MFA STUDENT HANDBOOK

FALL 2026/SPRING 2027

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Introduction

The Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Master of Fine Arts Handbook is a guide to the policies, procedures and requirements of the Department of Art + Design MFA degree program. For additional information or clarification, students should consult with the Graduate Coordinator or other Departmental Administrators.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Table of Contents	3
Program Description	4
MFA in Studio Art Degree Requirements	4
MFA in Studio Art Program Sequence	6
20 and 40 Credit Hour Reviews	6
Exit Requirements for Studio Concentrations	7
Exit Requirement Forms	8
Assistantships & Graduate Teaching Assistantships	8
Graduate Scholarships	9
Out-of-State Tuition Waivers	9
Graduate Studios	9
Galleries	9
Visiting Artists	9
Safety	9
Campus Health Resources	10
Advisement	10
Code of Ethics	10
Transfer of Credit	10
Continuous Enrollment	11
Leave of Absence	11
Time Limit to Degree	11
Graduation Deadlines	11
Commencement	11
Additional Information	12
Faculty	12

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Program Description

The Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art is a comprehensive three-year program designed to guide students toward expertise in studio art practices, aesthetics, and scholarly inquiry while expanding proficiency in art history, criticism, and theory. Students have additional opportunities to acquire experience in classroom instruction and pedagogy and gallery practices.

The MFA is a distinguished terminal degree that prepares students to excel as professional practicing artists in a global context and for careers in higher education.

Application Requirements

For application for admissions requirements or to apply for the MFA program, please see here.

Upon Graduation MFA Students will:

- Reflect conceptual cohesiveness, creativity/originality, and contemporary contribution to their chosen area(s) of specialization
- Exhibit professional breadth of competence in their chosen media, materials, and processes
- Clearly and critically synthesize essential techniques, aesthetics, concepts, or theories presented in the thesis exhibition
- Articulate how their work fits into a historical/contemporary context and/or explain its relevance to major cultural, theoretical, or aesthetic models
- Clearly communicate mastery of techniques and concepts presented in the thesis exhibition and paper
- Effectively articulate independent artistic and intellectual judgements and professional decisions pertaining to the exhibition, paper, and area(s) of specialization

Degree Requirements

Candidates must complete (60) semester hours in art with a minimum 3.0 GPA to be considered *in good academic standing* and assistantship eligible. No more than two grades of "C" earned at this university will be accepted as credit for this degree. A failed course may be repeated once.

MFA Studio Art Degree Requirements with a concentration in: *Ceramics, Painting & Drawing, Photography, Printmaking, Sculpture, or Interdisciplinary Art:*

Studio Art	**36 semester hours**
Art History/ Theory & Methods/Research Topics	**12 semester hours**
MFA Seminar	**6 semester hours**
MFA Project and Thesis	**6 semester hours**

The distribution of semester hour requirements is as follows:

MFA Studio Art: Area of Concentration – (36) semester

- (18) semester hours of courses focused within one discipline
- (18) semester hours in Studio Art Electives
  - At least (9) semester hours are required in Studio Art Electives
  - Up to (9) additional semester hours can be in Area of Concentration
- Up to (6) semester hours can be completed in graduate level, creative-based courses beyond the Department of Art + Design in consultation with Graduate Coordinator.

MFA Studio Art: Interdisciplinary Art – (36) semester hours in any Studio Art courses

- Up to (6) semester hours can be completed in graduate level creative-based courses beyond the Department of Art + Design in consultation with Graduate Coordinator

Art History/Research Courses – (12) semester hours

- ARTS 5392: Art Theory & Methods – can be repeated if different topics
- ARTS 5393: Art History and Aesthetics – can be repeated if different topics
- ARTS 5394: Directed Research. Up to (6) semester hours can be repeated if different topics
- Up to (6) semester hours can be completed in Graduate-level research-based courses beyond the Department of Art + Design in consultation with Graduate Coordinator

MFA Seminar – (6) semester hours

- (3) semester hours in ARTS 5191: Professional Practices. (1) semester hour course taken each Fall. The 3-Year rotation covers professional practices in the areas of Teaching, Creative Practices, and Professional Development
- (3) semester hours in ARTS 5192: Graduate Critique Seminar. (1) semester hour course taken each Spring. Interdisciplinary critique supporting evolution of techniques and concepts in preparation for the first-year review, second-year review, and Oral Defense

- **MFA Project and Thesis – (6) semester hours**
  - ARTS 5398: MFA Project and Oral Defense
  - ARTS 5395: MFA Thesis

Total: 60

Program Sequence

Full-time MFA candidates must enroll in (10) semester hours during Fall and Spring semesters according to the program sequence outlined below. The Graduate Coordinator assists in scheduling classes and tracks/updates individual student progress each semester.

MFA candidates are required to demonstrate outstanding progress in their creative research and must meet with Area of Concentration faculty, the Graduate Coordinator, or Thesis Committee at the end of each semester.

	FALL (10 hrs)		SPRING (10 hrs)	
YEAR 1	Course	hrs	Course	hrs
	Area of Concentration	3	Area of Concentration	3
	Area of Concentration or Studio Elective	3	Studio Elective	3
	Art Hist or Research Project (ARTS 5392/5393/5394)	3	Art Hist or Research Project (ARTS 5392/5393/5394)	3
	ARTS 5191: MFA Professional Practices	1	ARTS 5192: Graduate Critique Seminar	1
YEAR 2	FALL (10 hrs)		SPRING (10 hrs)	
	Course	hrs	Course	hrs
	Area of Concentration	3	Area of Concentration	3
	Area of Concentration or Studio Elective	3	Area of Concentration or Studio Elective	3
	Art Hist or Research Project (ARTS 5392/5393/5394)	3	Art Hist or Research Project (ARTS 5392/5393/5394)	3
	ARTS 5191: MFA Professional Practices	1	ARTS 5192: Graduate Critique Seminar	1
YEAR 3	FALL (10 hrs)		SPRING (10 hrs)	
	Course	hrs	Course	hrs
	Area of Concentration	3	Area of Concentration	3
	Area of Concentration or Studio Elective	3	ARTS 5398: MFA Thesis Project/Defense	3
	Studio Elective	3	ARTS 5395: MFA Thesis	3
	ARTS 5191: MFA Professional Practices	1	ARTS 5192: Graduate Critique Seminar	1

First-Year Review and Second-Year Review

The Department of Art + Design faculty review a candidate's work following completion of (20) semester hours (first year of graduate study) and following completion of (40) semester hours (second year of graduate study) before permitting advancement and toward completion of an MFA Project and MFA Thesis.

- **20 Credit Hour Review**: Candidates must present their work in a professional manner before the entire Department of Art + Design faculty, accompanied by a research statement. Upon conclusion, the faculty confer privately to determine if the candidate passed or failed.

  Assessment Measures:

  - Demonstrates thoughtful experimentation in a focused or variety of materials, techniques, or concepts
  - Executes technical, aesthetic, and conceptual decisions based on a practical understanding of art and design principles
  - Contextualizes techniques and concepts through written and oral presentation
  - Displays professional attitudes toward the production and presentation of works

- Shows likelihood for continued evolution of proficiency in skills and concepts

If the candidate fails the review, they must re-present their work at the conclusion of the following term. A second failure results in dismissal from the program.

- **40 Credit Hour Review**: Candidates must present their work in a professional manner before the entire Department of Art + Design faculty, accompanied by a research statement. Upon conclusion, the faculty confer privately to determine if the candidate passes onto their MFA Project.

  Assessment Measures:

  - Demonstrates refined exploration in techniques, materials, and concepts within the student's chosen area(s) of concentration
  - Executes technical, aesthetic, and conceptual decisions based on a mature understanding of art and design principles
  - Displays professional attitudes toward the production and presentation of works
  - Contextualizes techniques and concepts through oral and written presentation
  - Shows likelihood for successful completion of a cohesive body of work

  Upon passing, candidates will complete a Masters Thesis Advisory Committee Appointment Form (Form A). This must be completed by October 1st of your 3rd Year.

  If a change is deemed necessary, a Thesis Committee Member Change Request Form (Form D) may be submitted.

  The candidate must consult with the Galleries Director one semester prior to the projected exhibition for scheduling and coordination.

  If the candidate fails the review, they must re-present at the beginning of the following term. A second failure results in dismissal from the program.

Exit Requirements

The Candidate must create and present a professional MFA Project at the conclusion of (60) credit hours, including:

- **A Solo Exhibition**
- **An Exhibition Statement**
- **A Written Pape**r: 15-30 pages in length – exclusive of required apparatus – discussing the MFA exhibition and its place within theoretical, historical and/or contemporary contexts. Papers must discuss techniques, subject matter/content and include a bibliography. It must be at 90% completion prior to the Oral Defense. Failure to complete the paper by the end of the graduating semester will warrant a grade of "Incomplete." Candidates have until the end of the following term to complete the paper. It must be formatted according to *The Chicago Manual of Style* and uploaded according to ProQuest Guidelines (5) business days prior to graduation.
- **A Comprehensive Oral Defense:** Administered by the Thesis Committee must be performed during the exhibition. Candidates must complete a Preliminary Agreement to Schedule the Thesis Defense (Form B) five days prior. The candidate will respond to a series of questions based on the exhibition and written paper. Upon conclusion, the committee confers

privately to ascertain whether the candidate passed or failed. A failing defense may be repeated once. A second failure results in dismissal from the program.

- Only upon passing *all above listed Exit Requirement criteria* will the committee sign the Thesis Defense & Written Thesis Report (Form C). It must be initiated by your Thesis Chair and submitted the Friday prior to graduation.
- Graduating MFA candidates must submit a bound copy of the written paper to the Graduate Coordinator.

Exit Requirement Forms

MFA Thesis Forms | Thesis Formatting Guidelines | Thesis Submission Guidelines

Assistantships & Graduate Teaching Assistants

Graduate Assistant Handbook

MFA candidates receiving assistantships are required to read and understand the Graduate Assistantship Handbook. As per the Notice of Appointment form, they are designated as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA'S) and assigned up to (20) documented hours per week of duties. Students may not work more than (20) hours per week; hours do not roll over.

MFA candidates must be present in Corpus Christi and available by the faculty start date of each semester through the end of finals week. See Academic Calendar

The pay period for assistantships is October 1 – June 1 of each academic year.

First-year MFA Assistantship Duties:

- MFA candidates must shadow a faculty member for two semesters (20 semester hours) before becoming a *Graduate Teaching Assistant of Record*. (6 contact hours per semester)
- Other first-year assistantship duties include Building Monitor hours and may involve assisting full-time faculty on campus in the student's area of study, woodshop, or galleries, with responsibilities including cleaning or organizing classrooms, equipment maintenance, monitoring facilities, or exhibition preparation.
- A gallery assistant may be selected through an interview process with the Galleries Director and Galleries Manager.

Graduate Teaching Assistants (of Record) are employed to help meet the university's instructional needs. Graduate Teaching Assistants in the Department of Art & Design may be assigned to teach Studio Art, Foundations, or Lecture course numbered below 5000.

- The GTA teaching load is limited to one course per semester and accounts for (15) weekly assistantship hours. GTA's may work up to (5) additional documented hours per week to fulfill assistantship requirements, as listed in first-year responsibilities.
- They may not teach or assist a course in which they are enrolled (33.99.08.C0.02 – 2.2).
- GTAs must be supervised by a faculty member responsible for monitoring and evaluating their performance.

Graduate Scholarships

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi offers small Academic Scholarships based on achievement, educational objectives, evidence of leadership and service.

Out-of-State Tuition Waivers

For non-Texas residents, a Request for In-State Tuition form will be submitted each semester by the Graduate Coordinator.

Graduate Studios

Graduate Studios are designated as professional work areas and are solely for purposes of creative and scholarly production. Students must preserve the rights of others working in shared spaces and must adhere to laboratory safety protocols. A Graduate Studio Contract form outlining specific policies must be completed before spaces and keys are assigned. Negligent or improper use of studios may result in loss of access.

- Center for Arts: A select area is currently available for graduate students in Ceramics.
- Classroom West (CESS): Individual and shared spaces on the first and second floors.

Graduate Studios must be vacated by July 1st of the graduating spring semester.

- All work, materials, tools, equipment, and furniture that you brought into the studio must be removed.
- Holes must be patched and walls painted with Kilz Primer (you must provide these)
- Floors must be swept and mopped
- All area studio and graduate studio keys must be returned to the Building Supervisor

Galleries

The University Galleries include the Weil Gallery located on campus in the Center for Arts and the Larry Urban Gallery located in Downtown Corpus Christi. These spaces are for the exhibition of work by TAMU-CC graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, and visiting artists. Exhibitions serve our campus, greater Corpus Christi community, and beyond.

Visiting Artists

Attendance at scheduled public lectures and exhibitions is required for all MFA Candidates. Studio visits with participating artists will be assigned first come, first serve.

Safety

This document is a general summary and cannot be viewed as a complete safety guide to the Center for the Arts. It is the student's responsibility to read and understand Laboratory Safety Protocols.

SMTE 0097: Art Student Safety Seminar

Students must enroll in this online, non-credit course every semester. It must be passed at a grade of 100% to work in studio art classrooms. Students will not be charged a fee for this course.

It is critical all activities in the Center for Arts and CESS be performed safely. Graduate students must know how to properly use a tool or material before use. Questions about safety should be directed to the supervisor(s) of the studios to which they belong or the Building Manager. In addition, graduate students must set a responsible example for undergraduate students to follow. All Graduate Teaching Assistants are required to provide students with a tour of studio procedures and safety on the first day of class.

The campus emergency number is 361-825-4444. The Safety Office number is 361-825-5555.

Specific Rules

- Hazardous materials must be accompanied by approval of the studio area faculty or Center for Arts Building Supervisor.
- Hazardous materials must be accompanied by a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) and stored in each area of concentration. A copy must be given to the Center for Arts Building Supervisor.
- Flammable liquids, strong acids, and bases, and other chemically reactive or hazardous materials cannot be stored in student lockers.
- Sweeping in ceramics and sculpture creates airborne hazards. Whenever possible, graduate students must use wet-cleanup techniques to minimize these hazards.
- Graduate students needing access to materials and tools in areas beyond their concentration must first confer with area faculty.
- The woodshop is utilized by all areas of the department. Students are required to implement safe practices and thoroughly clean after use.
- Undergraduate students are not granted after-hours privileges unless accompanied by a full-time faculty member.
- Improper and unsafe use of materials and tools, especially willful, may result in removal of access to materials, tools, and space. Serious violations may result in removal from the program. Appeals to these decisions must be made through the Dean of Students and the Campus Safety Officer.

Campus Health Resources

Student Health Services Counselling Services

Advisement

Advisement for MFA Candidates occurs on several levels. The MFA Program Coordinator assists in matters of specific program administration, scheduling, and other program related issues and serve as a liaison to the Office of Graduate Excellence. Area of Concentration faculty provide information regarding career opportunities and relevant topics. Additional advisors include: The Department Chair, the Administrative Assistant and Building Manager.

Code of Ethics: Students and faculty are required to follow the Departmental Code of Ethics

Transfer of Credit

In addition to the University's transfer of credit policy, the following regulations apply to the MFA in Studio Art. Subject to the recommendation of the graduate faculty and a portfolio review, Candidates may have up to (15) semester hours of graduate credit (not including Exhibition or Thesis Project) applied to the Master of Fine Arts program. No grades less than a "B" and no

courses earned toward another completed graduate degree will be accepted as transfer credit. Credit more than seven years old will not be counted toward the MFA degree.

Continuous Enrollment

The University does not have an MFA continuous enrollment policy. An absence of two years requires reapplication to the University. Students should consider applying for a leave of absence if the time-to-degree and recency of credits requirements will be impacted.

Leave of Absence

Students experiencing life-changing or catastrophic events should consult with their graduate coordinator and/or department chair and request a Leave of Absence in writing using the Request for Leave of Absence form. A student in good standing may petition for a leave of absence for no more than two full academic terms. The maximum number of requests permitted in a program is two. A request requires approval in advance by the faculty advisor, Graduate Coordinator, SAMC Director, and Graduate Dean. If the Graduate Dean approves the petition, the registration requirement is set aside during the leave period. A leave of absence requires suspension of all activities associated with the pursuit of the degree. See the catalog for more information.

Time Limit to Degree

An MFA degree at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi must be completed within (7) years. The period begins the first semester of enrollment and is calculated from degree conferral. Credit that is more than seven years old will not be counted toward the degree. Exceptions require strong written justification from the student and submission of a revalidation plan. Credits earned at another university are not eligible for an exception. Written approval from the Department Chair, the SAMC Director, the Graduate Dean, and Provost are required. To revalidate dated courses, students should see Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements section of the catalog. Revalidation requests should be made using the Revalidation Request Form.

Graduation Deadlines

Attendance at hooding ceremonies and commencement by terminal degree candidates is recommended as it increases the stature of the Department of Art + Design within the University. Students must apply for graduation through their S.A.I.L. account by the posted deadline. Deadlines and pricing are posted by the Office of the Registrar. Fees are non-refundable.

Commencement

Dates, times, and location of the commencement ceremonies

Regalia – Graduates must wear official regalia to the commencement ceremony. These items can be rented or purchased at the Campus Store.

- Diplomas are made available once an audit has confirmed completion of all requirements. This process may take several weeks following graduation. Once complete, diplomas may be picked up in person or are mailed by the Registrar's Office. For more information, contact 361-825-2624 and press option 2 to be connected.

Additional Information

Information, policies, and procedures about tuition, fees, financial assistance, scholarships, and other topics important to graduate students can be found in the catalog. In addition, web pages for offices and campus services provide expanded information, forms, and contact names/phone numbers. Some of those webpages include:

Office of Graduate Excellence
Office of International Education
Office of Student Financial Assistance
Student Research & Innovation

Faculty

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