Supervisors and Graduate Program Director should ensure, through annual progress reports and otherwise, that the student is informed in writing about concerns regarding progress.

Annual Progress Report

The Supervisor and each continuing student must jointly submit an annual progress report on the student's performance. This on-line form, administered by the Faculty of Graduate Studies, must be filled out by the Supervisor, the Graduate Program Director, and the student. The student will receive an online copy of the report after the Supervisor and the Graduate Program Director have completed their comments.

REAPPRAISAL OF TERM WORK AND/OR APPEAL OF FINAL GRADES

Please refer to the Graduate Calendar, which outlines the process and timeline for appeals <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i-2.html>

FINAL APPRAISAL PRIOR TO THE ORAL DEFENCE OF THE THESIS EXHIBITION

The Final Appraisal assesses the student's readiness to move forward with the thesis exhibition, which is the culmination of the MFA program. The final appraisal will be based on studio work that is intended to comprise the thesis exhibition along with the supporting paper written by the student. Students are also encouraged to have a maquette or floor plan of their proposed exhibition at the final appraisal meeting.

In February, in preparation for the Final Appraisal Meeting, students will provide a detailed outline of the supporting paper to committee members for review. A comprehensive first-draft will then be due to all committee members three weeks before the final appraisal meeting which will normally take place in April or early May of the student's second year.

The draft of the thesis support paper will include a table of contents as well as substantial draft of each chapter written in full form (rather than in point form or as a skeleton). The supervisory committee will review and assess

the student's exhibition plan and a first draft of the student's thesis support paper.

In the Appraisal Meeting, the student will give an opening statement of ten minutes, followed by questions from committee members. The appraisal will not exceed one hour.

Once the final appraisal is complete, the Graduate Program Director (or designate) in consultation with the committee will make one of the following four recommendations:

1. Student has demonstrated satisfactory advancement in both studio work and the first draft of the support paper to the thesis exhibition.
2. Student has demonstrated satisfactory advancement in studio work but needs to re-submit the first draft of the support paper to the thesis exhibition. (Specification required)
3. Student has demonstrated satisfactory advancement in the first draft of the support paper to the thesis exhibition but needs to re-submit studio work. (Specification required)
4. Student has demonstrated un-satisfactory advancement in both studio work and the first- draft of the support paper to the thesis exhibition. (Specification required)

If a student wishes to appeal the outcome of a final appraisal, the student will follow the guidelines provided by the Faculty of Graduate Studies: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i-1.html>

If it is recommended that the student defer their thesis exhibition and extend the program length, they may be required to vacate their studio and/or office at least three weeks before the beginning of the next academic term and will no longer receive departmental financial support.

Program support, including studio and office space, is not extended beyond the 24-month program. However, in certain situations a written request for continued use of facilities can be submitted to the Department Head. If space is available, these formal requests may be granted on a term-by-term basis.

SECTION IV - THESIS REQUIREMENTS

A graduate thesis is comprised of three interrelated components:

THESIS EXHIBITION

The candidate's thesis exhibition is the final requirement for the MFA degree and will normally take place at the Nickle Galleries. Students whose practices are better suited outside the gallery setting are required to find the space that best suits their practice in consultation with their supervisor. The alternative space requires the Graduate Program Director's approval.

The candidate, having successfully completed all course work and having received a positive recommendation in the final appraisal, will prepare for the final exhibition in consultation with their Supervisor. The candidate is expected to have produced a coherent body of work and to have completed the thesis support paper, which will accompany the exhibition. The final exhibition will normally take place in August or September.

THESIS SUPPORT PAPER

The support paper is a required component of the graduate thesis. It should be prepared in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar grad.ucalgary.ca/current/thesis/guidelines.

The support paper should be 25-50 pages in length. The paper is a definitive statement about the exhibited work: it should describe the personal, historical, and/or theoretical origins of the student's work and the issues and ideas that motivate it. It should also explain its relationship to contemporary and/or historical art. The thesis support paper should demonstrate that the candidate is well-acquainted with the published academic literature on their thesis topic; that appropriate research methods have been used; and that they have developed an informed and critical perspective on their research subject.

All examiners must receive the support paper at least three weeks prior to the oral examination date. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that examiners receive a digital copy of the paper by the deadline.

For support with writing, please consult the Writing Support Services at the Student Success Centre:

<https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

Dare to be Different: consider a non-traditional thesis: <https://grad.ucalgary.ca/current-students/thesis-based-students/thesis/non-traditional-thesis>

ORAL EXAMINATION

The oral examination will be based on the candidate's thesis exhibition and the thesis support paper written to accompany the exhibition. The oral examination will ideally take place during the thesis exhibition and be held in the gallery or alternative space. The examination will be scheduled at least three weeks after the submission of the thesis support paper. It will consist of 2-3 rounds of questioning by the examining committee. This examination is open; however, only examiners may question the student. This formal examination will not exceed two hours.

The Oral Examination Committee will consist of at least four people: the Supervisor, the External Examiner, and the Supervisory Committee members. The Graduate Program Director or designate will act as a non-examining, neutral chairperson. If a larger oral examination committee is deemed necessary, a specific request to the Graduate Program Committee will be required. The composition of the oral Examination Committee is approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies on the recommendation of the Graduate Program Committee of the DAAH.

DEADLINE DATES

Graduate students should be aware of all deadline dates as listed in the current Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/academic-schedule.html>

COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS

For any questions regarding copyright, please refer to <https://library.ucalgary.ca/copyright>

THESIS SUBMISSION

Please refer to the Faculty of Graduate Studies Website for information about [thesis preparation and submission](#).

SECTION V – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE & TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

The University of Calgary is very proud of its graduate student awards program. In addition to recognizing academic achievement, scholarships are important in helping to bridge the gap between the rising cost of attending university and limited student income. Attracting top national and international students to the University of Calgary continues to be a very high priority.

Full-time students registered in a graduate degree program at the University of Calgary are eligible for awards and financial assistance. [Scholarship](#) information, application forms and instructions are found on the graduate award website and through the searchable awards database at grad.ucalgary.ca/awards. In addition to internal university awards, awards are available through external agencies and Canadian and international governments. If you are an international student, check with your home government for funding options.

In particular, there are two scholarships available that are specific to MFA students in the DAAH: The [Alberta Foundation for the Arts Graduate Scholarship](#) and the [Anne Severson Memorial Graduate Scholarship in Fine Arts](#). We recommend that eligible students apply for a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Canada Graduate Scholarship-Master's (SSHRC CGS-M).

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts also has several other awards available to emerging artists, with application made directly to the AFA. Please visit their website, affta.ab.ca, for more information.

There are also several funding opportunities available for Indigenous graduate applicants available through the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Please visit <https://grad.ucalgary.ca/awards/award-opportunities/indigenous-external-awards> for more information.

Students are encouraged to research awards in the graduate calendar and the **Graduate Students' Association** for eligibility requirements: <https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/awards/>

Many graduate students receive funding from the Division through [Graduate Assistantships](#), either teaching (GAT) or non-teaching (GANT) positions. All aspects of graduate assistantships are based on a [Collective Agreement](#) between the Governors of the University of Calgary and the Graduate Students' Association.

Government student assistance programs (student loans) are also available to Canadian citizens, permanent residents, protected persons, and American citizens. Please see [student loans](#) for more details.

SECTION VI – FACILITIES AND STUDENT RESOURCES

Graduate students are provided with their own allocated studio space. In addition, they have access to the following facilities on campus.

Visit ucalgary.ca/map for a campus map or to use the interactive room finder. Rooms on campus use the first two or three letters to designate the building and the number to designate the room. A room with a number in the 100s is on the main floor, in the 200s is on the second floor and a room such as 004 or 012 is in the basement. For example: the main office for the DAAH is CHD 100. It's located on the main floor of Craigie Hall, Block D.

FACILITIES

MFA Studios

Studio space is assigned to each student at the beginning of their program and is guaranteed for twenty-four months. It is the student's responsibility to learn the [Standard Operating Procedures](#) for studio space and classrooms. This includes knowing the information related to: emergency information, general information, workplace safety, hazardous materials procedures, pollution and waste and personal protective equipment (PPE). Students will be required to vacate this studio space by mid-August of their second year to allow time for the studio to be cleaned for the incoming MFA students.

Departmental Facilities

The facilities in the DAAH are well-equipped, purpose-built spaces that enable students to engage in a variety of mediums and approaches. The studios have been set up for the benefit of all of those registered in classes and are intended to foster a positive, community-based, learning environment. Please visit [here](#) to learn about the studios, workshops, technical resources and safety requirements that exist for:

- **Painting and Drawing**
- **Photography**
- **Printmaking**
- **Sculpture**
- **Digital Media**
- **Wood and Metal**

These studios are subject to proper use ensuring the well-being, security, and safety of all individuals. All students must comply with the [studio usage regulations](#) and abide by its policy. Failure to do so can result in all privileges and access being revoked. Students in violation of the rules may also be restricted from receiving studio space in the future. All students will be required to read the regulations carefully and sign the digital agreement form.

Department of Art and Art History Galleries- Little Gallery, Arnett Gallery and 621 Gallery

These [Exhibition spaces](#) are available for students and faculty to book.

Integrated Arts Media Labs

The [Integrated Arts Media Labs \(IAML\)](#) are a dedicated digital arts education and production environment located on the 6th floor of the Art Building (Parkade), created specifically for students in DAAH, Dance, Drama, and Music.

The IAML consists of the Main Lab (AB 659, 22 stations) and the Small Lab (AB 605, 10 stations). Each station is equipped with a Mac computer, MIDI keyboard, and a color-calibrated display(s). It offers a full range of creative software, including photo editing, video editing, 2D graphics and animation, 3D modeling and animation, CAD, music/audio sequencing, music notation, and interaction design and authoring. Equipment for short-term loan (e.g., audio recorder, DSLR) and printing services are also available for DAAH and SCPA students.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (OEDI)

We are committed to achieving equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible employment practices and workplaces. We must measure where we are now, how we are doing compared to the diverse make-up of our wider community and evaluate progress. The [OEDI](#) is committed to establishing an equitable, diverse, and inclusive campus that is accessible to all and free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination.

Taylor Family Digital Library (TFDL)

The University of Calgary [Libraries and Cultural Resources](#) supports the DAAH programs with extensive collections and services, including research advice and accessing materials (audio/visual, books, periodicals, online databases). These collections and services are a valuable resource for students and faculty so please make good use of them. View the [Library Research guides](#) and find additional support by contacting Laura Reid (laura.reid1@ucalgary.ca).

The Nickle Galleries

Located in Taylor Family Digital Library, the [Nickle Galleries](#) offers a full program of exhibitions and related events covering most aspects of the visual arts nationally and internationally. There is no admission cost for faculty and students, and is available for research in contemporary art, including the availability of a Prints and Drawings Study Room. The Nickle Galleries is normally the location for the MFA final graduating Exhibition.

UNICARD

The [Unicard](#) is the official campus identification for students, faculty, and staff. Your Unicard acts as an access card, a pass to transit, the libraries, and Active Living facilities.

PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL GALLERIES, ARTIST-RUN-CENTRES

- Alberta Printmakers Society
- Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts) Galleries-illingworth Kerr Gallery and the Marion Nicoll Gallery,
- Burns Visual Arts Society
- Calgary Centre for the Performing Arts
- Centennial Art Gallery
- Christine Klassen Gallery
- Contemporary Calgary
- EMMedia
- Esker Foundation
- Glenbow Museum
- Herringer Kiss Gallery
- Image 54 Gallery
- Norberg Hall Fine Art
- Kensington Downtown Art Gallery
- Masters Gallery
- Newzones Contemporary Art
- Nickle Galleries, University of Calgary
- Paul Kuhn Fine Arts
- Stride Gallery
- The Bows
- The New Gallery
- Trepanier Baer Gallery Inc.

- TRUCK Contemporary Art in Calgary
- Virginia Christopher Galleries
- Viviane Art Gallery
- Wallace Galleries

- Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Centre
- Webster Galleries Inc.
- Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff