

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

School of Art and Design

Art Education | Master of Arts (MA) Handbook

Last updated: August 2026

Table of Contents

1. Welcome
 2. Program Goals
 3. Program of Study
 4. Academic Advising and Academic Progress
 5. Thesis Research and Writing
 6. Funding and Teaching Assistantships
 7. Graduate College
-

1. Welcome

Welcome to the Master of Arts (MA) in Art Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

The MA is a research-focused graduate degree designed for students who wish to deepen their understanding of art education through advanced coursework and original scholarship. Through study with faculty across Art Education and related fields, students engage with contemporary theories, research methodologies, and critical issues that shape educational practice, policy, and inquiry.

Students in the program become part of a community of scholars committed to examining the relationships among art, visual culture, learning, and social life. Through coursework, collaborative dialogue, and the completion of a master's thesis, MA students develop specialized knowledge and contribute new perspectives to the field.

This handbook provides program-specific information about degree requirements, advising, research expectations, and academic progress. It should be read alongside the School of Art & Design Graduate Student Handbook and the Graduate College Handbook, which contain policies and resources applicable to all graduate students at the University of Illinois.

Graduate College Handbook: <https://handbook.grad.illinois.edu/full>

2. Program Goals

The MA program provides advanced study in art education through graduate coursework and independent research. The program is designed to help students:

- Examine major theories, concepts, and debates in art education.
 - Develop a critical understanding of the relationships among art, visual culture, education, and society.
 - Analyze educational practices and policies from scholarly and research-based perspectives.
 - Develop competence in qualitative, arts-based, and other research methodologies relevant to the field.
 - Engage deeply with scholarship in art education and related disciplines.
 - Strengthen their ability to communicate ideas through academic writing, discussion, and presentation.
 - Conduct independent research that contributes to understanding and practice in art education.
 - Prepare for professional work in educational, cultural, and community settings, as well as for potential future doctoral study.
-

3. Program of Study

The MA is a 32-credit-hour, thesis-based master's degree designed to be completed over one and a half to two (1.5-2) academic years. Students complete advanced coursework in Art Education and related fields while conducting original research that culminates in a master's thesis. Students develop their Program of Study in consultation with their academic advisor and should maintain a current Plan of Study throughout their enrollment.

➤ Core Art Education Coursework

All MA students complete a common foundation of Art Education coursework that develops knowledge of the field's history, theory, research methodologies, and contemporary issues. Coursework typically includes:

- **ARTE 502: Curriculum Development** (4 hours)
- **ARTE 505: Foundations of Art Education** (4 hours)

- **ARTE 593: Survey of Qualitative Methodologies** (4 hours)
- **ARTE 599: Thesis Research** (4 hours)
- Additional Art Education coursework approved by the student's advisor

Students must complete a minimum of **20 credit hours in Art Education (ARTE) coursework**.

➤ **Elective Coursework**

The remaining coursework may be selected in consultation with the student's advisor. Elective courses may be taken within Art Education, the School of Art & Design, or other academic units across the university and should support the student's research interests, professional goals, and intellectual development.

Graduate credit may be earned through approved 400- and 500-level courses. Students may apply a maximum of two 400-level courses toward the degree, provided those courses are taken for graduate credit with an approved graduate section.

➤ **Thesis Research**

The MA requires the completion of a master's thesis based on original scholarly research. Students typically begin exploring possible thesis topics during their first year and devote increasing attention to thesis research and writing during their second year.

Students register for *ARTE 599: Thesis Research* while actively conducting thesis research and writing. ARTE 599 may be taken in multiple semesters, but only one enrollment may be counted toward degree requirements.

Additional information about thesis advising, committee formation, research approvals, writing expectations, and thesis deposit procedures is provided in the *Thesis and Research Requirements* section of this handbook.

➤ **Special Topics, Independent Study, and Forum**

ARTE 501: Special Topics in Art Education

ARTE 501 addresses a variety of advanced topics in Art Education. Because course content changes across semesters, ARTE 501 may be repeated for credit when the topic differs.

ARTE 591: Independent Graduate Study

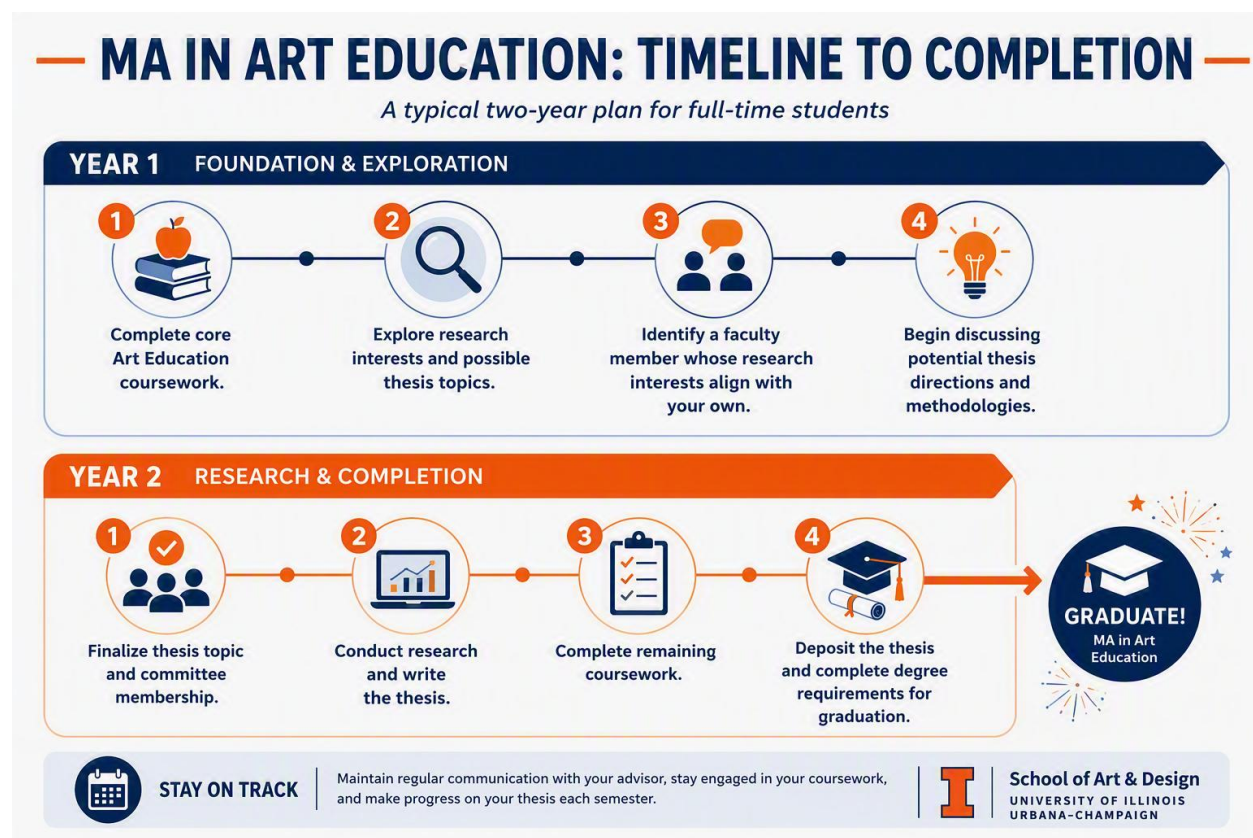
Students may count **one** Independent Graduate Study (ARTE 591) toward the MA degree. Independent studies are arranged with a faculty supervisor and require approval through the School of Art & Design independent study process.

ARTE 591F: Art Education Forum

All MA students must enroll in *ARTE 591F: Art Education Forum* during each fall semester they are in residence. The Forum brings together graduate students across the Art Education programs to share scholarship, discuss current issues in the field, and learn about resources that support graduate study and professional development.

ARTE 591F is required but does not count toward the 32 credit hours required for the degree.

➤ Typical Degree Timeline to Completion



4. Academic Advising and Academic Progress

When students enter the MA program, they are assigned an initial faculty advisor who assists with course selection and academic planning during the first stages of the program.

As students develop their research interests, they should identify a faculty member whose expertise aligns with their proposed area of study and ask that person to serve as their

thesis chair and academic advisor. In most cases, the thesis chair also serves as the student's primary academic advisor. Students should notify the Art Education Graduate Coordinator when an advisor change has been finalized.

Students should meet with their advisor at least once each semester before registration to review degree progress, discuss research development, and select courses that support their scholarly and professional goals.

➤ **Thesis Committee**

In addition to the thesis chair, MA students must identify a second faculty member to serve on their master's thesis committee. Together, the thesis chair and second committee member constitute the Master's Examination Committee. Committee membership is based primarily on shared scholarly interests and should be established early enough to support the student's thesis development and graduation timeline.

Students may change advisors if their research interests evolve. While there is no penalty for doing so, when changing advisors, everyone must be pre-informed and agree to the changes, and this may affect the timeline for degree completion.

➤ **Annual Review of Student Progress**

In accordance with Graduate College policy, the Art Education Program conducts an annual review of all enrolled graduate students. The purpose of the review is to assess academic progress, clarify expectations, identify strengths and areas for growth, and support timely degree completion.

Toward the end of each spring semester, students submit an updated Plan of Study that documents completed coursework, academic accomplishments, and progress toward degree requirements. Students should use the Plan of Study and their Graduate Degree Audit to ensure their records are accurate and up to date.

Program faculty, acting as the Annual Academic Progress Review Committee, review submitted materials and prepare an evaluation of each student's progress. Students receive a copy of the review and may discuss it with their advisor. Written comments or responses may also be submitted before the review is finalized.

5. Thesis Research and Writing

The MA degree requires the completion of a master's thesis based on original research. Because thesis research develops over time, students are encouraged to begin exploring topics, questions, and relevant faculty expertise during their first year in the program.

A successful thesis:

- Investigates a clearly defined research question.
- Engages relevant scholarly literature.
- Employs an appropriate research methodology.
- Demonstrates critical analysis and original thinking.
- Adheres to professional standards of academic writing and citation.

➤ **Typical Thesis Process**

While individual projects vary, most students progress through the following stages:

1. Identify a research topic and thesis chair.
2. Develop a research proposal and preliminary literature review.
3. Complete any required approvals for research activities.
4. Conduct research and analyze findings.
5. Draft, revise, and refine the thesis with guidance from the committee.
6. Submit the completed thesis for committee approval.
7. Deposit the final thesis according to Graduate College deadlines and procedures.

➤ **Research Involving Human Participants**

Any research involving human participants must receive approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before data collection begins. Because the review process may take several weeks and occasionally requires revisions, students should consult the IRB website and begin planning early in their research process.

<https://oprs.research.illinois.edu/>

➤ **Thesis Formatting and Deposit**

Students are responsible for meeting all Graduate College requirements related to thesis formatting, accessibility, deadlines, and deposit procedures. Because revisions and committee review require significant time, students should plan ahead and consult Graduate College deadlines well before their intended semester of graduation.

Graduate College Thesis and Dissertation Information:

<https://grad.illinois.edu/academics/thesis-dissertation>

➤ Professional Writing Expectations

Students are expected to submit carefully edited, professional-quality writing to their thesis chair and committee members. Faculty advisors provide scholarly guidance and feedback on ideas, methods, and arguments, but they are not expected to serve as copy editors.

Students, including native English speakers and multilingual writers, are encouraged to seek professional proofreading or copyediting assistance before submitting major drafts when appropriate. Any editor should focus on clarity, grammar, style, and formatting rather than generating content or contributing intellectual work to the thesis

➤ Writing Style

The Art Education Program requires thesis manuscripts to follow the current edition of the **American Psychological Association (APA)** publication guidelines, along with all formatting requirements established by the Graduate College.

➤ Using Generative AI Responsibly

Writing and research are central ways of learning and understanding material in college. The central tenet of academic integrity is doing your own work. As such, tools that you use in the process of learning, writing, and research should be carefully considered.

Talk with your instructors about what is considered responsible use of generative AI in your discipline and in their course.

If you use a generative AI tool in your work, you should cite it. The [APA](#) and [MLA](#) both provide guidelines for citing generative AI work. Be sure to note how you used it: “I used it this much, in this way, and this percentage of work was generated by AI.” Open AI, the creators of ChatGPT, have a [content co-author policy](#). The key here is to be ethical and not to deceive or mislead your readers. In working with a generative AI tool, be certain to verify that the citations it generates actually exist. Many people have found that these generative tools invent articles to cite.

Remember to:

- Follow only the specific permitted uses set by your instructor/advisor.
- Document and attribute all generative AI contributions to your coursework.
- Take full responsibility for generative AI contributions, ensuring the accuracy of facts and sources.

➤ Ways Not to Use Generative AI

There are some things to keep in mind when using generative AI for your coursework. Here are a few:

- Don't use it to write your thesis content.
- Don't rely solely on information provided by generative AI as it may be inaccurate, misleading, biased, and even made-up. So can citations provided by generative AI.
- Be transparent in your use of generative AI and cite as appropriate.
- Don't use generative AI to replace your critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Use generative AI to supplement your learning, not to replace it.

https://www.vpaa.uillinois.edu/digital_risk_management/generative_ai/students

6. Funding and Teaching Assistantships

Most MA students receive funding through teaching assistantships (TA) offered by the School of Art & Design, though in rare cases, fellowships or research assistantships (RA) may apply. These appointments provide professional experience in college teaching while supporting students' progress toward the degree. TA funding packages typically include a salary, tuition waiver, and partial fee waiver. Students should consult their admission and appointment letters for the specific terms of their support.

Teaching assistant assignments vary according to the needs of the School and the qualifications and experience of individual students. Art Education MA students commonly assist with or teach courses such as *Everyday Arts Lab* and *Introduction to Art* under the supervision of Art Education faculty. Responsibilities differ by assignment and may include teaching, facilitating discussion or studio activities, assessing student work, mentoring undergraduate students, and supporting course administration.

Teaching assistantships are contingent upon satisfactory academic progress, professional conduct, and fulfillment of assigned responsibilities. Supervising faculty evaluate teaching performance and provide guidance to support continued professional development.

Students are expected to treat teaching assistantships as both employment and an important component of their graduate education. The School, Graduate College, and Graduate Employees' Organization (GEO) provide policies, resources, and support related to assistantship appointments. Students should refer to the School of Art & Design Graduate Student Handbook for additional information regarding teaching assistant

responsibilities, employment policies, appointment percentages, and university procedures.

7. Graduate College

All graduate students at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign are subject to the policies and regulations of the Graduate College. MA students should consult both the School of Art & Design Graduate Student Handbook and the Graduate College Handbook for information regarding registration, academic standing, graduation requirements, degree audits, forms and petitions, and university policies that apply to graduate study.

Because the MA is a thesis-based degree, students should become familiar with Graduate College requirements early in their program. The Graduate College establishes policies related to thesis formatting, accessibility requirements, deposit procedures, graduation deadlines, and degree certification. Students are responsible for meeting all Graduate College requirements in addition to the requirements of the Art Education Program.

Students are strongly encouraged to review Graduate College thesis and dissertation resources well before their intended graduation semester. Doing so can help avoid delays in thesis approval, deposit, or degree conferral.

Graduate College Handbook

<https://handbook.grad.illinois.edu/full>

Graduate College Thesis and Dissertation Resources

<https://grad.illinois.edu/academics/thesis-dissertation>

Graduate Student Portal

<https://grad.illinois.edu/academics/graduate-student-portal>