

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

School of Art and Design

Art Education | Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Handbook

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1. Welcome

Welcome to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Art Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The PhD is the highest academic degree offered in the field and is designed for individuals who seek to advance knowledge through original research, critical inquiry, teaching, and scholarly leadership. Through intensive coursework, interdisciplinary study, collaborative mentorship, and independent research, doctoral students develop the capacity to contribute meaningful and innovative perspectives to art education and related fields.

At Illinois, doctoral study is both intellectually rigorous and highly individualized. Students work closely with faculty mentors while drawing upon the extensive resources of a major research university. Doctoral students regularly engage with scholars across disciplines, exploring questions that connect art, visual culture, education, creativity, identity, policy, community engagement, technology, and social change. Throughout the program, students are encouraged to develop a research agenda that reflects both their scholarly interests and their commitment to improving educational and cultural experiences in diverse local, national, and global contexts.

The PhD is more than a sequence of courses, examinations, and milestones. It is a process of becoming an independent scholar. As students progress through the program, they are expected to contribute to professional conversations through conference presentations, publications, collaborative research, teaching, and service to the field. The program prepares graduates for careers in higher education, research, leadership, policy, community-based practice, and other professions that value advanced scholarship and critical inquiry.

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

Graduate College Handbook:

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

2. Program Goals

The PhD program provides advanced study in art education through interdisciplinary coursework, independent research, scholarly collaboration, and professional engagement. The program is designed to help students:

- Develop deep knowledge of major theories, concepts, histories, and contemporary debates in art education and related fields.
- Critically examine the relationships among art, visual culture, education, creativity, identity, community, policy, and social change.
- Gain expertise in qualitative, arts-based, and other research methodologies appropriate to their scholarly interests.

- Design and carry out original research that contributes new knowledge to the field of art education.
 - Develop a sustained research agenda that addresses significant educational, cultural, and societal questions.
 - Communicate research effectively through scholarly writing, conference presentations, teaching, and publication.
 - Engage thoughtfully with interdisciplinary perspectives across the university and beyond.
 - Contribute to the advancement of art education through scholarship, leadership, advocacy, and service.
 - Prepare for careers in higher education, research, educational leadership, cultural institutions, and other professions that value advanced scholarly expertise.
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3. Program of Study

The PhD is a research-intensive degree that combines advanced coursework, interdisciplinary study, original scholarship, and doctoral research. Students work closely with faculty advisors to develop an individualized Program of Study that supports their research interests while meeting the requirements of both the Art Education Program and the Graduate College.

The doctoral degree requires a minimum of **64 graduate credit hours beyond the master's degree**, including coursework, research preparation, and dissertation research. Students typically complete coursework during the first two to three years of study and then focus primarily on dissertation research and writing. **The program is designed to be completed within four years**, and students are strongly encouraged to remain on that timeline whenever possible.

➤ Core Coursework

Students complete a minimum of **32 credit hours of graduate coursework** before advancing to dissertation research. At least **24 credit hours must be in Art Education (ARTE)** and at least **20 credit hours must be at the 500 level**. Coursework is selected in consultation with the student's advisor and should support the development of a coherent area of specialization and research agenda.

Course offerings vary from year to year and may include topics in art education theory, curriculum, visual culture, community arts, arts-based research, qualitative inquiry, writing for publication, and related areas. Students are also encouraged to take advantage of the wide range of graduate courses available across the university.

➤ **Research Methodology Requirement**

Doctoral students are expected to develop advanced research competencies appropriate to their scholarly interests and dissertation plans. In addition to *ARTE 593: Survey of Qualitative Methodologies*, students typically complete at least **two additional graduate-level research methodology courses** selected in consultation with their advisor. These courses may be taken in Art Education or in other academic units across the university.

Research methodology coursework should be completed before beginning dissertation research and should provide the foundation for successful completion of the dissertation.

➤ **Minor Requirement**

All doctoral students complete a related minor or equivalent area of focused study outside Art Education. The purpose of the minor is to provide depth in a secondary field that complements and strengthens the student's research interests. Minors often draw from areas such as anthropology, educational policy, curriculum and instruction, gender and women's studies, sociology, philosophy, communications, information sciences, or other relevant disciplines.

Students may pursue an established Graduate College minor or develop an individualized minor in consultation with their advisor. A minor typically consists of approximately **16 credit hours** of coursework outside the major field. You CANNOT minor in Art Education.

➤ **Independent Study, Forum, and Dissertation Research**

ARTE 591: Independent Graduate Study

Independent study provides opportunities for focused reading, research, writing, or project development under the supervision of a faculty member. Up to **4 credit hours of ARTE 591** may be applied toward doctoral coursework requirements. Students and faculty supervisors develop a written plan of study prior to registration.

ARTE 591F: Art Education Forum

All doctoral students must enroll in **ARTE 591F: Art Education Forum** during each fall semester in residence. The Forum brings together graduate students from the EdM, MA, and PhD programs to share research, discuss issues in the field, engage with visiting scholars, and learn about professional opportunities and university resources.

ARTE 591F is required but does not count toward degree hours.

ARTE 599: Dissertation Research

Following successful completion of the Preliminary Examination (Prelims), students devote their attention primarily to dissertation research and writing. No more coursework should be taken after the Prelims. Doctoral students must complete a minimum of **32 credit hours of ARTE 599: Dissertation Research** as part of the degree. Students should register for ARTE 599 whenever actively engaged in dissertation work and should consult Graduate College policies regarding registration requirements and degree completion.

4. Academic Advising and Academic Progress

Doctoral study is highly individualized and depends upon a productive mentoring relationship between the student and faculty advisor. Advisors assist students in developing a Program of Study, selecting coursework, identifying research opportunities, preparing for doctoral milestones, and progressing toward the dissertation. Students are expected to meet regularly with their advisor throughout the program and at least once each semester before registration.

➤ Choosing an Advisor

Upon entering the program, students are assigned an initial advisor who assists with course selection and academic planning during the first year of study. As students refine their research interests, they should identify an Art Education faculty member whose expertise aligns with their emerging scholarly agenda and ask that person to serve as their academic advisor. Selection is based primarily on shared research interests and mutual agreement between the student and faculty member.

For most students, the academic advisor later becomes the chair of the dissertation committee. Because this relationship plays an important role in coursework planning, doctoral examinations, dissertation research, and professional development, students are encouraged to select an advisor as early as possible, ideally by the end of the first year of study.

Students may change advisors as their research interests evolve. While there is no penalty for doing so, changing advisors may affect the timeline for degree completion and should be discussed carefully with the individuals involved and the Graduate Coordinator.

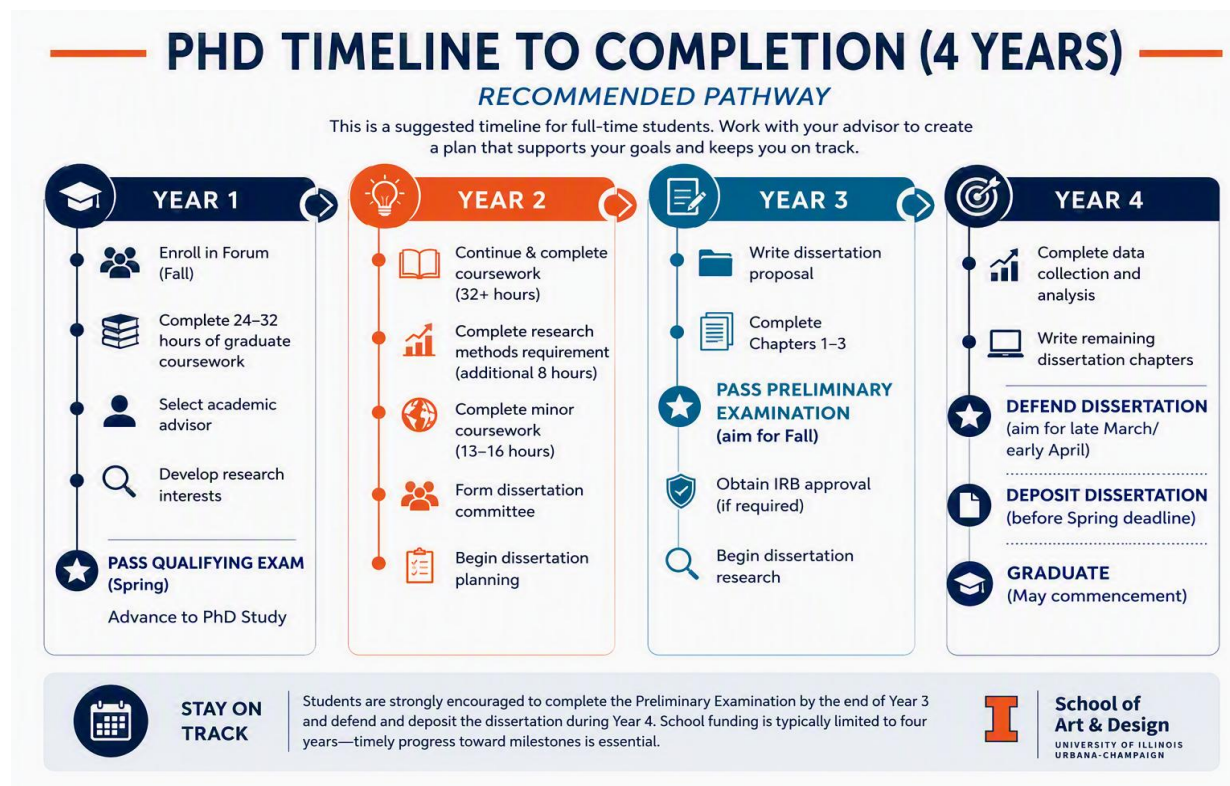
➤ Annual Review of Student Progress

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

Toward the end of each spring semester, students submit an updated Plan of Study documenting completed coursework, academic accomplishments, research activities, conference presentations, publications, teaching experiences, and progress toward major doctoral milestones. Students should update their Plan of Study regularly and compare it with their Graduate Degree Audit to ensure that all degree requirements are accurately documented.

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 are encouraged to discuss it with their advisor. Written comments or responses may also be submitted before the review is finalized.

5. Timeline to Completion & Doctoral Milestones



The PhD program is designed to be completed in approximately four years. Students are strongly encouraged to maintain steady progress toward each milestone and should work closely with their advisor to remain on schedule. Because School funding is typically limited to four years, delays in reaching milestones may affect financial support and time to degree.

➤ **Key Doctoral Milestones**

Qualifying Exam

The Qualifying Exam (often called "Quals") is completed during the second semester of doctoral study. The purpose of the examination is to assess a student's readiness for doctoral-level scholarship and their ability to critically analyze and synthesize ideas in the field of art education.

The examination consists of a one-day written analysis of contemporary scholarship in art education. Students are expected to identify arguments, evaluate differing viewpoints, analyze assumptions, and develop a well-supported position of their own. The exam is evaluated by Art Education faculty.

Successful completion of the Qualifying Exam indicates readiness to continue in the doctoral program and move toward advanced coursework and dissertation preparation.

If the Qualifying Exam is Not Passed

The Qualifying Exam serves as the program's formal assessment of readiness for doctoral study. Students who do not pass the examination are ordinarily not permitted to continue in the PhD program. Students may be allowed one additional semester to complete the coursework required for the EdM degree and, upon completion of those requirements, will graduate with the EdM rather than the PhD. Any opportunity to retake the Qualifying Exam is granted only at the discretion of the Art Education faculty and should be considered exceptional rather than routine.

Dissertation Committee

Students form a dissertation committee in consultation with their advisor, typically during the second year of doctoral study. The committee provides guidance on the development, execution, and evaluation of the dissertation and supports the student's progress through the Preliminary Examination and Final Oral Defense.

In accordance with Graduate College requirements, the dissertation committee must include **at least four voting members, at least three members of the Graduate Faculty, and at least two tenured faculty members at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**. The committee chair is typically a faculty member in Art Education and **must be a member of the Graduate Faculty**. At least one committee member is typically from outside the Art Education Program (not required), helping to provide additional disciplinary perspectives and expertise relevant to the student's research.



Committee membership should be selected thoughtfully and in consultation with the advisor, ensuring that the collective expertise of the committee aligns with the topic, methodology, and goals of the dissertation research.

Preliminary Examination

The Preliminary Examination ("Prelim") marks the transition from coursework to dissertation research. Students typically complete the Preliminary Examination after:

- Required coursework is completed
- Minor requirements are completed

- Research methodology requirements are completed
- The dissertation committee is established

The examination focuses on the dissertation proposal. Students typically prepare and defend the first three chapters of the dissertation:

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Methodology

Following the examination, the committee may issue a pass, defer the decision pending revisions, or fail the examination in accordance with Graduate College and program policies. Students who successfully complete the Preliminary Examination advance to doctoral candidacy (also known as, All But Dissertation: ABD).

Dissertation Research

Following advancement to candidacy, students begin full-scale dissertation research and register for **ARTE 599: Dissertation Research**. The dissertation should demonstrate the student's ability to conduct independent research and make an original contribution to knowledge in art education.

Students must complete a minimum of **32 credit hours of ARTE 599** as part of the doctoral degree. Research involving human participants requires approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before data collection begins. <https://oprs.research.illinois.edu/>

Final Oral Defense

The Final Oral Defense is a (roughly 2 hours) public presentation and examination of the completed (written) dissertation.

Students present their research findings and respond to questions from the dissertation committee and members of the academic community. Following the public presentation, the committee meets privately to determine the examination outcome.

Successful completion of the Final Oral Defense indicates that the committee has approved the dissertation as a significant and original scholarly contribution.

Dissertation Deposit

Following a successful defense and completion of any required revisions, students deposit the dissertation with the Graduate College according to published deadlines and procedures.

Students are responsible for ensuring that all Graduate College requirements regarding formatting, accessibility, examinations, and deposit deadlines have been satisfied.

Additional information is available through the Graduate College Thesis Office:

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

6. Funding and Teaching Assistantships

Most doctoral students in Art Education receive funding through teaching assistantships offered by the School of Art & Design, though in some cases, fellowships or research assistantships (RA) may apply. These appointments provide professional experience in teaching, mentoring, and higher education while supporting students' progress toward the doctoral degree. 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.

The Art Education PhD program is designed to be completed within four years, and School funding is typically limited to that period. Doctoral students are therefore strongly encouraged to remain on track with coursework, examinations, dissertation research, and degree completion milestones. Students seeking support beyond the expected funding period should consult their advisor regarding available options and resources, but the procurement of funding outside of Art + Design is the student's responsibility.

Teaching assistant assignments are based on program needs, faculty recommendations, student qualifications, and satisfactory academic progress. Art Education doctoral students commonly teach or assist with courses such as *Everyday Arts Lab* and *Introduction to Art* under the supervision of Art Education faculty. Responsibilities may include teaching, mentoring undergraduate students, assessing student work, facilitating discussions or studio activities, and supporting course administration.

Teaching assistantships should be viewed as both university employment and an important part of doctoral professional development. Through teaching experiences, doctoral students build skills in instruction, mentoring, curriculum development,

academic leadership, and communication that support careers in higher education and related fields.

In addition to School funding, doctoral students are encouraged to pursue fellowships, research support, conference funding, and travel grants offered by the Graduate College and other university units. Competitive funding opportunities change over time; students should consult Graduate College resources regularly and discuss funding strategies with their advisor.

For additional information regarding assistantship appointments, employment policies, appointment percentages, benefits, and Graduate Employees' Organization (GEO) resources, students should refer to the School of Art & Design Graduate Student Handbook.

7. Using Generative AI Responsibly

Writing, research, and critical inquiry are central components of doctoral education. As such, students are expected to uphold the principles of academic integrity and to take responsibility for all work submitted for courses, examinations, research activities, and degree requirements.

Students should discuss the appropriate use of generative AI with individual instructors, as expectations may vary across courses. Information about university guidance on generative AI is available at:

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

If you use a generative AI tool in your work, you should cite it. The APA and MLA both provide guidance for citing generative AI. Be sure to explain how the tool was used and the extent to which it contributed to the final product. The key principle is transparency: do not misrepresent AI-generated content as solely your own work.

When using generative AI:

- Follow only the specific uses permitted by your instructor/advisor.
- Document and appropriately attribute AI contributions to your coursework.
- Take full responsibility for the accuracy of all facts, interpretations, analyses, and sources included in your work.
- Verify all references and citations generated by AI tools before using them.

What Generative AI Should Not Replace

- Generative AI can support learning and writing, but it should not replace the intellectual work expected of doctoral students.
- Do not use AI to read, summarize, interpret, or personally respond to assigned readings for course credit.
- Do not submit AI-generated content as your own scholarly work.
- Do not rely solely on information produced by generative AI, as it may be inaccurate, misleading, biased, or fabricated.
- Be transparent about your use of AI and cite it appropriately.
- Do not use AI as a substitute for critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, or scholarly judgment.
- Use AI as a tool to support learning and writing, not as a replacement for your own intellectual engagement.

Generative AI and Doctoral Examinations

Generative AI may **not** be used during the completion of doctoral examinations, including the **Qualifying Examination, Preliminary Examination, Final Examination** or any written materials prepared as part of those examination processes unless explicitly authorized in writing by the Art Education faculty.

The use of AI to read, summarize, generate, or otherwise contribute substantive intellectual content to doctoral examinations is prohibited and may constitute a violation of university academic integrity policies. For dissertation proposals, preliminary examination materials, dissertation chapters, or other scholarly writing, students should consult with their advisor regarding appropriate uses of AI-assisted revision tools. Any approved use of AI should be limited to supporting clarity, organization, grammar, or style and should never replace the student's own intellectual work, analysis, or scholarly judgment.

8. Graduate College

Because the PhD is governed by Graduate College requirements regarding registration, committees, examinations, dissertation research, thesis deposit, graduation deadlines, and degree completion, students are expected to become familiar with Graduate College policies early in the program and to review them regularly as they progress toward candidacy and graduation. Staying informed about Graduate College requirements is an important responsibility of all doctoral students. <https://grad.illinois.edu/>