

School of Art & Design
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

MFA DRI GRADUATE HANDBOOK

AY27 (Fall 2026 – Spring 2027)

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Welcome

Welcome to the MFA in Art & Design—Concentration in Design for Responsible Innovation (DRI) at the University of Illinois! This handbook describes the MFA DRI concentration curriculum, requirements, rules, and regulations. It is a great guide for when you have questions, but remember that the Program Coordinator(s) and your Research Advisor and/or Thesis Committee are also here to help.

Links to program information:

- Art & Design [MFA in Design for Responsible Innovation](#) in the Academic Catalog
- [MFA in Design for Responsible Innovation](#) program overview on the School of Art & Design Website

This MFA DRI Graduate Handbook is a quick reference guide for students enrolled in the Design for Responsible Innovation Concentration within the School of Art and Design MFA Program at Illinois.

- First and foremost, MFA DRI students are subject to guidance and policy set by the Graduate College at Illinois, as described in the [Graduate College Handbook \(GCH\)](#).
- MFA DRI students are also subject to guidance and policy described in the [Art & Design Grad Handbook](#).
- If there are any discrepancies between policy description here and in the GCH, Graduate College policy prevails. Please keep in mind that Part II of the GCH may be updated any time throughout the year and those changes are effective immediately.
- With all these points in mind, please familiarize yourself both with this MFA DRI Graduate Handbook and the [Graduate College Handbook](#).

Finally, please note that the MFA DRI Program Coordinator may add further explanatory detail throughout the year. Such additions will not amend policy, but may provide further useful guidance to students.

Introduction

School of Art & Design Mission Statement

The School of Art & Design distinguishes itself, as part of a preeminent public research university, through its leadership in visual literacy, design thinking, critical inquiry, and material problem solving. As artists, designers, historians, and educators, the School's faculty and staff prepare students to make significant contributions in broad areas of culture, scholarship, and professional practice. We value the unique qualities of traditionally defined disciplines, the exploration of critical frameworks,

collaborative processes, and new technologies and media. Central to the School's culture is a commitment to open dialogue among students, faculty, staff, and a global community in an atmosphere of diversity and active inclusion. See <https://art.illinois.edu/about/our-mission-strategic-plan/>.

MFA DRI Program Mission Statement

The three-year MFA in Design for Responsible Innovation at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign cultivates designers who envision and create inclusive futures in academia, industry, and communities. We invite students with design or design-adjacent* academic or professional backgrounds to apply. We prepare our graduates to drive responsible innovation in design practice and pedagogy by addressing pressing contemporary questions around climate change, ethics and social justice, equity, technology access, identity, and cultures. We equip our students with the knowledge and skills to build a more equitable and sustainable world through traditional and emerging practices including, but not limited to, graphic design, visual analytics, systems and service design, multimodal interaction, and visual communication and narrative.

** Students without an undergraduate design degree will enroll in design studio electives focused on tools, methods, and skill building in their first graduate year.*

Program Overview and Requirements

The DRI concentration within the MFA Program in Art & Design at the University of Illinois provides graduate students with key disciplinary competencies that synthesize critical elements of advanced, highly skilled, analytically-based studio work in design. The program curriculum is loosely structured in order to inform and infuse design practice and research with knowledge from other disciplines on campus. As a land grant, Research One (R1) university, we provide a holistic education that helps students become critical thinkers, innovative designers, and conscientious citizens.

MFA DRI studio and seminar courses are designed to help you understand research methodologies, synthesize design history and contexts, develop an advanced studio practice, use analytical tools and processes, articulate your design practice and research clearly, and prepare you for the option of teaching design in academic settings or exercise design expertise in industry or community settings. The remainder of your courses will be electives to support your research interests.

Advising Schedule

Graduation requirements include completion of 64 credit hours and completion of a graduate thesis project. The thesis project will be approved by your thesis

committee, publicly exhibited and/or presented, and include a written component to be deposited in the University of Illinois Graduate College Thesis Office. Students are responsible for registering, ensuring the accuracy of their schedules, and meeting campus deadlines. In order to ensure that you are meeting course requirements, be sure to check with the DRI Graduate Coordinator prior to course registration for each term, which typically opens in the ninth or tenth week of the preceding semester. Students must register online using the Self-Service registration system no later than the tenth day of instruction..

	Year 01	Year 02	Year 03
Fall	ARTD 595 MFA DRI Studio 4h ARTD 499 ID Thry & Methd 4h *Note: ARTD 499: Design Methods fulfills the ARTD 570: DRI Research Methodology requirement ARTD 451 EDGE 4h ART 595 SGTA Pedagogy Sem 2h	ARTD 595 MFA DRI Studio 4h FAA Elective 2h Elective 4h	ARTD 599 Thesis 4h Elective 4h
Spring	ARTD 595 MFA DRI Studio 4h ARTD 551 DRI Res Imp 4h FAA Elective 4h	ARTD 595 MFA DRI Studio 4h FAA Elective 4h Elective 4h	ARTD 599 Thesis 4h Elective 4h

MFA DRI Required Course Descriptions

[ARTD 595 MFA Design for Responsibility Studio](#) (credit: 4 hours)

This studio provides the MFA design student with tools to define and develop their body of work in the context of the DRI program's mission by pursuing an individual or collaborative path. The course enhances the student's ability to develop a rigorous theoretical framework and select appropriate methods and processes for design research and pedagogy. Additional fees may apply. See Class Schedule. May be repeated in separate terms to a maximum of 20 hours. Prerequisite: Enrollment in the MFA concentration in Design for Responsible Innovation or consent of instructor.

[ARTD 570 Design for Responsible Innovation Research Methodology](#) (credit: 4 hours)

This seminar coordinates readings in design theory and the processes and principles of human-centered design with graduate students' emerging thesis research interests. Students will address the role of design research methodology in establishing design practice and design pedagogy. DRI graduate students enrolled in this course will be well-prepared to take leadership roles in the corresponding ARTD 270 Design Methods. Students may take this course one time for credit toward the MFA DRI degree. Additional fees may apply. See Class Schedule. May be repeated in separate terms to a maximum of 8 hours.

[ARTD 499 Design Theory & Methodology](#) (credit: 4 hours)

Choose the Special Topics section that specifies Design Theory & Methodology. If it says Industrial Design Theory & Methodology, that's ok, it's still the right course for you.

[ARTD 451 Ethics of a Designer in a Global Economy \(EDGE\) \(credit: 4 hours\)](#)

The EDGE studio presents complex problems of ethics within the graphic design practice. Individual sections address social and environmental issues. Additional fees may apply. See Class Schedule. 4 undergraduate hours. 4 graduate hours. May be repeated up to 8 hours in the same term and 12 hours in separate terms, if topics vary.

[ARTD 551 Design for Responsible Innovation Research Impact \(credit: 4 hours\)](#)

This seminar helps DRI graduate students connect their research with pedagogy and professional development strategies to disseminate their research into publishing, conferences, communities, and other relevant venues. Students may take this course one time for credit toward the MFA DRI degree. May be repeated in separate terms to a maximum of 8 hours.

[ART 595 Art and Design Graduate Student Teaching Seminar \(credit: 1 hour\)](#)

Students in this course will learn about pedagogy and related resources available on campus. Structured for students across A+D degree programs, this course will focus on broadly relevant, rather than discipline-specific, practices. Other times, it will ask students to share discipline specific knowledge with the goal of developing interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches that can be used in a range of teaching contexts. Students will always be encouraged to adapt course materials to their specific needs.

[ARTD 599 Thesis \(credit: 0 to 12 hours\)](#)

Faculty guidance in writing and depositing a thesis for MFA concentrations in Industrial Design or Design for Responsible Innovation or MDes Industrial Design. Students should enroll with the faculty member who is supervising their thesis. Additional fees may apply. See Class Schedule. Approved for S/U grading only. May be repeated in separate semesters to a maximum of 32 hours. Prerequisite: Restricted to graduate study in Design For Responsible Innovation (MFA) or Industrial Design (MFA, MDes).

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Students will be graded on their attendance record and the degree to which they are prepared for class. As a matter of general policy, class absences are not excused. Instructors will reasonably accommodate certain types of

absences, as described in Article 1, Part 5, Section 1-502 of the Student Code (admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/). An absence is defined as:

1. missing class entirely;
2. arriving 15 minutes past the official class start time or a pattern of arriving after the start time of the course meeting;
3. leaving the classroom for more than 15 minutes during the duration of a course meeting;
4. leaving early

Three (3) tardies are equal to one absence. If a class is missed, it is the student's responsibility to contact their classmates first for the material and information covered that day. Students are expected to come to the next class prepared for the work that is to be covered. Office hours should be used for individual discussion and catch-up opportunities. The student is responsible for contacting the instructor right away in order to coordinate and make arrangements for making up missed work.

Semester Reviews

This is the primary forum for evaluating the student's thesis research.¹ Reviews will be held during the final week of the semester. Students will present their design research; length is determined by year in the program. Participation is required; faculty will provide feedback. Following the presentation, faculty will consult and vote on the student's progress. Students should demonstrate clear research direction and progress towards their degree each review. The student's record of coursework will also be considered. The possible outcomes are Pass, Pass with Reservations, or Fail. Results will be provided in writing by the conclusion of the final exam period.

¹ The Graduate College requires Units to hold annual academic progress reviews for all graduate student. In the MFA DRI concentration, this is provided twice annually—once at the end of the fall term and again at the end of the spring term.

Sample Review Form



College of Fine & Applied Arts
School of Art & Design
143 Art & Design Building, MC-590
408 E. Peabody Dr.
Champaign, IL 61820-6024



College of Fine & Applied Arts
School of Art & Design
143 Art & Design Building, MC-590
408 E. Peabody Dr.
Champaign, IL 61820-6024

GRADUATE FACULTY REVIEW

Student's Name: _____

Year Entered Program: [Fall/Spring Year] _____

Year in Program: [First, Second, Third] Year _____

Expected Graduation Date: [Month Year] _____

Research Advisor or Committee Members: [Name], [Chair], [Names, Affiliations] _____

Current Semester: [Fall/Spring Year] _____

Working Thesis Title: _____

Abstract: _____

Keywords: _____

Classes Taken: _____

	Fall	Spring
Year 01: [RUBRIC + Number]: [Title, Faculty]	[RUBRIC + Number]: [Title, Faculty]	[RUBRIC + Number]: [Title, Faculty]
TA: [RUBRIC + Number + Title]	TA: [RUBRIC + Number + Title]	TA: [RUBRIC + Number + Title]
Year 02: [RUBRIC + Number]: [Title, Faculty]	[RUBRIC + Number]: [Title, Faculty]	[RUBRIC + Number]: [Title, Faculty]
TA: [RUBRIC + Number + Title]	TA: [RUBRIC + Number + Title]	TA: [RUBRIC + Number + Title]
Year 03: [RUBRIC + Number]: [Title, Faculty]	[RUBRIC + Number]: [Title, Faculty]	[RUBRIC + Number]: [Title, Faculty]
TA: [RUBRIC + Number + Title]	TA: [RUBRIC + Number + Title]	TA: [RUBRIC + Number + Title]

Questions for Reviewer(s): _____

Notes from Graduate Faculty Review, [DATE]: _____

Suggested Readings: _____

	Fall	Spring
Year 01: Pass/Fail/Pass With Reservation	Pass/Fail/Pass With Reservation	Pass/Fail/Pass With Reservation
Year 02: Pass/Fail/Pass With Reservation	Pass/Fail/Pass With Reservation	Pass/Fail/Pass With Reservation
Year 03: Pass/Fail/Pass With Reservation	Pass/Fail/Pass With Reservation	Pass/Fail/Pass With Reservation

Pass = Satisfactory progress toward degree

Pass w/ Reservations = Unsatisfactory progress toward degree

First Pass w/ reservations = additional GPA, attendance, consultation, and deliverable requirements

Second Pass w/ reservations = Internal Probation

Internal Probation = Funding/teaching assistantships may be discontinued

Second Semester Internal Probation = Fail

Fail = Funding/assistantships unavailable; Graduate College Probation; possible dismissal

See [DRI MFA Program Handbook](#) for detailed definitions of Semester Review Outcomes

Program Chair Signature: _____ Date: _____

Outcomes Defined

1. Pass (P)
 - a. Satisfactory progress towards degree, on the basis of demonstrated creative and research progress and successful completion of coursework that meets the GC minimum requirement of 2.25 per semester and 2.75 cumulative.
2. Pass with Reservations (PwR)
 - a. Faculty have reservations about the student's progress toward degree
 - b. Student is required to complete the advising schedule for the succeeding semester with a GPA of 3.0 or above
 - c. Student must show regular attendance in all courses
 - d. Student must show acceptable progress at mid-term in DRI courses
 - e. Student must schedule a mid-semester thesis review with their thesis committee and demonstrate sufficiently improved progress toward the degree. If no thesis committee is formed yet, the student should consult the DRI concentration representatives to identify an appropriate roster of DRI faculty)
 - f. Student must determine a clear set of deliverables for thesis with their committee (If thesis committee is not formed yet, the deliverables will be discussed and determined with all appropriate DRI faculty)

- g. If a student holds a DRES accommodation, time extensions will be determined in consultation with DRES staff
- 3. Second Pass with Reservations (PwRx2) = 1 semester Internal Probation
 - a. Faculty have reservations about the student's progress toward degree
 - b. Funding and Assistantships are reviewed and may be discontinued
 - c. Student is required to complete the advising schedule for the succeeding semester with a GPA of 3.0 or above
 - d. Student must show regular attendance in all courses
 - e. Student must show acceptable progress at mid-term in DRI courses
 - f. Student must schedule a mid-semester thesis review with their thesis committee and demonstrate sufficiently improved progress toward degree (or appropriate roster of faculty as determined after first PwR).
 - g. Student must determine a clear set of deliverables for the thesis with their committee. (If no thesis committee is formed yet, deliverables will be determined in consultation with all appropriate DRI faculty)
 - h. If a student holds a DRES accommodation, time extensions will be determined in consultation with DRES staff
 - i. Third Pass with Reservations (PwRx3) = Fail
- 4. Fail (F)
 - a. Funding and Assistantships are not available
 - b. Academic warning is filed with the Graduate College. The GCH notes,

Programs monitor the academic progress of their students. Factors that a program may use to assess academic progress include, but are not limited to, performance in course work; satisfactory and timely completion of all milestones as determined by the program; satisfactory progress in research; overall graduate and / or program GPA; and performance on qualifying, preliminary, and other examinations. Failure to meet these requirements can result in the program recommending to the Graduate College that the student be not in good academic standing or dropped by the Graduate College. The Graduate College will review the recommendation. If it is determined that the student will be placed on academic warning status, the Graduate College will communicate the length of the warning period and requirements for returning to good academic standing (GCH 2025–2026, 26).
 - c. Student is required to complete the advising schedule for the succeeding semester with a GPA of 3.0 or above
 - d. Student must show regular attendance in all courses
 - e. Student must show acceptable progress at mid-term in DRI courses
 - f. Student must schedule a mid-semester thesis review with their thesis committee and demonstrate sufficiently improved progress toward degree. If no thesis committee is formed yet, the student should

consult the DRI program coordinators to identify an appropriate roster of DRI faculty)

- g. Student must determine a clear set of deliverables for the thesis with their committee. (If no thesis committee is formed yet, deliverables will be determined in consultation with all appropriate GD/DRI faculty)
 - h. Student must pass the following faculty review before they can become eligible again for funding and assistantships
 - i. If a student holds a DRES accommodation, time extensions will be determined in consultation with DRES staff
5. Drop
- a. Per the GCH,

A graduate student placed on academic warning status who fails to improve their academic standing by the end of the warning period will receive a notice of drop status from the Graduate College. This action prohibits the student from registering and drops any courses for which the student has pre-registered. The student may request reinstatement to the Graduate College through the petition process. The Graduate College will consider petitions containing strong support from the academic program they wish to pursue and strong justification based on other factors pertinent to the program's determination of satisfactory academic progress.

- 6. UIUC [Graduate College Handbook page references](#) on Academic Warning and Drop Status
 - a. Academic Standing, 24–27
 - i. Academic Warning (Not in Good Academic Standing), 26
 - ii. Academic warning due to GPA, 26
 - iii. Academic warning due to exceeded time limit, 26
 - iv. Academic warning based on program recommendation, 26
 - b. Drop Status, 26–27

Advising

Curricular Advising

The MFA DRI Program Coordinator is responsible for consultation on course selection and all matters relating to the student's progress to degree. Advising appointments may be initiated by the coordinator or requested by you via email. You should meet with the coordinator at least once a semester when selecting courses to ensure you are staying on track to graduate.

Research Advising

Each incoming student will be assigned a faculty research advisor on the basis of the faculty member's expressed interest in the student's research.

1. The Research Advisor's role consists of general scholarly and practice-based mentorship, administered through individual and group meetings.
2. First/second year Research Advisor assignments will persist until the student forms a thesis committee, typically during the fourth semester.
3. The student may or may not invite the Research Advisor to serve as the chair of the thesis committee; the faculty member may or may not accept such an invitation.
4. The student may request to change the Research Advisor by completing a [Change-of-Advisor Request Form](#). The student should cultivate a conversation with the new proposed advisor and gain their agreement to serve as Research Advisor prior to completing the request form.
5. Research Advisors must be full-time permanent tenure-track or specialized GD/DRI Program faculty who hold Grad College appointments.
6. Your Research Advisor will:
 - a. Be available to meet on a regular schedule that you define together each term
 - b. Offer guidance and expertise to support development of your individual topical research focus
 - c. Assist as needed in course selection to ensure timely progress to degree, with electives that support your design research interests (this supplements curricular advising from the Program Coordinator)
 - d. Help strategize in your pursuit of your academic and professional objectives, within the structure of our program, institution, and field
 - e. Encourage your process of seeking input from other faculty, professionals, and peers
 - f. Respect reasonable differences of opinion or divergence of direction as part of a normal and healthy growth process
 - g. Encourage you to form your Thesis Committee without expressed or implied expectation of being invited to serve as Chair or member

Thesis Advising and Committee Formation

1. The thesis committee, consisting of a Chair and at least two committee members, is formed in the fourth semester.
2. The Chair is a member of the Graduate Faculty in Graphic Design and Design for Responsible Innovation.
3. The committee will also include at least one additional committee member who is a full-time, permanent tenure-track or specialized FAA faculty.
4. The committee will also include one or more additional members, who may come from GD/DRI, other programs on campus, or other universities. It is acceptable and encouraged to invite a faculty member from another discipline to serve on the committee who has a research interest that supports your area of study.

5. The minimum committee size is three faculty. We recommend limiting the committee to no more than four for the sake of expediency.
6. To establish your thesis committee, complete [Thesis Committee Approval Form](#), then send it to Ellen de Waard, your Thesis Committee Chair, the MFA/DRI Program Chair, and the MFA DRI Program Coordinator.
7. To change the Thesis Committee, submit an updated [Thesis Committee Approval Form](#) to Ellen de Waard, the MFA/DRI Program Chair, and the MFA DRI Program Coordinator.

Thesis Process

The MFA DRI concentration requires the development of a Thesis Project and requires both a research presentation and a written thesis document.

Research Presentation Requirement

There are two options for the thesis research presentation. Consult with your Research Advisor and/or Thesis Committee as you plan for your thesis research presentation:

1. **Option ONE:** The MFA Exhibition at Krannert Art Museum
 - a. This is a rigorous, multi-step professional exhibition opportunity.
 - b. It is critical that you consult with KAM exhibition designers well in advance of installation and respond to outreach from KAM exhibition designers in a timely and thorough manner. Failure to communicate effectively with exhibition designers can result in failure to mount your exhibition, which can in turn prevent your on-time graduation.
 - c. The KAM exhibition is held in Spring of the third year. Watch for outreach from KAM in Fall of the third year.
 - d. Attendance at the KAM planning meeting in Fall of the third year is required.
 - e. You will be asked to provide an accurate and complete list of works to be exhibited, text for wall labels, and other paperwork.
 - f. You will have the opportunity to consult with KAM Exhibition Designers to plan your show.
 - g. Work for exhibition should be complete by January of the third year to ensure readiness to exhibit.
 - h. Consult closely with your Thesis Committee to plan your exhibition and ensure meaningful and effective showcasing of your research.
 - i. Prepare to install your own work. This requires significant research, design, planning and calendaring, responsible communication, and creative problem-solving.
 - j. KAM will handle lighting, labels, fixtures, and placement in the gallery. Please review accessibility guidelines offered in the [Smithsonian Institution's Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design](#).

2. **Option TWO:** Present original, distinct (not versions of same) peer-reviewed conference papers derived from your thesis research at TWO separate, relevant, peer-reviewed, national or international academic or professional conferences (off campus) PLUS an on-campus public lecture that is open to the public. Together, these three presentations fulfill the same requirement as the MFA Exhibition at KAM.
 - a. Conference Paper Presentations
 - i. This is a rigorous, multi-step professional activity. It requires active significant effort and advance planning to identify appropriate conferences and prepare proposals.
 - ii. Development of conference paper presentation must be supervised by a Faculty member, such as your Research Advisor, Thesis, Committee Chair, Program Coordinator, or Professor teaching a DRI course (599, 595, 570, 499 DT&M, 551, or 591) and approved in the “Conferences for Partial Fulfillment of MFA DRI Thesis Requirement” form.
 - iii. Consult your professors and peers to identify appropriate conferences that meaningfully support your developing thesis research.
 - iv. Conference paper presentations can be given as early as the third semester.
 - v. Some conferences publish conference proceedings with full papers. Having a conference proceeding published is an excellent way to build your career and reputation. However, other conferences only publish extended abstracts in their proceedings, and others do not publish them.
 - vi. Full conference attendance is expected (beyond your own session).
 - vii. After each conference, download the “MFA DRI Conferences Presentations” form and have it signed by the professor supervising this requirement. This, along with your conference materials (paper, extended abstract and/or conference slides) will be uploaded by the Professor into the program records.
 - viii. Only two conference paper presentations are required, but you can present at more than two if you wish. That said, you should never present the same paper twice; this is not only a program matter but a matter of academic and professional integrity.
 - ix. Travel and accommodations are your responsibility. That said, the School of Art and Design offers some competitive funding opportunities. In order to avail yourself of these, it is very important that you establish a regular habit of carefully reading the weekly updates that Ellen de Waard sends by email.

b. On-Campus Public Lecture

- i. Whereas conference paper presentations are delivered during the development of the thesis, the public lecture is delivered as you conclude the thesis process.
- ii. It should be delivered in your final semester (the same semester in which you deposit your thesis) and be scheduled at a time widely available to A&D faculty and students, e.g. midday or 5:30 on a weekday.
- iii. The lecture should be about 40 minutes long plus 20 mins for Q&A (one hour total).
- iv. Consult your Thesis Chair to define a date and time. Check the A&D Calendar to ensure you do not schedule alongside a conflicting A&D event.
- v. Book a room via the [A&D Checkout Window](#) > Patron Portal (Reserve Equipment) > New Reservation > Browse Catalog > Rooms and Spaces.
- vi. Create a poster with lecture title, abstract, date, time and location and distribute it widely.
- vii. With **at least 4 week's advance notice** (preferably more, to facilitate turnout), send your event info and poster to Nate Mask and ask him to put the event on the A&D Calendar and circulate the poster.
- viii. Send special invitations to individuals as you wish, e.g. your Thesis Committee and colleagues in other units.
- ix. Managing the event is your responsibility. Your Thesis Chair and/or Committee Members may assist.
- x. After presenting, upload slides and script to the same folder as your conference presentations.

Regardless of which Research Presentation Requirement option you choose to meet, you must *also* participate in MFA DRI final reviews, held at the end of each semester, including your final (sixth) semester. This can be a version of a presentation you gave at a conference or job talk, but must meet posted length requirements, which may be different from conference presentation requirements. These presentations allow you to incorporate feedback, refine your content, hone your presentation skills, and benefit from constructive criticism. They also play an important part in the life of the program by demonstrating the full arc of the thesis process across your six end-of-term presentations.

Thesis Document Requirement

The scholarly written Thesis Document describes and presents your design research. Consult with your Research Advisor and/or Thesis Committee to establish length, format, organization, structure, etc.

1. In general the Thesis Project should:
 - a. Be broadly and deeply connected to a rigorous theoretical framework that informs and validates your research methods and processes;
 - b. Be contextualized within appropriate social, cultural and historical perspectives; and,
 - c. Demonstrate ample awareness of the contemporary social, technological, economic and political issues that affect and/or are affected by the design processes, systems, and artifacts that the Thesis Project critically examines, invents or re-invents, implements, and/or evaluates.
2. Document requirements:
 - a. General
 - i. A minimum/maximum of 75–150 pages exclusive of abstract, images, image captions, footnotes, endnotes, appendices, annotated bibliography, or sources cited (this is a baseline; consult your Chair to establish length criteria for your thesis)
 - ii. 10–12 pt Times New Roman font
 - iii. 1.5 spacing or double spacing
 - iv. 1-inch margins
 - b. Grad College specifications: The Illinois Graduate College has detailed formatting requirements and a calendar that must be met for deposit
 - i. [Thesis Format Requirements](#)²
 - ii. [Thesis Formatting FAQs](#)³
 - iii. [Graduate College Thesis Deposit Calendar](#)⁴
3. Outcomes (What a viable written thesis project accomplishes):
 - a. Demonstrate the candidate's pursuit of knowledge in a manner that meets one or more of the following objectives:
 - i. Position the candidate intellectually and practically to pursue a career in university-level or secondary education

² <https://grad.illinois.edu/academics/thesis-dissertation/format-requirements>

³ <https://grad.illinois.edu/academics/thesis-dissertation/thesis-process/faq/thesis-formatting-fags>

⁴ <https://calendars.illinois.edu/list/3259>

- ii. Enhance the candidate's professional practice opportunities, particularly as manager/team leader, either in academia or the private sector; or, increasingly, in both
 - iii. Improve the candidate's ability to identify, pursue, and conduct basic, clinical, or applied research in qualitatively and quantitatively viable ways
 - iv. Improve the candidate's ability to investigate the manner in which function and expression intersect
 - v. Allow the candidate to cultivate an eclectically-informed awareness of how the transformations they propose will affect select arenas/environments as decision-making processes evolve
 - vi. Demonstrate the candidate's ability to make a significant impact in the design industry
- b. Your document must be approved by your Thesis Committee. This is a rigorous multi-step process.

Roadmap to Thesis

This roadmap was developed on the basis of student success in recent years. It builds upon the thesis requirements described above. A successful thesis process begins in Fall of year one. The MFA DRI Thesis process culminates with the mounting of *either* a thesis exhibition in the Krannert Art Museum *or* two distinct presentations of thesis research at relevant national or international conferences; *and* the deposit of an approved written thesis document with the Graduate College Thesis Office.

Three-Year Calendar

Year One—Fall

- **Enroll** in required courses per the Advising Plan
- **Meet** with faculty research advisor. Student is paired with a faculty research advisor and initiates regular meetings with them.
- **Define** your research area. Use the first year research rubric below (or a rubric developed in consultation with 595 faculty, 570 faculty, or faculty research advisor) to guide you in defining your research area.
- **Pass**
 - All courses with a minimum semester GPA of 2.75
 - Semester Review

Year One—Spring

- **Enroll** in required and elective courses per the Advising Plan

- **Meet** regularly with your research advisor
- **Consult** with MFA DRI Program Coordinator to choose courses for next Fall
- **Develop** your design research area of inquiry and research question(s) to guide the thesis.
- **Use** the first year research rubric (below) or a rubric developed in consultation with 595 faculty, 570 faculty, or faculty research advisor to develop your research agenda
- **Conduct** secondary research, develop literature review and annotated bibliography, and create a research proposal for your thesis topic
- **Initiate** at least two exploratory meetings to discuss your developing research agenda with potential committee members
- **Pass**
 - All courses with a minimum cumulative and semester GPA of 2.75
 - Faculty Review

Year Two—Fall

- **Enroll** in ARTD 595 MFA DRI Design Studio and electives that support research interests
- **Consult** with research advisor to determine whether to file IRB for human subjects research
- **Develop** design research areas of inquiry; continue to conduct literature review, continue to update the contextualized bibliography with new materials from secondary research.
- **Use** Second Year Research Rubric (below) or a rubric developed in consultation with 595 faculty, 570 faculty, or faculty research advisor to continue to develop and refine your research agenda
- **Initiate** at least two exploratory meetings to discuss your developing research agenda with potential committee members
- **Apply** to conferences: **Consult** with your faculty research advisor to identify and apply to relevant peer-reviewed conferences (ARTD 551 Design Research Impact supports this process)
- **Pass**
 - All courses with a minimum cumulative and semester GPA of 2.75
 - Faculty Review

Year Two—Spring

- **Enroll** in ARTD 595 MFA DRI Design Studio and two A+D, FAA, or campus electives that support research interests
- **Consult** with research advisor to determine whether to file/amend IRB for human subjects research

- **Refine** your research methodology by using the Second Year Research Rubric (below) or a rubric developed in consultation with 595 faculty, 570 faculty, or faculty research advisor to develop and refine your research agenda
- **Form Thesis Committee** by filing paperwork with Director of Graduate Studies
- **Begin** drafting thesis document and consult with committee on structure
- **Consult** with thesis committee to determine whether you will fulfill the thesis exhibition requirement by participating in the MFA Show at Krannert Art Museum (KAM) or with the 2/1 conference option (2 distinct peer-reviewed conference paper presentations + on-campus “job talk”)
- **Consult** with committee about submitting to relevant peer-reviewed conferences and journals
- If participating in **peer-reviewed conferences** (instead of KAM MFA Exhibition):
 - Make travel and logistical arrangements
- **Submit** proposals to appropriate/relevant conferences
- **Pass**
 - All courses with a minimum cumulative and semester GPA of 2.75
 - Faculty Review

Year Three—Fall

- **Enroll** in thesis completion course plus elective:
 - ARTD 599 Thesis Completion
 - One A+D, FAA, or campus elective that supports research interests (ARTD 595 is a good option)
- **Consult** with thesis committee chair to determine whether to file/amend IRB for human subjects research
- **Refine** your research methodology by using the Third Year Research Rubric (below) or a rubric developed in consultation with 595 faculty, 570 faculty, or faculty research advisor to continue to refine your research agenda
- **Review** all format requirements for anticipated thesis deposit (A+D or GC)
- **Consult** with thesis committee chair to review deposit requirements and develop a timetable for drafting, review, and deposit
- **Consult** with thesis committee to develop plans for MFA Show or two distinct peer-reviewed conference paper presentations plus on-campus “job talk.” If the latter:
 - Conference **presentations** must be determined by this semester (if not already)
- If participating in **peer-reviewed conferences** (instead of KAM MFA Exhibition):
 - Make travel and logistical arrangements
- **Apply** for travel funding

- **Provide** a minimum of two successive drafts of full thesis document to thesis committee; incorporate committee feedback in each draft
- **Pass**
 - All courses with a minimum cumulative and semester GPA of 2.75
 - Faculty Review

Year Three—Spring

- **Enroll** in thesis completion course plus elective:
 - ARTD 599 Thesis Completion and electives that support research interests
- **Register** for graduation via Enterprise Self-Service
- If participating in KAM MFA **Exhibition**:
 - Attend planning meeting with Krannert Art Museum exhibition designers to prepare for MFA Show (January)
 - Meet individually with KAM exhibition designer(s) to plan MFA Show (February)
 - Provide high-resolution image(s), image captions, and research statement for MFA Show catalog (February)
- If participating in **peer-reviewed conferences** (instead of KAM MFA Exhibition):
 - Make travel and logistical arrangements
 - Schedule and deliver on-campus “job talk”
- **Consult** with thesis committee chair to determine whether to file/amend IRB for human subjects research
- **Provide** a minimum of two successive drafts of full thesis to thesis committee; incorporate committee feedback in each draft
- **Deliver**
 - Final, fully-formatted draft of thesis document to committee with sufficient lead time for final review before A+D or Grad College Thesis Office review
 - Committee-approved thesis document to A+D or Grad College Thesis Office in time for final School or GCTO review prior to deposit
- **If participating in MFA Show**:
 - Deliver MFA Show to KAM (early April)
 - Install MFA Show at KAM (mid April)
- **If participating in peer-reviewed conferences**:
 - Attend full conferences and present distinct papers
- **MFA Show** opens (late April)
- **Deposit thesis with Graduate College Thesis Office (DRI)** on time (late April or early May)
- **Pass**
 - All courses with a minimum cumulative and semester GPA of 2.75

- Final Faculty Review

Sample Research Rubrics

First Year ⁵	Second Year	Third Year
• Topic • Literature Review • Annotated Bibliography • Developing research question:⁶ ◦ TOPIC: I am studying... ◦ QUESTION: Because I want to find out what/why/how... ◦ SIGNIFICANCE: So that I can [do/understand]... [OR] In order to help my readers [do/understand]... • Research Timeline	• Topic • Literature Review • Theoretical Framework • Research Question + Supporting Sub-questions • Research methods • Expected Findings • Significance	• Topic • Literature Review • Theoretical Framework • Research Question + Supporting Sub-questions • Objectives + Strategy • Methods • Findings • Significance

DRI MFA Thesis Document Guidelines

The thesis or practicum project document should:

- Be broadly and deeply connected to a rigorous theoretical framework that informs and validates your research methods and processes;
- Be contextualized within appropriate social, cultural and historical perspectives; and,
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the contemporary social, technological, economic and political issues that affect and/or are affected by the design processes, systems, and artifacts that the Thesis critically examines, invents or re-invents, implements, and/or evaluates.

The thesis for the MFA in Design for Responsible Innovation should be an outgrowth of the student's pursuit of knowledge that meets many or all of the following objectives:

- Position the candidate intellectually and practically to pursue a career in university-level or secondary education
- Enhance the candidate's professional practice opportunities, particularly as manager/team leader, either in academia or the private sector; or, increasingly, in both

⁵ First years have the option to move to Second-Year rubric as soon as they feel ready

⁶ This model comes from Booth, Wayne C., et al. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

- Improve the candidate's ability to identify, pursue, and conduct basic, clinical, or applied research in qualitatively and quantitatively viable ways
- Improve the candidate's ability to investigate the manner in which function and expression intersect
- Allow the candidate to cultivate an eclectically informed awareness of how the transformations they propose will affect select arenas/environments as decision-making processes evolve
- Your document must first be approved by your Thesis Committee prior to deposit. This is a rigorous process.

Be sure to familiarize yourself with these key resources:

- UIUC thesis requirements <https://grad.illinois.edu/thesis/format> (includes downloadable templates and examples of successful theses)
- [Thesis Formatting FAQs](#)⁷
- [Graduate College Thesis Deposit Calendar](#)⁸
- IDEALS Database for UIUC
 - <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu>
 - <https://guides.library.illinois.edu/ideals/deposit>
 - <https://wiki.illinois.edu/wiki/display/IDEALS/Deposit+Guidelines>
- Stages for Thesis Deposit <https://grad.illinois.edu/thesis>

Required Order (per UIUC thesis requirements page, linked above):

1. Copyright Page
2. Title Page
3. Abstract and Keywords
4. Acknowledgments and/or Dedication Page (optional)
5. Table of Contents
6. Main Text
7. Bibliography or References
8. Appendix/Appendices (optional)

Sample Thesis Outline:

Draft your outline on the basis of Graduate College requirements *and* in consultation with your thesis committee. The Grad College's required order does not provide specifics for item 6, "Main Text." Therefore, we have developed a guiding outline that includes a sample structure for your main text. *Your* outline should be specifically appropriate to *your own research*. Your thesis document should also include visual representations that complement the work completed.

⁷ <https://grad.illinois.edu/academics/thesis-dissertation/thesis-process/faq/thesis-formatting-faqs>

⁸ <https://calendars.illinois.edu/list/3259>

- I. Front Matter
 - A. Consult UIUC thesis [format requirements](#)
 - B. Present the following content in this order:
 1. Title Page (Request template from Ellen de Waard; it corresponds to the Master's Degree format requirements at the link above; it must be signed by thesis committee members)
 2. Abstract and Keywords
 3. Acknowledgments
 4. Dedication (optional)
 5. Table of Contents
 6. Preface (optional)
- II. Main Text
 - A. Chapter 1: Introduction
 1. Research Question
 2. Hypothesis
 3. What is your proposed contribution? What were your assumptions when you began?
 4. Who is your audience? Who cares?
 - B. Chapter 2: Secondary Research
 1. Background: Why is this important?
 2. Statement of Intent
 3. Literature Review
 4. What has happened before in the topic of study, what is being done now, have you identified gaps?
 - C. Chapter 3: Primary Research
 1. Research Methodology
 2. Data
 - D. Chapter 4: Synthesis
 1. Analysis and discussion
 2. Limitations
 - E. Chapter 5: Conclusion
 1. What is next/future work/provocations
- III. Bibliography or References
- IV. Appendix/Appendices (optional)
 - A. Annotated Bibliography
 - B. IRB Form with Principal Investigator Signature
 - C. Blank Consent Forms
 - D. Primary Research Data, edited to preserve participants' privacy

Funding

Costs

All tuition and campus fee rates can be found on the website of the Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.illinois.edu/tuition-fees/tuition-fee-rates/tf-rates-academic-year/>

You are considered a student in the Graduate College.

Even when you are on tuition waiver-generating funding, expect to be billed for tuition. However, this charge will be removed from your student account a few weeks later, after your funding is applied to your account. This is simply how the UIUC billing system works.

Assistantships

The School of Art & Design offers funding packages that waive the full cost of tuition plus a portion of the campus fees.

- <https://grad.illinois.edu/funding/funding-employment/tuition-and-fee-waivers>
 - <https://grad.illinois.edu/funding/tuition-waiver-guide>
 - See how the university [defines the different roles of graduate assistantships](#).
1. Teaching Assistantships (TAs) are awarded upon recommendation of the MFA DRI Program Coordinator and GD/DRI Program Chair. Recipients of 25% TAships serve the Graphic Design Program an average of ten hours per week. Depending upon background, experience, and program needs, TAs may serve as classroom facilitators and/or graders. After gaining experience, some TAs may teach courses as the instructor-of-record (IoR.) Review the [A&D Graduate Teaching Guide](#). TAs that serve as Instructor of Record (IoR) receive a 33% TAship.
 2. TAship holders typically receive a full tuition waiver and a partial fee waiver and also receive a stipend. Although TAs do not receive a stipend during the summer, they can enroll in summer courses with a tuition waiver and partial fee waiver.
 3. New incoming graduate students in A&D who are also first-time TAs participate in a mandatory campus-wide two day [Graduate Academy for College Teaching](#) held each semester in Week 0 (the week before the semester begins). During the A&D Orientation week (Week 0 each fall), they attend A&D Graduate Teaching meeting. They should also review the [University TA Guide](#).

4. International students are not allowed to exceed a 50% total appointment (due to the student visa status). Domestic students (including Green Card holders) are not allowed to exceed a 67% appointment. Exceeding these allowances will jeopardize your tuition waiver.

TA Job Descriptions

- a. Teaching Assistant (grader only)
 - i. Appointments are negotiable with priority to the needs of the course and flexible to meet the needs of the instructor and teaching assistant.
 - ii. Minimum Qualifications:
 1. Be in good standing in a graduate program at UIUC.
 2. Commitment to working with students from culturally diverse backgrounds.
 3. Strong organizational, communication, and interpersonal skills.
 4. Ability to work collaboratively and on a self-directed basis.
 5. Open to feedback and will implement accordingly.
 - iii. Duties Typically Include:
 1. Attend every class. This is necessary for comprehension of instructional content. However grader-only TAs will not interact directly with students.
 2. Organize and implement a system for recording attendance.
 3. Grade student work.
 4. Assist in developing and implementing rubrics for grading assigned work.
- b. Teaching Assistant
 - i. Appointments are negotiable with priority to the needs of the course and flexible to meet the needs of the instructor and teaching assistant.
 - ii. Minimum Qualifications:
 1. Be in good standing in a graduate program at UIUC.
 2. Commitment to working with students from culturally diverse backgrounds.
 3. Strong organizational, communication, and interpersonal skills.
 4. Ability to work collaboratively and on a self-directed basis.
 5. Open to feedback and will implement accordingly.
 - iii. Duties Typically Include:

1. Attend every class. This is necessary for comprehension of instructional content.
 2. Shadow instructor throughout day-to-day instructional tasks.
 3. Organize and implement a system for recording attendance.
 4. Enforce attendance policy.
 5. Manage communications with students on attendance.
 6. Provide feedback and critiques on student work.
 7. Grade student work and manage communications with students about missing or incomplete work.
 8. Assist in developing and implementing rubrics for grading assigned work.
 9. Lead class as agreed upon with the instructor, as for example when the instructor is away.
- c. Teaching Assistant: Instructor of Record for a Non-Major Course
- i. Appointments are made with priority to the needs of the course.
 - ii. Minimum Qualifications:
 1. Possess relevant skills and expertise in the subject area
 2. Be in good standing in a graduate program at UIUC and have successfully served as a Teaching Assistant in a prior Graphic Design course of similar topic area.
 3. Commitment to working with students from culturally diverse backgrounds
 4. Strong organizational, communication, and interpersonal skills
 5. Ability to work on a self-directed basis
 - iii. Duties Typically Include:
 1. Lead every class, using provided syllabus to deliver course content and learning outcomes that meet course description and learning objectives
 2. Organize and implement a system for recording attendance
 3. Enforce attendance policy
 4. Manage communications with students on attendance
 5. Provide feedback and critiques on student work
 6. Use provided rubrics for grading assigned work
 - 7.
 8. Use provided syllabus to implement systems for accountability and grading

9. Manage communications with students on all instructions and priorities necessary for students progress toward completion of the course
- d. Teaching Assistant: Instructor of Record for a Major Course
- i. Appointments are made with priority to the needs of the course.
 - ii. Minimum Qualifications:
 1. Possess relevant skills and expertise in the subject area
 2. Be in a good standing in a graduate program at UIUC and has successfully served as a Teaching Assistant in a prior Graphic Design course of similar topic area.
 3. Commitment to working with students from culturally diverse backgrounds
 4. Strong organizational, communication, and interpersonal skills
 5. Ability to work on a self-directed basis
 - iii. Duties Typically Include:
 1. Use provided syllabus to deliver course content and learning outcomes that meet course description and course objectives
 2. Implement syllabi, assignments, and any rubrics provided by program faculty to ensure required competencies are taught in the specific course.
 3. Develop and apply rubrics for grading assigned work
 4. Use provided syllabus to implement systems for accountability and grading
 5. Organize and implement a system for recording attendance
 6. Enforce attendance policy
 7. Provide feedback and critiques on student work
 8. Manage communications with students on all instructions, attendance, and other priorities necessary for students progress toward completion of the course
5. Research Assistantships (RAships) with individual professors are contingent on funding and availability. Faculty with their own research funding may select and hire qualified students to assist them.
 6. Graduate Assistantships (GAships) are not commonly used in the DRI Program.

7. Assistantships with other colleges and programs on campus may work quite differently. For example, another department might offer a higher stipend but only a partial tuition waiver. If you are looking for an additional appointment outside of Art & Design, it is your responsibility to find out exactly what kind of package you will receive. The publication board for these extra job positions is called the Assistantship Clearinghouse
<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/clearinghouse>
 - a. Before accepting an additional appointment from outside A&D, please request permission from your A&D program chair, grad rep(s) and research advisor or thesis committee chair.
 - b. We understand the need for (additional) funding, but your academic progress must always be your central focus.
 - c. Bear in mind the limits on total graduate student assistantships: 67% for domestic students, and 50% for international students due to visa requirements.

Facilities

MFA DRI Graduate Studio

Enrolled students will receive designated desk space in 420 Flagg Hall. Please be respectful and responsible. Keep your studio space clean and organized; you'll be glad there's less to clean up at the end of each semester, and you'll find it easier to work throughout the year.

The graduate program coordinators have collaborated with A&D administration to develop the following policy on use of the DRI graduate studio. In the interest of students' health and safety, all must comply with the rules and regulations listed below. Failure to comply with this policy will result in the loss of studio privileges.

1. Please be mindful of noise levels in this shared workspace.
2. No courses or office hours shall be held in the graduate studio. (Office hours may be held in the community room; see below.)
3. Do not store any materials in the hallway, common areas (east and west ends of the room) or on a desk that has not been assigned to you.
4. Common-area desks may be used freely but must be cleared at the end of the work session so that they will be available to all
5. Students can use the lockers located in the next room to hold valuable items.
6. Do not block the access to doors, windows, or fire extinguishers.
7. Do not hang or attach anything to the lights, ceilings or utility lines.
8. Do not alter the space with temporary walls.
9. No animals except those who meet Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act legislation. <http://disability.illinois.edu/applying-services/service-animals-campus>

10. No smoking, candles or open flames are permitted.
11. No alcohol or other controlled substances allowed in the studio.
12. Aerosols, including spray paint, fixative, and adhesive, may only be used in A&D spray booths.
13. Any materials(s) that occupy an amount of space that is deemed excessive, or any material deemed to be hazardous, must be removed by the owner within 24 hours of notice.
14. Please keep doors and windows closed and locked when not in studio.
15. Studio spaces are assigned for one semester at a time.
16. Full time enrollment is required, except in the case of students who only have their final thesis/dissertations to complete.

A&D Facilities Policy

Studios are also governed by the following policy, which is enforced by A&D Facilities Personnel:

1. Studios may be used only for legitimate activities directly related to University coursework.
2. Spaces must be left in the same condition as when originally occupied.
3. Studios may not be used as residences.
4. Fire codes and University policies forbid the storage of anything in hallways or public areas such as lounges. Do not store any material outside the buildings, or use any University space for storage of personal items.
5. Any toxic and/or flammable materials must be handled and stored in compliance with Department of Research Safety regulations. MSDS information must be filed with Art & Design.
6. All waste must be disposed of in accordance with University and EPA policies. Trash should not be left outside the dumpster because it will not be collected by Facilities and Services.
7. All items from Surplus remain University property and must be returned to the Facilities Manager.
8. Vehicles, including motorcycles, bicycles, and automobiles are not allowed in University buildings.
9. There are costs involved in removing equipment and trash that remains in studios when students move out. These costs will be passed on to the occupant when the studio is vacated.
10. All other University, state, local, federal, good neighbor, and common sense laws apply.

Assignment Criteria for Graduate Students in Other Programs

DRI faculty see value in housing Informatics PhD students with DRI students due to the opportunities for interaction that this affords. Desk space is not guaranteed to

Informatics PhD students; rather, the MFA Program Coordinator(s) will make desk assignments each semester. Decisions will be made at the discretion of the GD/DRI Program Chair and the MFA Program Coordinator and as space allows. Factors, in order, are collegiality, relevance of the research, and faculty research advisors' recommendations.

Annual Clean up and Move Out

Students must move all belongings out of the studio and clear out their lockers by the specific date announced by School, normally between the end of the academic year and May 31st. Any items remaining in the space after that time will be discarded.

Community Room

MFA DRI students have access to the adjacent shared open office space, Flagg 416, which holds a community computer, printer, scanner, desk and chairs.

Resolving Problems

Report any problems with the graduate studio to the MFA DRI Program Chair and Graduate Coordinator.

How Do I...?

Register for Courses

Go to Student Self Service (a.k.a. Enterprise) <https://apps.uillinois.edu/selfservice/>.

1. During the first four semesters (years one and two), full time registration is 12 (minimum) credit hours for the fall/spring semester.
 - a. 12 hours will enable you to make sufficient progress toward your degree and keep you in good academic standing. Students are not required (but are allowed) to register for coursework during the summer.
2. During the final two semesters (year 3) the required minimum is 8 credit hours. International students may need to register for 12 hours to maintain full-time status that satisfies visa requirements.
3. Always keep in mind your own individual situation when registering, especially any requirements associated with any fellowship, assistantship, visa, or student loan requirements.
4. Exceptions to a full time course registration may occur only towards the end of your study, or in special circumstances.
5. It is your responsibility to ensure you are making sufficient progress towards your degree.
6. Course registration must be finalized by the 10th day of class
 - a. You have until the 10th day of class to add or drop a class
 - b. Tuition for classes dropped by the 10th day deadline will be refunded

- c. After the 10th-day deadline, dropping a course requires petitioning; the petition may or may not be granted; if granted, the course will be recorded on the transcript with a grade of "W," indicating withdrawal; tuition will not be refunded.
 - d. The deadline to drop a class with a grade of W typically falls in the middle of the semester; after this deadline, classes cannot be dropped (except in rare extenuating circumstances, see next item)
 - e. In cases of documented medical emergencies or other exceptional circumstances beyond the student's control, the college may consider waiving the "W" notation and/or granting a refund, but this is rare.
 - f. Students enrolled in courses that only meet for part of the semester (e.g., 8-week courses) may have different deadlines for adding or dropping, which should be reviewed with an academic advisor.
 - g. See the Registrar's calendar at <https://registrar.illinois.edu/academic-calendars/>
 - h. Make changes via Student Self Service (a.k.a. Enterprise) <https://apps.uillinois.edu/selfservice/>.
7. International students may be held to different standards, due to their student visa status. See <http://iss.illinois.edu/students/fijl/>

Decide What Classes to Take

- Review the Advising Schedule
- Search the Course Explorer <https://courses.illinois.edu>
- Consult the Program Coordinator
 - AY27 (Fall 2026–Spring 2027), Catalina Alzate
- Consult your Research Advisor, Thesis Committee Chair, or another Thesis Committee member
- Keep in mind:
 - All graduate academic policies are defined in the Graduate Student Handbook <https://grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook>
 - The [Art & Design Grad Handbook](#) also contains important guidance.
 - Your degree's program curriculum is governed BOTH by what is published in the Academic Catalog <http://catalog.illinois.edu/> AND what you find here in the MFA DRI Handbook. You will receive your handbook through your program. It may also be available on [the MFA DRI Page on the Art & Design website](#).
 - The MFA degree requires at least 64 graduate credit hours.
 - Graduate coursework consists of courses at the 400 and 500 level. All 500-level courses carry graduate credit, while 400-level courses may only carry undergraduate credit, which will not count toward a graduate degree. Undergraduate coursework (100, 200 and 300 level) will not count toward your graduate degree either. That said, you are

still allowed to register for undergraduate hours, and they *do* count toward your full-time registration status.

- The Independent Study (ARTE/ARTS/ARTD/ARTH 591) may only be taken twice during your MFA process.
 - It can serve several purposes:
 1. Individual research/project with a specific faculty member
 2. Shadowing for credit, in preparation for teaching (a specific class) the following semester
 - You will register with a specific faculty member. First, talk to the faculty member about your proposal. Then fill out an online request form, through www.art.illinois.edu > [Registration & Advising](#) (scroll to A&D Registration forms). Once the request is approved, Ellen de Waard will give you a specific CRN number for registration. You will then need to register via Student Self Service and adjust the number of credit hours.

Where do I go to...?

- Find TA Guidance: <https://guides.library.illinois.edu/c.php?g=348085&p=2346174>
- Look up faculty/staff/student contact info: <https://directory.illinois.edu/search>
- Check your financial aid status: <https://osfa.illinois.edu/process/checking-your-status/>
- Access your student account: <https://paymybill.uillinois.edu/Access> USFSCO
- Check your course schedule and/or make changes: [Application Directory: Student, Faculty & Staff Self-Service](#) .
- Address a problem or ask a question about registration, transcripts, diplomas: Office of the Registrar <https://registrar.illinois.edu/>
- Consult the Graduate College: 507 East Green Street, Suite 101, MC-434, Champaign, IL; 217.333.0035; grad@illinois.edu; <https://grad.illinois.edu>
- Address a health issue: McKinley Health Center <https://mckinley.illinois.edu/>
- Discuss a mental health issue: the Counseling Center <https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/>
- Handle a health insurance issue: university health insurance <http://si.illinois.edu/>
- Find the request form for an independent study: <https://art.illinois.edu/about/resources-for-current-students/registration-advising/>
- Find Graduate College forms: <https://grad.illinois.edu/forms>
- Join the GEO union on the UIUC campus. They help bargain for your stipend, benefits, and funding levels. You can learn more about the GEO here: <https://www.uiucgeo.org/>

Important Links

- [School of Art & Design](#)
- [College of FAA](#)
- [University of Illinois](#)
- [Graduate College](#): Explore this site and get to know it inside and out! You will find a great many necessary resources including the Graduate College Handbook, the Graduate Calendar, the petition portal, electronic thesis submission, and much more.
- [Graduate College Thesis Deadlines](#)
- Resources for International Students:
 - [International Student and Scholar Services \(ISSS\)](#)
 - [Oral English Assessment \(English Proficiency Interview or EPI\)](#)
 - [English Proficiency Requirement for International TAs](#)
 - [Policy Statement Regarding the Appointment of Non-Native English-Speaking Teaching Assistants](#)
- [Course Explorer](#): All course offerings on campus
- [Student Self-Service](#): Your personal account with access to your student billing account, student records, registration portal, personal info, etc.)
- [Disability Resources and Educational Services \(DRES\)](#)
- Safety and Health
 - The [Activities and Recreation Center \(ARC\)](#) is available for free use by full time registered students
 - [Student Health Insurance](#): Full time registered students receive health insurance.
 - [McKinley Health Center](#): Full time registered students have free access to the center
 - [The Counseling Center](#): If you find yourself struggling with academic difficulties, grief, anxiety, addictions, or other social/emotional issues, please realize there are mental health services available for you.
 - Same-day appointments are available by calling 217-333-3704 after 7:50am.
 - Reach the Crisis Line after 5p 217-359-4141 after 5pm (Crisis Line).
 - Or contact McKinley Mental Health services through 217-333-2705.
 - Student (mental) health records are absolutely confidential. Only with your permission can others obtain your medical record.
 - [Connie Frank CARE \(Coordination, Assistance, Response, and Education\) Center](#): Various types of assistance, available during regular business hours

- If you are the victim of a crime, have been assaulted, raped, or “just” feel threatened, we urge you to take immediate action by reporting the crime or requesting protection. Campus police can be reached at 217-333-1216 (non-emergency number). Program this number in your phone!
- In case of an emergency, always call 911.
- Report a crime or submit a tip to campus police:
<http://police.illinois.edu/crime-reporting/report-a-crime-or-submit-a-tip/>
- If you need assistance after business hours from University that can't wait until the next business day, yet is not a 911 situation, please contact the [Emergency Dean](#) 217-333-0050.
- Division of Public Safety [Emergency Response Guide](#)
- Division of Public Safety [Run > Hide > Fight: This Could Save Your Life](#) (video)

Finally...

- YOU are responsible for your class schedule!
- Check your records regularly for accuracy!
- Always read your emails through your student (@illinois.edu) account. Also look at attachments. Follow up on emails. If you don't understand what to do, ask someone. If you don't get a reply, please ask again, preferably the next day.
- Always read communications from the Graduate College, through GradLinks. They help you remember important deadlines and opportunities
- Always skim the weekly A&D e-newsletter that comes out on Mondays. It includes academic deadlines, fellowship information and deadlines, lectures and other relevant activities, conference information, and TA/job opportunities.
- Check your paper mailbox regularly! (143 A&D)

Appendix: Illinois Research Guidelines

- [Policy and Procedures on Integrity in Research and Publication](#) (Printed Copy Available in the MFA DRI Graduate Room)

Inclusive Excellence at Illinois

This program's pedagogical character reflects the University's commitment to diversity and inclusion. As the Senate Committee on Equal Opportunity has stated,

we aspire to create a truly pluralistic environment, free of barriers associated with identity, in our pursuit of academic and scholarly excellence. We support a diversity of world views, histories, and cultural knowledge across a range of social groups including race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, abilities, economic class, religion, and their intersections.

In this program, we may not always agree, but we will always listen to each other and treat one another with dignity and respect.

For more information, see <https://studentaffairs.illinois.edu/about/inclusive-excellence>

Land Acknowledgement Statement

As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has a responsibility to acknowledge the historical context in which it exists. In order to remind ourselves and our community, we [conclude this handbook] with the following statement. We are currently on the lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Peankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. It is necessary for us to acknowledge these Native Nations and for us to work with them as we move forward as an institution. Over the next 150 years, we will be a vibrant community inclusive of all our differences, with Native people at the core of our efforts.