

M.F.A. Handbook

2025-2026

**M.F.A PROGRAM IN VISUAL ARTS
VISUAL ARTS DEPARTMENT UCSD**

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1. INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

The Department of Visual Arts consists of five undergraduate major programs (Art History, Media, Studio, Interdisciplinary Computing and the Arts, and Speculative Design), an MFA program and two PhD major programs (Art History and Art Practice). There are approximately 12 staff, 35 full-time faculty members, 70 graduate-level students and 850 undergraduate-level students within the Department of Visual Arts.

The MFA program is a three-year degree program designed to provide intensive professional training for students who wish to pursue a career within the field of contemporary art—including all aspects of art making, criticism, theory and curating. To receive your MFA degree, you must complete: coursework, annual critiques, a First Year Review and a Thesis presentation. This handbook provides you with detailed instructions regarding all components of the MFA program and should be referred to regularly in order to ensure understanding and successful completion of this degree program.

Department Contacts

MFA Faculty Director – Professor Ruben Ortiz-Torres – ruortiz@ucsd.edu

Student Affairs Manager – Katherine Zamora – vis-grad@ucsd.edu

Graduate Coordinator - Alex Glenn [-vis-grad@ucsd.edu](mailto:vis-grad@ucsd.edu)

It is imperative that you maintain communication with the MFA Faculty Director and administrative staff during your time in the program. The MFA Faculty Director and administrative staff should be included on all e-mail correspondence that pertains in any way to your progress through the degree program, including but not limited to correspondence about leaves of absences, employment, fellowships, advising and committees.

2. ACADEMICS

Curriculum

To meet graduation requirements, you must complete 18 courses (4 units per course, 72 units total) for the MFA program: 13 Core courses and 5 Elective courses.

Core Seminars (13 courses, 52 units):

- VIS 201-Contemporary Critical Issues
- VIS 202-Art Practice Seminar
- VIS 203-Working Critique Seminar
- VIS 203-Working Critique Seminar
- VIS 205-Introduction to Graduate Studies in Art Practice
- VIS 208-Thesis Exhibition
- VIS 209-Thesis Writing
- One from VIS 210-219 Art Practice/Theory
- One from VIS 206, 230-262 Art History/Theory/Criticism
- VIS 500-Apprentice Teaching course

- VIS 502-Teaching Visual Arts
- VIS 295-Individual Studies
- One from another Department (one Grad course, 4 units)

Elective courses (5 courses, 20 units), choose from any of the following:

- Graduate Course (VIS 200+), any graduate-level course in VIS
- Graduate Research (VIS 299), a maximum of 3 may be taken
- Undergraduate Courses (upper-division), a maximum of 4 may be taken
- Directed Group Study (VIS 298), a maximum of 1 may be taken

Prior to joining the MFA Program, you were expected to have completed at least four semester courses or six quarter courses in art history, film history/criticism or a related field at the undergraduate level. Related areas of study can include: History, Anthropology, Ethnic Studies, Performance Studies, Gender Studies; continued. If you have been admitted without this requirement completed, you will be required to complete coursework in this area in addition to the MFA program requirements. To complete this requirement at UCSD, you can enroll in Art History (VIS 113-120) or Media Studies courses (VIS 150-159, 194S) at the undergraduate level. Instructions for enrolling in an undergraduate course are found [here](#).

Enrollment

UC San Diego follows the quarter system which consists of three quarters of the academic year (Fall, Winter, Spring) and two sessions during the summer (Session I, Session II). Each quarter is 10 weeks followed by one week for finals. Each summer session is five weeks followed by one day for finals. Graduate students only enroll in courses during the academic year and use the summer for employment, research, studio time, travel, etc.

Each quarter (Fall, Winter, Spring) you are expected to enroll in at least 12 units, or 3 courses, to maintain your full-time student status for employment and funding eligibility. For additional information pertaining to campus enrollment dates, times, and policies and procedures, please view the UC San Diego Enrollment website [here](#).

The Visual Arts Annual Schedule is located on our department website [here](#). The schedule does change from time to time; please do take note of the last revision date listed on the bottom of the page. Our class enrollment and registration system is WebReg. You can learn more about the system and how to use it via the tutorial found [here](#).

Because your academic and professional goals are unique, you will be required to meet with staff and Faculty advisors regularly to create and maintain an appropriate, long-term academic plan specific to the MFA program and your personal goals. You can find program specific information on the Visual Arts website, but this does not replace the individual conversations and support that you will have with your Faculty Advisor, Graduate Director and department staff. This handbook and the [MFA Program](#) page will be a primary resource for you during your time in the department.

First Year Exhibition and Review

During the Spring Quarter of your first year, you will make a formal presentation of your body of work between Weeks 1 and 8 of Spring Quarter to your Provisional Faculty Advisor. The First Year Review consists of:

Exhibition- This shall include work produced during your first year in the MFA program. These presentations are held in the Commons Gallery (VAF 404, or other VAF spaces with approval of Facilities staff and the MFA Faculty Director), and weeks are assigned by lottery. Your presentation must be open to Faculty and Cohort for at least three days. You will be required to meet with your Provisional Faculty Advisor but should plan to invite other Faculty you are interested in learning from to view your exhibition to discuss your work.

Artist Statement - An artist statement that considers the formal and conceptual aspects of the work in your First Year Review show. Statement should be up to 1500 words.

Oral Exam- You will need to schedule a two-hour oral examination/review meeting with your Provisional Faculty Advisor in the Commons Gallery. During this time, they will review your work, artist statement and its relationship to the field of art. Feedback will be provided to the student in the form of oral or written notes by the Provisional Faculty Advisor, either at the end of the exam or within one week following the exam date.

This presentation is considered a required departmental examination. Passing the First Year Review implies that you are doing well and making appropriate progress towards your degree completion. If the work presented at the First Year Review is considered unsatisfactory, you will have to rework the material over the summer in order to finalize the First Year Review at the beginning of the Fall Quarter of your second year. After this extension, continued unsatisfactory completion of the First Year Review will result in your withdrawal from the MFA Program.

Second Year Exhibition

During the Winter Quarter of your second year, you will make a presentation of your body of work to your Faculty Advisor, other invited Faculty and your cohort. The Second Year Exhibitions are held bi-weekly during Winter Quarter with multiple solo shows held at the same time. Location and weeks are assigned, in consideration of preferences, by the MFA Faculty Director. You should meet with your Faculty Advisor and invite other Faculty you are interested in learning from to view your exhibition to discuss your work. This is especially important as in the Spring Quarter of second year you will constitute your Thesis Committee. You have an opportunity during your Second Year Exhibition to meet with potential committee members to discuss your work, their availability and interest in supporting you during your third year.

This is an opportunity to evaluate your progress, ask questions of your Advisor, Faculty, and fellow grad students and work through your creative ideas and research to date.

Spring Evaluations

The Division of Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs (GEPA) requires that all MFA students be evaluated annually. To complete this evaluation:

1. During the Spring Quarter of your first and second years in the program, department staff initiate the electronic review form with an email to your @ucsd.edu email address. This email contains a link to the evaluation system and instructions for you to complete your self-assessment.
2. Once your self-assessment is complete, your Faculty Advisor will submit an evaluation of your progress for that academic year.

3. Once your Faculty Advisor has provided feedback, you will review their response and sign the form.
4. Lastly, the completed evaluation will be routed to GEPA for formal archiving with your academic records.

These evaluations serve as an important tool for students and advisors in assessing student progress, while also providing suggestions for students' successful completion of the program. Spring Evaluations are important narrative documentation that illustrates your progress in the MFA Program, other than the official transcript. The Spring Evaluations are also reviewed and relied upon by GEPA if the department submits any requests for any exception to policy on your behalf.

Drifting Studio Visits and the Antin Prize Committees

All graduate students participate in one required critique each year from the Drifting Studio Visit Committees. All graduate students are required to present current work and/or research in-progress in their studio and engage in discussion with a panel of three Faculty during their visit. Drifting Studio Visits are individual 20-25 minute studio visits with rotating committees of Department Faculty.

Drifting Studio Visits take place prior to Open Studios in Winter Quarter. For First and Second Year MFAs, these serve to introduce students to a diversity of Faculty perspectives, art making practices and facilitate conversation in service of Thesis Committee formation.

The Third Year Drifting Studio Visits, also known as the Antin Prize Committee Critique, takes survey of third year students' work, discusses progress toward Thesis, and will also assess the originality and creativity of the work and select one winner for the David Antin Prize. This is a \$1,000 prize that will be announced during the Winter Quarter Open Studios.

The constituency of the panel will change annually, with an attempt to represent the breadth of the art making practice within the department.

Provisional Faculty Advisor to Committee Chair

Provisional Faculty Advisor

Students are paired with a Provisional Faculty Advisor for their first year. This is determined by the MFA Faculty Director in consultation with the Admissions Committee, taking into account the number of advisees each Faculty currently has, how well their practice/research interests intersect with the student's, and how available that Faculty member will be throughout the academic year. First year students should meet with their Provisional Faculty Advisor on a regular basis (bi-weekly) during the first quarter VIS 299, the method to be determined in conversation between Advisor and MFA student. The 299 may include informal or formal studio visits, discussions about research, suggesting readings and discussion of research, and may take place in person or remotely.

Responsibilities of the Provisional Advisor include, but aren't limited to:

- Having an Independent Study (VIS 299) with their advisee in their first quarter

- Writing the advisee's Spring Evaluation
- Evaluating the advisee's First Year Review
- Advocating on the advisee's behalf for petitions, as needed
- Writing letters of support for grants/residencies

Permanent Faculty Advisor/Committee Chair

Your Provisional Faculty Advisor may continue on as your Permanent Faculty Advisor and in the role of Committee Chair. If you or your Provisional Faculty Advisor wish to change the arrangement, please contact the MFA Faculty Director. The advisor's main role is to help student's plan their academic program in a way that is consistent with their research and career objectives. Students should make a point of meeting with their Faculty Advisor at least once a quarter to ensure that the advisor is aware of all factors affecting the student's academic performance. These meetings should be initiated by student request. Responsibilities include but aren't limited to:

- Chairing the student's Thesis Committee
- Instructing 4 units of VIS 295-Individual Research/Thesis Prep
- Leading the Thesis Exam
- Being a resource regarding opportunities beyond what the department offers, including grant funding options and residencies.
- Writing the advisee's Spring Evaluations.
- Advocating on the advisee's behalf for petitions, if needed
- Writing letters of support for grants, residencies, employment, etc., at upon request and at their discretion and availability

It is the Advisor's responsibility to provide advice on the student's work, including recommending other faculty who might prove useful, as well as reading lists, or writing projects, when appropriate.

Committee Constitution

During the Spring Quarter of your second year, you will need to formally constitute your Thesis Committee. The members of your committee will supervise the preparation of your Thesis and evaluate the Thesis presentation. Your committee is selected in consultation with your Faculty Advisor and with each member's consent. In preparation for Committee formation, you should have met with each proposed member at least once for a studio visit or equivalent meeting. It is greatly advised that you discuss your research and creative plans, your expectations for Committee engagement, and understand the proposed Faculty members' availability and method of advising.

The membership of your MFA Thesis Committee must include:

- Three tenured or emeriti faculty from the Visual Arts Department
- One tenured or emeritus member from outside of the Visual Arts Department

You should plan to meet with your Committee members on a regular basis for studio visits, advising, or equivalent, as needed. Individual Faculty work with MFA students in different ways according to their pedagogy and availability, so please consider what your expectations for Committee participation means for you. This could be one studio visit per quarter, for example, but must be discussed and agreed upon in advance of your formal committee formation so that expectations for Committee participation are clearly

understood. The MFA Program Director is available to help discuss these questions and advise in the case of Thesis Committee questions, concerns or other issues.

The GEPA website has [information](#) about Committee membership that is important to review if you have questions regarding the role a Faculty member can have on your committee. To formally request the creation of your Thesis Committee, you need to complete the request form [here](#). This form will route to departmental staff for processing.

Advisor Changes / Committee Re-Constitution

If for any reason you need to make changes to your Provisional or Permanent Advisor/Committee Chair or Committee membership, you need to first check-in with your Advisor/Committee Chair and/or the MFA Faculty Director. In consultation with them, it will be determined whether a formal change in membership is necessary. If it is necessary to make a change to your Committee, a new member will need to be asked to join your Committee and a [committee reconstitution form](#) submitted to departmental staff for processing.

Advancement to Candidacy

The Advancement to Candidacy is an important step towards degree completion. Advancement indicates that you have completed or are in progress to completing the required coursework, evaluations and critiques for the MFA Program and have only the Thesis and defense to complete. To Advance to Candidacy, you must:

1. Enroll in the last of your required coursework. For most students this is Fall Quarter of the third year but for some this may be Winter Quarter of the third year.
2. Once enrolled in the last of your required coursework, send a message to vis-grad@ucsd.edu.
3. Staff will complete the GEPA forms necessary to process your Advancement to Candidacy.
4. GEPA will formally record your Advancement quarter as a part of your student record.

Once Advanced to Candidacy, you will still need to enroll in 12 units minimum for each of your remaining quarters to ensure that you are meeting the UCSD enrollment criteria for funding. To reach 12 units each quarter during the remainder of your third year, you will enroll in 8-12 units of VIS 299 and 0-4 units of VIS 500. Departmental staff will properly advise you regarding the course enrollment that you need during this time.

Thesis Structure

Presentation of Work— During the last quarter in residence, you are required to present to the public a coherent exhibition, screening, or performance of your work. The exhibition, screenings, or performance must run for a minimum of three consecutive week days. We require that the Thesis exhibition is documented in a considered manner that can be used to archive the presentation of your work.

MFA Thesis Exhibitions are organized into four blocks (Weeks 1, 3, 5 & 7 of the Spring Quarter) according to the Department Calendar, and must be scheduled within these timeframes. Any request for special accommodations otherwise must be submitted to the MFA Faculty Director.

In order to be processed as a Spring Graduate, your Thesis Defense must take place no later than Week 8 of the Spring Quarter.

Oral Examination— Your Thesis Committee will administer an oral examination covering your work and its relationship to the field of art.

You should plan to have the oral exam scheduled during the presentation of work. If needed, the oral exam could occur after the formal presentation of work, with approval of all Committee members. Since scheduling of these exams is very complex, you are asked to plan as early as possible with your Committee.

Written Thesis— A Thesis is a research paper that demonstrates and investigates the context, process and purpose of your work. The written Thesis should be produced out of discussion with your Committee Chair and in dialogue with the VIS 209 Thesis writing seminar. It should be 7,000 words minimum with illustrations, footnotes and addendum as appropriate.

All written material must comply with the GEPA formatting guidelines. The formatting manual and information regarding the submission of the Thesis can be found [here](#). GEPA has Thesis [formatting workshops](#) at the beginning of each quarter. You will receive an email when those dates are announced.

Thesis Checklist and Timeline

Fall Quarter

Enrollment: If you are enrolling in the last of your required coursework for the MFA Program, then you need to send an email to vis-grad@ucsd.edu when enrollment is complete. Department staff will initiate the Advancement to Candidacy paperwork needed for GEPA. If you will not be Advancing to Candidacy this quarter, you will need to enroll in courses appropriate to your academic plan.

Week 1: Third Year Cohort meets with the MFA Faculty Director, Facilities staff, and Events and Promotion staff to discuss Thesis planning and scheduling for Spring Quarter.

Week 3: Third Year Cohort submits to the MFA Faculty Director their individual preferences for Thesis Exhibition dates based on the [Graduate Student Calendar](#), along with any accommodation requests that may be taken into consideration. Cohort will be informed of Thesis dates by Week 5.

Week 5: You will need to inform your Committee of the Thesis Exhibition dates you have been assigned and begin determining rough timing for Thesis Oral Exam.

Winter Quarter

Enrollment: If you Advanced to Candidacy in Fall Quarter, you should enroll in 8 units of VIS 299 with your Committee Chair and 4 units of VIS 500 with the MFA Faculty Director. If you did not Advance to Candidacy in the Fall, you will need to enroll in your final required coursework and email vis-grad@ucsd.edu so that the Department staff can complete the required Advancement to Candidacy paperwork for GEPA.

You will continue finalizing your Thesis creative and research work. It may be helpful to check in with your Committee members or other Faculty for brief studio visits and feedback on written Thesis-in-progress.

By Week 5: All Students should send Department Promotions Manager a promotional image for their Thesis, for the purpose of Thesis Exhibition email blasts.

End of Winter/Spring Quarters

Four Weeks in Advance of the Thesis Presentation/Oral Exam (at minimum):

- schedule the Thesis formatting meeting with the GEPA. This formatting meeting should be scheduled with at least 90% of your writing complete and an idea of how you will document your Thesis show.

Two Weeks in Advance of the Thesis Presentation/Oral Exam:

- The completed written work must be sent to all members of your Thesis Committee.
- Complete the preliminary formatting meeting with GEPA.
- Email the Department staff at vis-grad@ucsd.edu with the date of your Oral Examination and your Thesis title.

At the Oral Examination meeting, you need to:

- Bring copies of your written Thesis for Committee Members
- You need to remind your Committee Members that they have received your Final Report Thesis Form from vis-grad@ucsd.edu via DocuSign and that this needs to be reviewed and signed after the Oral Exam meeting.

Following Thesis Examination, you will need to:

- Check in with vis-grad@ucsd.edu to ensure that there is nothing outstanding that you need to complete for the processing of your Final Report paperwork.
- Confirm with GEPA that your Thesis is appropriately formatted and submitted.
- If needed, have your Embargo Form signed by your Faculty Advisor. This is only necessary if you need to have a hold put on the public release of your written Thesis.

Thesis Evaluation Standards

PASS –The committee has approved of the Thesis paper and body of work, and will sign the Final Report Form and Thesis Signature page.

PROVISIONAL – There are revisions to content that will take additional time, and possibly also additional research. The revisions may pertain to either the Thesis paper or the body of work. The completed final draft must be sent in .PDF form to all Committee Members within a designated and agreed amount of time. The Committee may or may not reconvene to review the changes. The Committee Chair will not sign the Thesis Final Report form until the revisions have been made and accepted by the Committee.

FAIL – Significant rewriting and possibly also research are required. The Committee Chair will need to be consulted on how to proceed. If the campus total registered time limit has been reached, you may be withdrawn or dismissed from the program.

3. DEPARTMENT PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS

Lightning Talks

Lightning Talks is an annual celebration of our incoming MFA and PhD Practice cohort with a round of 6 ½ minute presentations of each student's work and ideas as they enter the MFA program. It's intended to be lighthearted and a way for returning Grads and Faculty to get a quick overview of the first year cohort and their work.

What is a Lightning Talks? The Lightning Talks presentation is **a format that uses 20 slides or images that are displayed for 20 seconds each**. The slides will move automatically as the presenter is speaking. This format ensures that the speaker is concise, keeps the presentation moving, and gets through all of their content.

Dates of the annual Lightning Talks will be announced on the Graduate Student Calendar.

Open Studios

MFA Open Studios takes place each Winter Quarter, with dates announced on the [Graduate Student Calendar](#) at the beginning of each Academic Year. First and Second Year Drifting Critique Committees meet with their respective cohorts on Friday, the day before public Open Studios.

Public open studio participation is voluntary and encouraged for all graduate students as a part of public engagement, and professional development. This is an opportunity to share your creative work and research with the San Diego and Southern California community including fellow artists, curators, scholars and others.

Workshops and Lecture Series

Lonengnecker-Roth Residency Workshops

A committee of Faculty select and invite a contemporary artist working in a craft tradition to take part in the Longenecker-Roth residency each Fall Quarter, housed in a studio at VAF.

<https://visarts.ucsd.edu/people/visiting-artists/>

See the Department Calendar for workshops for graduate students in the form of open studio drop-in hours. Folks can watch, participate in making, stop by to chat, etc. Specific activities may be folded in and announced. The residency culminates in a formal Fall LAIR Open Studio event where the Artist-in-Residence presents their work to the Department and public.

Visiting Lecture Series and Studio Visits

The Visiting Lecture Series is organized by a committee of Faculty who invite artists and scholars to give public lectures sharing their creative work and research, and meet with MFA and PhD Practice students for studio visits. Grad students may be invited to participate in nominating artists and scholars for the series at the committee's discretion.

Visiting Lecturers will be announced on the Department Calendar and email blasts, and the Visiting Lecture Series Committee will provide more information about requests for studio visit sign-ups, when available.

4. FACILITIES

Assignment of Graduate Studio Space

Studio spaces are provided to enrolled MFA students for a period not to exceed 3 years/9 quarters. It is anticipated that you will stay in the same studio for the duration of the program.

The Department meets annually to assign studio spaces. If there is a serious problem with your current studio assignment, you should write an email outlining the difficulty and submit by May 1st to vis-facilities@ucsd.edu for review. Please note, this would be regarding your overall Studio location and assignment and should not prevent you from reaching out immediately if there are issues with the functioning of your current Studio and use of the space.

If you will be away from UCSD for any reason during the academic year, Fall/Winter/Spring, your Studio may be reassigned temporarily and you will need to move out your things and turn-in your key. Studio spaces are for registered and enrolled students in the UCSD area. If you are going to be away for any reason, email vis-facilities@ucsd.edu to discuss your timeline and needs to see what steps need to be taken regarding your assigned Studio.

Studio move-out dates for graduating 3rd Years are always the Saturday-Sunday a week after Commencement.

Access to Shared Production Areas

The media and shop areas in the Visual Arts Facility and Structural Material Engineering building are designated for faculty and enrolled graduate student research only. Each has equal access upon completion of the appropriate training and is governed by the same rules. The photography areas VAF 228 and SME 149 are the only spaces that are also used for Undergraduate teaching and production purposes. Undergraduate students have their own production facilities at Mandeville.

Faculty and students alike must abide by the rules of each facility. Equipment must be properly checked out in consultation with the production staff. Any questions or concerns regarding use of the Visual Arts Facilities may be addressed to vis-facilities@ucsd.edu or the MFA Faculty Director.

Large Format Printing Policy

To arrange use of the large format printers, contact Justin Tuerk, Photography & Print Lab Instructional Technician at vis-facilities@ucsd.edu.

Ink costs are calculated at \$4 per square foot

Paper cost \$1.50 per linear foot (No paper cost if you bring your own roll)

We stock Epson Enhanced Matte and Premium Photo Luster (260)

$(\text{Print Height} \times \text{Print Width}/144) \times 4 + (\text{Paper Length}/12 \times 1.50)$

- ● Students can use a Russell Grant or they can order ink cartridges from B&H, Freestyle, or your preferred vendor.
 - ● Faculty can use research funds or they can order ink cartridges from B&H Freestyle, or your preferred vendor.
- Cash, check, venmo, etc. will not be accepted for payment

Justin Tuerk

UCSD Visual Arts Facility 407 7835 Trade St., Suite 100 San Diego, CA 92121

Policies to Observe

These are general reminders but not all encompassing, always refer to your Facilities Contract to confirm the full list of requirements to ensure you do not lose access to these resources.

- Do not give anyone your keys or access to your Studio.
- This is a professional space to be used in support of your MFA work and may not be used as a living space. There can be no overnight stays in your Studio.
- UCSD is a smoke-free campus.
- Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) rules must be followed.
- Do not leave work, personal items or trash outside of your Studio space. Dumpsters and trash cans are provided.
- The UCSD Principles of Community must be followed to maintain and safe and support space for all.
- Complete and maintain all trainings necessary to access specific facilities and use the included equipment.
- Notify the Department immediately if there are any concerns or issues with your studio or general department spaces. Everyone must self-monitor and then notify vis-facilities@ucsd.edu of issues so that work orders can be submitted and a safe environment maintained.
- At the end of your time in the program, return your Studio to previous conditions by the designated move out date.

Violation of Space Contract

Every graduate student and faculty member is provided annually with the Facilities Contract outlining required expectations for the use of Studio and shared spaces. The Department and all individuals are

required to adhere to these campus, safety and community based expectations. Those who violate these conditions may have their access to space revoked.

5. FUNDING

UAW Contract Obligations

The Department of Visual Arts provides full funding (3 years MFA, 5 years PhD) for students. The department adheres to all UAW contract obligations to students. Cohorts annual support will adhere to the obligations set by the UAW and will be generally achieved through employment. Primarily, student academic year salary support will be as a Teaching Assistant (TA) within the Visual Arts Department or another unit on campus.

Salary

Salaries increase annually based on experience via steps. If employed throughout the academic year, the salary will be paid out through nine monthly installments. Students typically work as TA's within Visual Arts, or another unit, with a 50% appointment (20 hours per week). This provides a salary to the student and the hiring department will pay all tuition and fees for the duration of employment. The Visual Arts department has created year-long employment appointments so that students know what they will be teaching and how they will be funded for the full academic year. Detailed information will be provided by the department and your instructor of record prior to the start of each course so that you are prepared for the course expectations and timeline.

Teaching Assistantships

TAs are a part of the Academic Student Employees bargaining unit and the terms and conditions of employment are set forth in the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the UC and the United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW), under the UAW/ASE Contract. In our department specifically, we have two types of TA positions: section TAs and lecture TAs. Although these positions have slightly different in-the-classroom expectations, both types of position adhere to the standards of the ASE contract. Below is general information regarding each type of appointment but not all encompassing:

- Section TAs:
 - Responsible for leading 2 sections.
 - Section TAs are required to attend lectures, complete required reading and/or film and video viewing, lead section meetings with smaller groups of students, hold office hours, and evaluate and grade student work.
 - 20 hours of work per week or 220 hours of work per quarter
- Lecture TAs:
 - Lecture TAs will not lead sections
 - Lecture TAs are required to attend lectures, complete required reading and/or film and video viewing, lead exam prep sessions, hold office hours, and evaluate and grade student work.
 - 20 hours of work per week or 220 hours of work per quarter

Offer of Teaching Assistantships are made by the department faculty in consideration of the employment needs of the department and skill sets of each student. Academic plans are consulted when assigning

employment and scheduling courses to ensure that employment offers do not impact the academic needs of each student. Students are notified of their offers each Spring Quarter for the following academic year to ensure that each student knows their employment and security of funds in advance. Those who are offered and accept employment from the Department of Visual Arts will be sent an employment contract and Description of Duties via the campus Instruction Assistant (IA) System. As a TA for the Department of Visual Arts, each quarter every TA will enroll in 4 units of VIS 500 with the MFA Director.

Students may seek and accept TA positions through other departments and units (i.e. College Writing Programs, Linguistics, Communication, Literature, etc.). These positions are promoted by these departments directly or are posted in the IA System, open campaigns. The department will accommodate as many remaining MFA students as possible in departmental TAships. Students who are not guaranteed offers from the department should be applying for positions outside of our department each year.

[The Teaching + Learning Commons](#) and [Center for Engaged Teaching](#) offer programs designed to support the work of TAs.

Associate-In

An [Associate-In](#) is a graduate student who is hired as the instructor of record for an undergraduate lower- or upper-division course with the mentorship of a full-time faculty member. All Associate-in teaching positions are unionized and salaried positions that follow university pay rates. Students with existing TA offers may still elect to apply and accept any Associate-in offers they receive in place of their TAship. Associate-in offers count toward fulfillment of income guarantees and priority will be granted to those who have not held a prior Associate-In position. Selected students must:

- Be Advanced to Candidacy
- Have advanced training in the needed subject matter
- Have prior, relevant teaching experience and quality CAPE scores

The Department of Visual Arts will hire a small number of Associate-In's each academic year based on the need within the undergraduate area. Associate-In's and Visiting Instructors are hired to cover course needs at the undergraduate level when there are not full-time faculty available. Due to this, the number and type of positions will vary year-to-year. Once the need has been established for the following academic year, an open call for applications will be sent to each student. This call will occur early in Fall Quarter and those who apply will enter into a pool of candidates from which offers may be made. The department may choose to re-open the application call mid-year only when there is a need. It will not be opened to accommodate students who miss the deadline for any reason.

Selections are made by the Faculty Area Heads in consultation with the Graduate Program Directors and the Department Chair. Because these teaching offers are motivated by departmental need, they may be made from quite early to quite late. Those selected will be sent an official offer of employment via the IA System. Associate-Ins may not teach a graduate level course or graduate level students within an undergraduate course.

MFA Students can qualify for these position during Winter and Spring quarters of year 3.

Summer Graduate Teaching Scholar

[Summer Graduate Teaching Scholar](#)s (SGTS) is a competitive, summer-only program to hire graduate students as the instructor of record for undergraduate lower- or upper-division courses with the mentorship of full-time faculty. Selected students will be hired as an Associate-In during the summer and

are sponsored by the SGTS program. Those selected will participate in training during the academic year to assist in the preparation of their course content and materials.

Qualified students will work with Faculty and Department staff to complete the SGTS application during Fall Quarter and select courses that are most appropriate for the summer session. The Department will make nominations to the SGTS program and will be notified if any students are selected to teach during the upcoming summer session. Unlike the typical Associate-In process, that is based on department course need, the SGTS program is an opportunity for students to indicate courses they are most interested in teaching. The SGTS program provides an additional financial award to the student for their participation the SGTS training program.

MFA students can qualify for this program the summer following year 3.

Graduate Student Researcher (GSR)

Occasionally, graduate students may be employed as a Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) to perform research in an academic department/research unit under the direction of a faculty member or authorized Principal Investigator. GSR positions are typically awarded by the professor who is the holder of a research grant that provides the source of payment and the work would be in support of their research needs. Most GSR positions are for work to be conducted 25% time (10 hours per week) up to 49.99% time (20 hours per week). Positions are available throughout the academic year and summer months, depending on the terms of the grant.

Department Grants and Fellowships

The Department of Visual Arts has several established grants and fellowships available for MFA Students:

- Russell Grant- an endowed grant to the Department of Visual Arts, the Russell Foundation offers up to \$3000 awards to support student work. This is offered each Fall Quarter and students may earn one award for the duration of their time in the MFA Program. It is encouraged that 2nd and 3rd year students apply to provide assistance in preparation of their Thesis.
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Funding- there are multiple funding options available for students who are producing work or hosting workshops that are in support of the department EDI mission.
- David Antin Prize- is an annual \$1000 prize awarded to a member of the 3rd Year MFA cohort based on their work. The student is selected by an interdisciplinary committee of department Faculty and announced as a part of the Open Studios event in Winter Quarter.
- MFA Thesis Fellowship- is offered to every MFA student during Spring Quarter of year 3. This Fellowship provides a financial stipend equivalent to a 50% TA position and full coverage of campus tuition and fees. This allows the 3rd Year cohort not to teach during the quarter they complete and present their Thesis.

Information regarding department funding is available on the Department of Visual Arts website and the Graduate Student Calendar.

Additional Grants and Fellowships

In addition to employment and funding opportunities offered directly by the Department of Visual Arts, grants, prizes, fellowships and awards are available across campus and beyond. As the administrative staff are made aware of funding opportunities, the Graduate Student Calendar will be updated with necessary information and an email sent to the MFA listserv. This does not represent the whole of financial support

available, only that the Department staff are made aware of. It is an important aspect of financial planning and professional development that you are seeking additional funding sources to support travel, supplies, materials, etc. Some additional funding options are:

[Visual Arts External Awards Database](#)

[UC Graduate Division](#)

[UC Mexus](#)

[Center for Latin American Studies](#)

[Research Affairs](#)

[UC San Diego Institute for Arts Humanities](#)

GRAPES @ UCLA - <https://grad.ucla.edu/funding/>

Career Center-GSR positions on Handshake

Funding opportunities provided outside of our department may have varying deadlines or short timelines. It is important that you periodically check for campus-wide or any relevant external fellowship opportunities. These deadlines change and are outside of departmental control and so deadlines may appear with short notice. You will want to periodically make sure you have up to date the following so that you can take advantage of these external funding opportunities, even with little notice:

- An autobiographical sketch or artist statement
- Your project description or proposal
- Work samples of completed work and relevant work-in-progress
- Curriculum vitae

And at the time of applying you will often be asked to provide additionally:

- An outline of your budget (for project grants)
- A letter of support from your Faculty Advisor

These recommendations are approximate and be sure to verify all funding application requirements for their exact requirements.

Funding Application Calendar

The following is an overview for students of some Department and external funding and residency opportunities. Follow the Graduate Student Calendar for specific funding deadlines and to stay up-to-date on any changes and additions.

Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
<p><u>2nd Years</u> Russell Grant External Funding Skowhegan Dedalus Nomination</p> <p><u>3rd Years</u> Summer Grad Teaching</p>		<p><u>2nd Years</u> SOMA Flaherty Film Seminar</p>	<p><u>1st and 2nd Years</u> Seek external funding Seek employment</p>

Or anything listed above			
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6. GRADUATE STUDENT REPRESENTATION

Elections and Term

Elected Graduate Student Representative positions include the MFA Faculty Meeting and Graduate Student Association Reps. Elections for each position shall be held at the first meeting of the current graduate students during the Fall Quarter, which should take place before the first Faculty meeting of the Academic Year.

Students shall inform the Department Chair, MFA Director, and Graduate Advisors of the election results.

Each elected officer shall serve in their position for the term of one year, until the fall elections of the following year, at which point the newly elected officers shall be installed.

The Faculty Search Committee Graduate Representative is an un-elected, Faculty-appointed position, created as needed.

Resignation

If a student wishes to resign from office, they must provide the MFA Faculty Director and vis-grad@ucsd.edu two weeks' notice so that a replacement can be selected and to ensure a smooth transition of office. In the event that there is interest by more than one person for said position, and the office does not allow for multiple students to hold such a position, the Graduate Students shall hold an election. The newly designated Representative shall hold the position for the remainder of the term of office.

MFA Faculty Meeting Representative – 1 Graduate Student, 1 Alternate

- Attend monthly meetings of the UCSD Visual Arts Faculty, typically held on the first Friday of every month
- Serve as the representative voice from Graduate Students for Faculty and Administration. Able to meet with the Graduate Coordinator and MFA Faculty Director on a regular basis and report back to the student body.
- Call meetings of the graduate students, including the electoral meeting in the Fall Quarter.

MFA GSA Representative – 1 Graduate Student, 1 Alternate

- Attend biweekly meetings of the UCSD Graduate Student Association (GSA) Council.
- Serve as a voting member of the UCSD GSA Council.
- Report back to the Visual Arts MFA students on any upcoming UCSDGSA events or ongoing business.

Faculty Search Committee Graduate Representative – 1 Graduate Student

When the Department forms an Ad Hoc Search Committee for a new faculty hire, the Committee will include one Graduate Student Representative. Graduate Students will be given notice by the MFA Faculty

Director to express interest, and selection will be made by the respective Search Committee Chair. Graduate Student selection will take into account the area of specialization for the posted search.

- Review, provide feedback on second-round candidates selected by Faculty on the Search Committee.
- Keep the Graduate Students informed about the hiring process.
- Facilitate opportunities to meet those candidates that are selected for final interviews.
- Communicate to the Faculty on Committee the student opinions and reactions to the candidates for hire.
- Present student evaluations of finalist candidates to Faculty at hiring review meeting.

7. POLICIES

Grading

All graduate students must complete:

- A minimum of 12.0 units of upper-division (numbered 100 and above) and graduate level courses (numbered 200 and above) per quarter. Lower-division undergraduate courses (numbered 1-99) may be taken by graduate students for interest or skills building but those units do not apply towards the minimum needed per quarter.
- Successfully complete 36.0 units per year. Failure to pass a total of 36.0 units in a year will result in the student being placed on academic probation by the university.
- Maintain a minimum grade point average of at least 3.0 (B average) to continue in good standing. A student is subject to dismissal if the overall grade point average falls below 3.0 at any time. University policy states that any student with more than 8 units of “U” and/or “F” grades is barred from future registration including the next available quarter.

It is expected that MFA students will take most courses for letter grades. Those courses taken for Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) grading rather than a letter grade will not have an impact on the GPA however they can still impact academic standing.

All students are expected to complete the assigned coursework within the 10 weeks allocated for the course. During extenuating circumstances and with the written permission of the instructor, the grade “I” may be assigned to a student's work. An incomplete is intended when the work is of non-failing quality, but is incomplete due to problems beyond the student’s control, such as illness, family emergency, etc. The deadline for filing a request for an Incomplete shall be no later than the first working day after final examination week. An instructor may not grant a request for an Incomplete for other than such good cause. The instructor shall make arrangements with the student for completion of the work required at the earliest possible date, but no later than the last day of the finals week in the following quarter. If not replaced by this date, the “I” grade will lapse into an “F” and will be computed into the GPA.

Forms

Academic Forms

<https://visarts.ucsd.edu/grad/advising/academic-forms.html>

- First Year Review Form

- Committee Form / Committee Reconstitution Form
- General Petition Form

Enrollment Forms

<https://visarts.ucsd.edu/grad/advising/enrollment-information.html>

- Special Studies VIS 298/299
- Pre-Authorization VIS 295 (MFA 3rd year)
- Reading Course Contract for enrollment in any VIS 100-189 course
- UC Intercampus Exchange Form
- Leave of Absence

Residency

US citizens who are not California residents must establish CA residency by August prior to the start of the second year. This allows for the NonResident Supplemental Tuition (NRST) to be dropped for your second and third years in the program. This is required as the Department is only able to pay this additional tuition on behalf of the student during their first year in the program. To establish residency for tuition purposes is an easy process with the Residency Deputy on campus:

<https://students.ucsd.edu/finances/fees/residence/criteria.html>. If you do not establish California residency but are eligible, then you will be required to pay your NRST for each quarter until you establish residency or graduate.

International Students are generally not able to establish CA Residency due to visa restrictions. The Department will fund 3 years/9 quarters of NRST for these students. Any International Students who need to enroll in coursework or graduate later than that will be required to pay their NRST.

Leave of Absence (LOA) Policy

Students needing to take a leave from the University with plans to return should notify the MFA Faculty Director, their Faculty Advisor and vis-grad@ucsd.edu of their intention to do so at least one month in advance of the leave. Graduate Students who have completed a minimum of one quarter and maintain a 3.0GPA are eligible for up to 3 quarters of leave. Any student bearing a child or responsible for the caregiving of a child 5 years or younger is eligible for an additional 3 quarters of leave. During this time, students may pay to maintain their health insurance but will not be permitted to utilize any campus resources, maintain a department Studio and will not be able to hold any employment or receive financial support. Students need to check-in with vis-grad@ucsd.edu each quarter to confirm their continued LOA plans or to process their return to campus.

Some students may decide to withdraw from the University or no longer enroll in courses. Anytime you are taking a leave, you should discuss this with your Faculty Advisor. Once you are interested in returning to campus, must reapply for admission and pay a readmission fee to the Cashier's Office. You also will need to meet with the MFA Faculty Director, your Faculty Advisor and administrative staff to learn what requirements need to be met based on the current catalog requirements for the MFA Program.

Time Limits

Students would usually finish the majority of their required coursework in 2 years, but must be Advanced to Candidacy no later than Week 10 of the Winter Quarter of their 3rd Year. Ideally students will be Advanced to Candidacy by Fall Quarter of the 3rd Year in order to allow the most time and best preparation for the Thesis presentation, paper and exam. Students must be in residence for at least 2 years or 6 quarters before graduating.

For international students, there is an additional tuition (NRST) charged to the Department each quarter enrolled. The Department of Visual Arts agrees to pay this supplemental tuition for normative time (3 years, 9 quarters). For International students who extend into the 4th Year, you are responsible for the NRST until you graduate.

Trainings/Systems Access

UCSD requires that all employees complete required trainings every 1-2 years in order to maintain access to campus systems. It is necessary that you stay up-to-date on these trainings as an expectation of your employment and funding guarantee. These required training reminders will be sent to you via email from the UC Learning Center.

8. PROGRAM TIMELINE AND SAMPLE PLAN

Degree Progress is outlined below by Year and Quarter, including Required Courses, Drifting Critiques, Evaluations, Funding and other helpful information. It is important that you are reviewing this with administrative staff and your Faculty Advisor to ensure that you are meeting all required aspects of the program and are able to make individual adjustments based on your personal and professional goals.

YEAR 1

Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
VIS 205 VIS 299 VIS 500 VIS 502 <i>Lightning Talks</i>	VIS 201 VIS 202 VIS 210-219 VIS 500 <i>Drifting Critique</i> <i>Open Studios</i>	VIS 203 Out of Dept course VIS 500 <i>First Year Review</i> <i>Spring Evaluation</i> <i>Confirm Advisor</i>	<i>CA Residency</i>

YEAR 2

Fall	Winter	Spring
VIS 206, 230-262	Elective Course	VIS 208

Elective Course VIS 500	Elective Course VIS 500 <i>2nd Year Exhibitions Drifting Critique Open Studios</i>	Elective Course VIS 500 <i>Constitute Committee Spring Evaluation</i>
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YEAR 3

Fall	Winter	Spring
VIS 203 VIS 209 VIS 295 (4 units) VIS 500 <i>Choose Thesis Grouping Advancement to Candidacy GEPA Thesis Formatting Drifting Critique</i>	VIS 299 (8 units) VIS 500 <i>Open Studios Confirm Thesis Committee Date</i>	VIS 299 (12 units) <i>Thesis Exhibition Thesis Defense Meeting with full Committee</i>

9. RESOURCES

- [Graduate Student Calendar](#)- Look here for quarterly deadlines and academic events
- [Annual Schedule](#)- See Visual Arts courses planned for the full academic year
- [MFA Program Page](#)- Review the MFA program page regularly to manage progress
- [Tritonlink](#)- For accessing academic and financial systems required by campus
- [GEPA](#)- Division of Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs
- [OSD](#)- For Academics: Office for Students with Disabilities
- [DCC](#)- For Employment: Disability Counseling and Consulting
- [CAPS](#)- Counseling and Psychological Services
- [Triton Food Pantry](#)- If experiencing food insecurity for yourself, roommates or family members
- [OPHD](#)- Office for the Prevention of Harassment or Discrimination
- [OMBUDS](#)- Confidential space for problem-solving issues
- [Transportation](#)- Parking passes or transportation passes
- [Career Documentation for the Visual Artist](#)- free workbook about legacy planning