

UMBC  
Department of Visual Arts

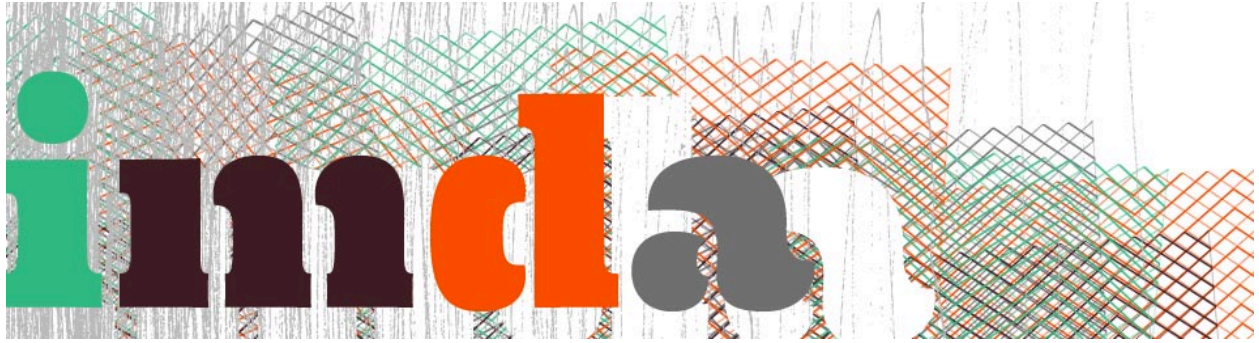
Master of Fine Arts  
*in*  
Intermedia + Digital Arts

**imda**  
**GRADUATE HANDBOOK**



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## **Introduction**

The Intermedia and Digital Arts [IMDA] Master of Fine Arts [M.F.A.] program is committed to investigating transformations of emerging artistic practices, especially those that give rise to new processes that pose unique conceptual and social challenges. Responding to these challenges is central to the student's course of study. The Department of Visual Arts, in which the IMDA program is located, is committed to recognizing changes in culture and incorporating those changes into our graduate curricula.

IMDA students are given a studio and access to a range of facilities and methodologies for making art, as well as to courses in art history and theory that reflect current critical discourse. The course of study offers in-depth critical feedback from engaged faculty and renowned artists alongside an interdisciplinary approach to new methods of art-making. The goal is to foster a student's ability to create utilizing intellectual flexibility, focus and honesty. The program offers hybrid methods of physical computing, performance and relational art, cinematic arts, photography, installation, and interactive forms of display, with art theory and criticism. Thereby students extend the limits of any one specialized field, method or approach.

This handbook has been prepared by the Department of Visual Arts's IMDA Graduate Program Committee and approved by the Visual Arts faculty. To reflect the nature of this program, the policies described in this handbook have been designed to be as flexible as possible to ensure a valuable and relevant education appropriate to the M.F.A. as a terminal degree. The policies of the IMDA Graduate Program are updated regularly, and graduate students are invited to participate in this process. Please check with the IMDA Graduate Program Director [GPD] to assure that you have the most recent version of this handbook.

## **Student Status, Residency and Time Requirements**

### **Full-Time Status**

Students are required to enroll in at least 9 credits in order to maintain full-time status. Fewer than 9 credits constitute part-time status. IMDA students are expected to maintain full-time status until they have achieved candidacy, typically upon completing their third semester. Outside full-time employment is not permitted during the student's first three semesters. Students on Research Assistantships [RAs] or financial aid must maintain full-time student status. Students attending UMBC on an F-1 or J-1 visa must remain registered as full-time students for the entire semester. The full-time status formula is explained in detail in the UMBC Graduate School Catalog.

To maintain access to University equipment and facilities, a student is required to be enrolled for an appropriate number of course credits. This includes students who wish to work independently through the summer or students who are working for an additional [fourth] year on their theses. A student's Thesis Chair in conjunction with the Graduate Program Director [GPD] will determine the amount of course credit a student should enroll in to maintain access to resources.

### **Thesis Residency Requirement**

The Department of Visual Arts requires that a student be present during the Thesis Exhibition and Oral Defense/Final Examination, which take place during the semester in which one graduates, but does not require a student to be in residence while completing the work for the Exhibition or Thesis.

The Graduate School requires that a student register for at least 1 graduate credit during the semester in which he/she applies for graduation and presents their Thesis Exhibition and written Thesis.

### **Admission to Candidacy Time Requirements**

A student must Advance to Candidacy by the end of their third semester in order to continue in the program. See **Advancement to Candidacy** for more information.

### **Completion of Degree Time Requirements**

A student is required to Advance to Candidacy at least two full sequential semesters before the date on which the M.F.A. degree will be conferred. A student is required to complete all program requirements for the degree, including the Thesis Exhibition, written Thesis and Oral Defense/Final Examination, within five years of admission into the program. Failure to complete all requirements within the time allotted requires another application for admission to the Graduate School and IMDA Graduate Program.

## **Leaves and Withdrawals**

### **Leave of Absence**

A student who wishes to continue in the IMDA Graduate Program, but who cannot register for a particular semester or year, may take a Leave of Absence [LOA] with the approval of the IMDA Graduate Program Director [GPD] and Graduate School. Any student who has not registered for a class on the tenth day of the semester will be automatically placed on LOA. Leaves are to be taken on a semester basis [not for less than one full semester]. The requirement that students complete the master's degree within five years remains in effect during LOAs. After five years LOA students who wish to resume their studies in the IMDA Graduate Program are required to submit a new application for admission with the consequent evaluation of performance and portfolio.

### **Vacation, Sick and Family Leaves**

Research Assistants [RAs] are on contracts and are not eligible to earn credit toward vacation time. If an RA who is on a fixed schedule becomes ill, they may receive up to one week [five days] of sick leave. After four days, a supervisor may require a doctor's note. RAs who are on a flexible work schedule may be required to make up work hours that were lost due to illness. See the UMBC Graduate School Handbook for more information.

### **Parental Leave Fellowships for Graduate Assistants**

In recognition of the challenges of balancing the demands of a graduate assistantship and parenting a new child, UMBC offers Fellowships for Parental Leave to improve the environment for new parents who are Graduate Assistants [GAs]. Any GA is eligible to receive a Fellowship for: [1] the birth of a child; [2] the recent adoption of a child under the age of six; or [3] the assumption of other parenting responsibilities [e.g., foster parenting, legal guardianship] of a child under the age of six. Except for birth mothers as described below, the period of the Fellowship is six weeks. During the Fellowship period, the GA retains his or her full stipend and benefits, provides no service to the University, and maintains enrollment as a full-time [ $\geq 9$  credits] student.

The University recognizes the need of birth mothers to respond to or to recover from the effects of pregnancy and/or the delivery of a child. If a birth mother believes that she requires a Fellowship period of more than six weeks, she must obtain a letter from her physician or other licensed health-care professional that provides [1] the nature of the need; [2] a statement that the GA cannot return to her duties for health reasons arising from the pregnancy and/or delivery; and [3] the duration of required absence beyond the initial six weeks.

In all instances, the GA should discuss his or her Fellowship plans with his or her GPD and/or supervisor as soon as possible to allow for maximum collegial support. All Fellowship requests will be approved by the Associate Dean of the Graduate

School, the GPD and the GA's supervisor. Upon request, the Graduate School will reimburse the cost of the GA's stipend to the supporting department.

The Graduate School recommends that international students consult in advance with the Office of International Education Services before their period of parental leave.

### **Withdrawal from the IMDA Graduate Program**

To withdraw from the IMDA program and UMBC, a student must submit a Request for Withdrawal form, accessible on the Graduate School website. Please also refer to the Graduate School website for updates.

## **Research Assistantships [RAs]**

IMDA students have the opportunity to receive a full or half Research Assistantship [RA], which is awarded annually and offers a variety of opportunities. These awards may entail teaching a course, providing other services in the Department of Visual Arts, assisting Faculty on a research project or carrying out assignments at one of several research centers, and partnering units and organizations at UMBC. Current partners include: Imaging Research Center [IRC]; Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture [CADVC]; Shriver Center; commonvision; and Office of Institutional Advancement [OIA]. Research Assistantships run from [approximately] August 17 until December 17, resume January 10, and end June 15. A full RA receives a stipend, partial tuition remission, and entry to one of two University health plans in exchange for 20 hours of service per week to the Department, affiliated research centers, or other partners.

Service assignments are generally made by the Graduate Program Director [GPD] based on the skillsets required by the supervisor and the experience and skillset of the student. Assignments are reassessed each semester, though year-long assignments are most common. A faculty member, director or associate staff member will be designated as a supervisor for each RA in the Department of Visual Arts. Service responsibilities will be listed on an RA assignment contract at the start of each year, as agreed to and signed by both the RA and the supervisor. At the end of each semester, the supervisor will complete an RA evaluation form and submit it to the GPD for review. RAs are competitive, merit-based awards and are annually reviewed for renewal. No RAs are awarded after a student's sixth semester. Please see **Leave and Withdrawals** for more information regarding RA rights and responsibilities.

### **Graduate School Registration Requirement for Research Assistants**

Research Assistants [RAs] must be registered as full-time students whether they hold a full RA appointment or a partial RA appointment. To be considered full-time, a student must be registered for a minimum of nine [9] credits in each Fall and

Spring semester. Such credits can include those allotted for RA work through the GRAD 600 and 601 courses as described below. *The student must be registered in courses that lead toward his/her degree.*

a) Full-time RAs, whose total commitment is 20 hours per week on average, have the option to register for GRAD 601. GRAD 601 is fixed at five [5] credits, so students who register for this course must register for a minimum of four [4] credits in addition to this course.

b) Part-time RAs in two different departments, whose total commitment is 20 hours per week on average, have the option to register for GRAD 601. GRAD 601 is fixed at five [5] credits, so students who register for this course must register for a minimum of four [4] credits in addition to this course.

c) Part-time RAs, whose total commitment is 10 hours per week on average, have the option to register for GRAD 600. GRAD 600 is fixed at three [3] credits, so students who register for this course must register for a minimum of six [6] credits in addition to this course.

The GRAD 600 and 601 credits do not appear on a student's transcript or schedule of classes, and students are not billed for GRAD 600 or 601. These credits are not considered when determining financial aid eligibility and do not apply toward a student's required 60 credits; their use is only for calculating full-time versus part-time enrollment status. See the registration requirements for GAs/RAs for a full description of GRAD 600 or 601, or contact Trisha Watson, x5-1071 or [patricia@umbc.edu](mailto:patricia@umbc.edu).

#### GRAD 601 [5] units

Full-time Graduate Assistants/Research Assistants [RAs] committed to a total of 20 hours [one 20-hour full RA, or two 10-hour half RAs] are required to enroll in GRAD 601. No permission required.

#### GRAD 600 [3] units

Half-time Graduate Assistants/Research Assistants [RAs] committed to a total of 10 hours [one 10-hour half RA or two 5-hour quarter RAs] are required to enroll in GRAD 601. No permission required.

Each semester the class number changes, check [imdainfo.umbc.edu](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu) under GUIDES or the graduate school website for the current class number required.

## **Teaching Opportunities**

### **Path to Teaching for the Department**

IMDA students may receive professional mentoring in classroom teaching, and an independent teaching experience in the Department of Visual Arts. Mentoring is achieved during the Teaching Practicum course [ART 638], which should be taken in an area of the student's expertise. When a student has successfully completed 638 and Advanced to Candidacy, they are able to teach a course independently in the



Department of Visual Arts. The Chair of the Department of Visual Arts may waive these requirements when a student demonstrates previous college-level teaching experience. Students should discuss with their IMDA Faculty Advisor, the Graduate Program Director [GPD], or the point person in the appropriate teaching area what class will best meet their needs.

### **Teaching Courses Available**

Offering IMDA students the opportunity to teach is a priority in the pedagogical mission of the Department of Visual Arts and its M.F.A. program. The undergraduate Foundations courses that IMDA students have the opportunity to teach include ART 210, 211, 212, 213 and 214. A qualified student may also teach in an area other than Foundations. While teaching requests are made through the GPD, the Chair of the Department of Visual Arts establishes the final teaching assignments for all faculty and graduate students.

When a graduate student is given a course to teach in the Department, the point person in that area, or the faculty member who served as a mentor for the graduate student's Teaching Practicum, will continue to assist and mentor the graduate student if necessary.

### **Teaching: RA, Adjunct or Credit?**

Once the Teaching Practicum is completed, IMDA students typically teach a class, or classes, as part of their RA. Occasionally, a qualified graduate student may teach as a paid adjunct or for Teaching Internship credit [ART 639]. ART 639 may be taken only if a student is not being paid to teach the course.

In addition to teaching a course independently through an RA, IMDA students may assist a faculty in teaching a lecture course [such as an Art History lecture] or the Foundation lecture course [Art 215] as part of their RA. This is distinct from a student enrolling in a Practicum [Art 638]. An RA who is assigned a teaching assistantship will be involved in teaching activities, such as grading, but their position is not necessarily a path toward independently teaching any particular course.

### **Apply for Teaching**

In order to receive full consideration to teach a course and meet the University scheduling requirements, requests for teaching need to be submitted to the GPD by the dates below. See [imdainfo.umbc.edu](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu) for teaching request forms.

#### **Teaching Semester**

Fall  
Spring

#### **Request is due to the GPD**

Previous January 15  
Previous August 15

## Other Opportunities and Support

### RTKL Award

Once a year, one IMDA student is offered the RTKL<sup>1</sup> [Rogers, Taliaferro, Kostritsky & Lamb] Award. When students Advance to Candidacy, they are eligible for a merit-based RTKL award [financial need is not a consideration]. Faculty members of the Department of Visual Arts base their selection of the RTKL recipient on the merit of students' third-semester Graduate Review Day presentations. The award is intended to support and highlight the recipient's M.F.A. Thesis Exhibition. Upon accepting this award, the student agrees to present a public lecture on their work during the Thesis Exhibition.

### Internal and External Opportunities

The Graduate Student Association [GSA] offers opportunities for travel and other support to graduate students. For more information see [gsa.umbc.edu](http://gsa.umbc.edu). For financial support, grants, residencies and employment opportunities both internal and external to UMBC, see [imdainfo.umbc.edu](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu).

### Service

Students have opportunities to provide service to the Department of Visual Arts, affiliated Centers, GSA and the broader community. These opportunities include serving alongside faculty on the IMDA Graduate Committee during the admissions evaluation process, on the Visiting Artists Lecture Series Committee, as the IMDA Representative to the GSA, or as graduate representatives on Department Promotion and Tenure Committees or faculty hiring committees. IMDA students should work with their advisors to choose a service commitment that best meets their needs and interests.

## Advising

Graduate student advisement is a two-stage process. For the first three semesters, incoming students are assigned an IMDA Faculty Advisor who assists with curriculum planning and short-and long-term goal-setting during the early stages of the program. Each semester the IMDA Advisor will authorize the student to register for whatever courses are needed. Following Advancement to Candidacy, at the beginning of the student's fourth semester, the student selects the Chair of his/her Thesis Committee. The Thesis Chair replaces the IMDA Faculty Advisor and functions as the student's mentor, overseeing all aspects of the student's remaining course work, research, written Thesis and Thesis Exhibition.

It is possible for a student to be finished with all course work, the written Thesis, and all preparatory work for the Thesis Exhibition by the end of the Fall of the student's fifth semester. If a student does not wish to be in residence in their third year, their

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<sup>1</sup> RTKL Associates is an international architecture and design firm founded in 1946 in Annapolis, MD.

graduate committee must approve this request. In such a case, the Department does not require a student to be in residence during the Spring semester in which their Oral Defense will take place [see **Thesis Residence Requirement**]. If a choice is made not to be in residence following this approval, the student will be required to return to UMBC during the Spring semester for the Exhibition and Oral Defense. The student will be required to enroll for at least two credits of ART 799 Thesis Exhibition during this final semester.

### **Advisement and Student Responsibilities**

- Communicate regularly with the GPD, IMDA Faculty Advisor|Thesis Chair regarding progress, goals and plans.
- Update the **Application for Diploma for Masters Degree** [found on the Graduate School website]
- Following Advancement to Candidacy, select a Thesis Chair.
- Initiate contact with Visual Arts Faculty members being considered for Thesis Committee Chair.
- Select Committee members in consultation with the Thesis Chair.
- Become familiar with and comply with relevant policies and procedures as set forth by the UMBC Graduate School and the IMDA Graduate Program.
- Report problems that could delay progress in completing the M.F.A. degree to the IMDA Faculty Advisor|Thesis Chair, GPD or the Department of Visual Arts Chair.

At all times, the Graduate Program Director [GPD] is available for advice and consultation regarding procedural issues and questions related to the IMDA program, advising, the Department of Visual Arts, Graduate School and University.

### **Course Path**

The IMDA M.F.A. requires a minimum of 60 credits, including 32 credits of studio, history and theory courses, 14 elective credits and 14 credits that are reserved for the Thesis Exhibition and written Thesis. These 60 credits with a grade of B or better, a Thesis Exhibition, written Thesis and publication, and Oral Defense|Final Examination are all required for completion of the M.F.A. degree.

During the initial semesters, there is a sequence of required courses that provides a foundation for proceeding through the IMDA program. Upon Advancement to Candidacy, full-time status is no longer required, as mentioned above [see details in section **Student Status, Residency and Time Requirements**]. During the final three semesters, a student works more independently toward their Exhibition and written Thesis under the guidance of the Thesis Chair and Committee. Possible course options for these final semesters include: Teaching Practicum, Electives, Independent Studies and Internships.

### **Electives, Non-IMDA Courses and Transfer Credits**

IMDA courses comprise ART 600 through ART 799, all of which may be used toward the IMDA M.F.A. Fourteen of the 60 required credits are electives that may be fulfilled by taking Special Topics [ART 649], Independent Studies [ART 690 up to 8 credits, or 790 up to 8 credits] or Art 400-499/600-799 cross-listed courses; or they may include up to 8 credits of Art 400-499 level undergraduate Visual Arts courses.

Non-Visual Arts graduate courses may be taken with permission [no credits under 400 level will be counted towards the M.F.A.]. Non-IMDA courses [courses not designated as either graduate level or art courses] may require that they be taken as an Independent Studies at the 690 or 790 level with permission from the instructor that includes an agreed-upon number of credits reflecting the amount of time devoted to the course. Non-IMDA courses may also require approval for graduate credit by the Graduate School and IMDA Faculty Advisor/Thesis Chair. Speak with your IMDA Faculty Advisor/Thesis Chair about electives and non-IMDA course options.

Students may transfer up to 6 credits from a USM or other accredited institution prior to matriculation in the IMDA program to be counted toward the M.F.A. degree. The credit must have been earned within five years of matriculating in the IMDA program with a grade of B or better.

The Graduate School requires that full RAs register for GRAD 601 [5] units and half RAs register for GRAD 600 [3] units. These courses are non-credit and do not count toward the 60 credits required for completion of the M.F.A. See **Research Assistants** in this Handbook, pp 7, or the UMBC Graduate School website for details.

### **Required Courses**

|         |  |                   |
|---------|--|-------------------|
| ART 610 | Intermedia Methods and Innovation Seminar [2x] | 4 Credits         |
| ART 620 | History and Theory of Imaging and Digital Arts | 4 Credits         |
| ART 624 | Contemporary Art, Theory and Criticism         | 4 Credits         |
| ART 640 | Intermedia and Digital Studio [2x]             | 8 Credits         |
| ART 740 | Advanced Intermedia and Digital Studio [2x]    | 8 Credits         |
| ART 792 | Exhibition and Thesis Preparation              | 2 Credits         |
| ART 798 | Graduate Thesis                                | 4 Credits         |
| ART 799 | Thesis Exhibition                              | 8 Credits         |
|         | Electives [600-799]                            | <u>18 Credits</u> |
|         | <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>60 Credits</b> |

The following is a suggested schedule of courses, outlining how the IMDA M.F.A. program is typically completed over a three-year period.

## Typical IMDA Course Path

|               |  |  |
|---------------|--|--|
|               | FALL   |  |
| <b>YEAR 1</b> | ART 610 [2]                                      | Introduction to Intermedia and Innovation Seminar                |
|               | ART 620 [4]                                      | History and Theory of Imaging and Digital Arts                   |
|               | ART 640 [4]                                      | Intermedia and Digital Arts Seminar                              |
|               | SPRING   |  |
|               | ART 640 [4]                                      | Intermedia and Digital Arts Seminar                              |
|               | ART 610 [2]                                      | Advanced Intermedia and Innovation Seminar                       |
|               | Teaching Practicum [2] and/or ART Elective [2-4] |  |
|               | FALL   |  |
| <b>YEAR 2</b> | ART 624 [4]                                      | Contemporary Art, Theory and Criticism                           |
|               | ART 740 [4]                                      | Advanced Intermedia and Digital Studio                           |
|               | Teaching Practicum [2] and/or ART Elective [2-4] |  |
|               | <b>Candidacy</b>                                 | DECEMBER <b>Grad Review Day</b> [See below for full description] |
|               | SPRING   |  |
|               | ART 740 [4]                                      | Advanced Intermedia and Digital Studio                           |
|               | ART 792 [2]                                      | Exhibition and Thesis Preparation                                |
|               | ART Elective [4]                                 |  |
|               | FALL   |  |
| <b>YEAR 3</b> | ART 798 [4]                                      | Graduate Thesis [Writing Seminar]                                |
|               | ART 799 [2]                                      | Thesis Exhibition  |
|               | ART Elective [4]                                 |  |
|               | SPRING   |  |
|               | ART 799 [6]                                      | Thesis Exhibition  |
|               | ART Elective [4]                                 |  |

## IMDA Courses

**ART 610** *Introduction to Intermedia and Innovation Seminar* [2] This course will investigate intermedia methodologies where students will conduct self-directed research relevant to their individual art practice. Interdisciplinary configurations of methods and social entrepreneurial activities will be encouraged [required IMDA MFA course].

**ART 620** *History and Theory of Imaging and Digital Arts* [4] This course presents a chronological examination of the influences of imaging and digital arts upon major issues and movements in contemporary art [required IMDA MFA course].

**ART 621** *Contemporary Art in Process* [3] A study of new directions in the visual and performing arts in conjunction with a visiting artist program. The course is designed as an investigation of the artistic process through viewing work and interacting with the artist.

**ART 624** *Contemporary ART, Theory and Criticism* [4] Focusing on the fundamentals of art theory, criticism, analysis and evaluation, this course will examine contemporary art, theory and the historical and philosophical issues that shape and define art and culture [required IMDA MFA course and meets the Graduate Schools RCR requirement].

ART 630 Technical Seminar [2-4]

ART 636 Curatorial Seminar [2]

**ART 638** *Teaching Practicum I* [2] A tutorial course in the practice and issues of teaching. Required as preparation for students who are interested in teaching. [This is a Pass/Fail course].

**ART 639** *Teaching Internship* [3] A student will assume responsibility for teaching a course under the supervision of a faculty member. Prerequisite: Consent of Instructor.

**ART 640** *Intermedia and Digital Studio* [4] A studio course in which the student develops ideas and imagery to produce a body of work. Note: Repeatable up to eight credits [required IMDA MFA course].

ART 641 Graduate Computer Art Studio [3]

ART 642 Graduate Video Art Studio [1-6]

ART 643 Graduate Photography Studio [1-6]

**ART 649** *Special Topics Studio* [4] Through lectures, demonstrations and critique of student work, current issues and techniques, specific media will be presented. Note: Repeatable up to eight credits. Prerequisite: ART 640 and consent of Instructor.

**ART 690** *Independent Studies* [1-6] A research project conducted under the supervision of a visual arts faculty member. Note: Repeatable up to 12 credits. Prerequisites: ART 640 and permission of Instructor.

**ART 691** *Special Topics in Art History* [4] Special topics in contemporary art history and theory. Specific topics to be announced. Note: Repeatable up to 12 credits.

**ART 710** *Advanced Intermedia and Innovation Seminar* [2] Students will continue to investigate methodologies and conduct self-directed research learned in ART 610. Prerequisite: Consent of Instructor.

**ART 720** *Seminar in ART History and Theory* [4] An examination of major contemporary issues and ideas in art history and theory [required IMDA MFA course]. Prerequisite: ART 620 and ART 624.

**ART 740** *Advanced Intermedia and Digital Studio* [4] A studio course in which the student develops ideas and imagery to produce of a body of work [required IMDA MFA course]. Prerequisite: ART 640.

ART 780 Imaging Symposium in Industry [3-6]

**ART 790** *Independent Study* [1-6] Advanced research project conducted under the supervision of a visual arts faculty member. Note: Repeatable to 12 credits. Prerequisite: Consent of Instructor.

**ART 792** *Thesis and Exhibition Preparation* [2] Preparation of written and thesis exhibition in conjunction with thesis committee [required IMDA MFA course].

**ART 794** *Graduate Internship* [1-6] An internship directly related to the graduate student's emphasis;

to be taken under the supervision of a visual arts faculty advisor.

**ART 798** *Graduate Thesis* [4] Writing of master's thesis in conjunction with the advisor and thesis committee [required IMDA MFA course]. Prerequisite: Consent of the Instructor.

**ART 799** *Graduate Thesis Exhibition* [8] The culmination of a student's work, presented as a formal exhibition [required IMDA MFA course]. Prerequisite: Consent of the Instructor.

*\* Note: Course numbers not in bold are occasionally offered. Check the on-line catalog for current descriptions.*

## Grades

### Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades are only given under extenuating circumstances and/or for medical reasons. An incomplete [I] grade must be changed to a final letter grade [A, B, C, D or F] for all courses required for the degree. For courses not required for the degree, an incomplete [I] mark may remain on the student's transcript. *Note:* All coursework applied towards the M.F.A. must be passed with a B or better. Also, in order to achieve candidacy all coursework must be passed with a B or better.

### Pass/Fail Credits

Up to 6 Pass/Fail credits may be used to fulfill the required 60 credits other than Pass/Fail credits automatically earned from ART 638, ART 639 and ART 799. Any course for which the student wishes to register on a Pass/Fail basis must first be evaluated and approved by the student's IMDA Faculty Advisor/Thesis Chair before the student registers for the course.

### Plus/Minus Grading

Faculty will have the option of assigning grades that include a plus or a minus [e.g., B+] to graduate students enrolled in graduate courses. This option is not available for undergraduate students enrolled in graduate courses or graduate students enrolled in undergraduate courses. The grade of A still indicates superior achievement, so A+ is not assignable. Furthermore, the grades of D and F indicate unacceptable performance, so plus/minus grading is not assignable for either. Refer to the Graduate School Policies, Procedures and Forms on the Graduate School website for more information.

### Appeal of Grade

A student who wishes to appeal a final grade in a course should first approach the instructor of that course before approaching the Chair of the Department of Visual Arts. If after a discussion with the Chair, the student remains dissatisfied, they may appeal to the Associate Dean of the Graduate School. Refer to the Graduate School Catalog for more information.

## Graduate Review Day and Advancement to Candidacy

### **Graduate Review Day**

All first-year and second-year students present their artwork and an artist's statement on Graduate Review Day through the end of their fourth semester in the program. Graduate Review Day is customarily scheduled over a one-or two-day period between the end of the regular class schedule and the beginning of final exams. Each student will present his/her work for review by the Department of Visual Arts faculty and associate staff at this time. Presentations are ongoing throughout the day and are typically set up in locations throughout sites on campus, including — but not limited to — the Fine Arts Building, ITE and the Raleigh Building. Faculty and associate staff view and evaluate the presented work, the artist's statement, and the one-on-one and/or group discussions of the work. The criteria for the evaluation are whether the graduate student is on track in developing a position and direction in the work presented, and if the student is able to articulate and support that position and direction through writing and/or discussion. The position and direction should reveal the student's grounding in historical and theoretical issues, artistic and contemporary influences and new developments. All students will discuss this evaluation with their IMDA Faculty Advisors or Thesis Chairs.

### **Advancement to Candidacy**

Consideration of Advancement to Candidacy takes place on the third Graduate Review Day, when the student has completed approximately 30 credits. At the end of the third semester, the Department of Visual Arts faculty and associate staff review a student's creative research, grades and overall participation in the IMDA Graduate Program for Advancement to Candidacy. A student Advances to Candidacy after having presented both a clear position and direction within their work and written statement, as well as the ability to articulate how that position was formed. This presentation will also indicate the student's ability to complete the thesis requirements successfully and pass the Oral Defense within the expected timeline. Coursework will be completed with a B or better, and the student is required to be in good standing within the University and Department in order to Advance to Candidacy.

Based on the faculty and associate staff review of the presentation at Graduate Review Day, and their vote, a student will receive a letter granting or denying Advancement to Candidacy from the GPD. Students who do not receive Candidacy at the end of the third semester will not be allowed to continue in the program. If a student wishes to continue in the program they must re-apply, following all official Graduate School and IMDA Program application procedures and abiding by all deadlines.

### **Formation of Thesis Committee**

Upon Advancement to Candidacy, a student will select a Thesis Committee Chair who is a regular or associate member of the University of Maryland Graduate School of Baltimore [UMGSB], and together, they will select the other members of the Thesis



Committee. The Thesis Committee consists, at minimum, of a Chair and two additional full-time faculty members who are affiliated with the Department of Visual Arts. Including the Thesis Chair, up to five members may be included, a fourth member may or may not be part of the UMGSB and must hold an M.F.A. at minimum or equivalent. The selection of the Thesis Committee members should be finalized by the first month of the semester following the student's Advancement to Candidacy.

The Chair of the Thesis Committee will serve as the student's advisor through the completion of graduate studies, taking over the role of the IMDA Faculty Advisor. At the start of each semester, the Thesis Chair will authorize the student to register for whatever courses are needed. The additional committee members, in conjunction with the Thesis Committee Chair, will advise and assist the student while work proceeds on the written Thesis and Thesis Exhibition.

## **Thesis Exhibition, Written Thesis and Oral Defense Process**

Three courses [ART 792, 798, and 799] totaling 14 credits are reserved specifically for the preparation and completion of the Thesis Exhibition and written Thesis [see Appendices for more information on these courses]. Other coursework may optionally support the work to be on display for the Thesis Exhibition. The Chair of the Thesis Committee will mentor the student through 792 and 6 credits of 799 and give the final grade for each course. Two credits of 799 is reserved for the IMDA Thesis Publication. The student will typically enroll in 798 the semester prior to mounting the Thesis Exhibition.

### **Green Light**

In early December prior to the student's Thesis Exhibition, a Green Light approval process will require the student's Thesis Committee to approve or deny the student's drafted written Thesis and Thesis Exhibition. Once the exhibition plan has been approved, the student, Thesis Chair and CADVC [or exhibition venue], will work toward approving the logistics of implementing the exhibition plan, including space and equipment needs. If the Thesis Committee denies the student's plan, the student may not mount their Thesis Exhibition, complete the written Thesis or stage the Oral Defense until the following spring.

### **Thesis Exhibition**

Students will display their final creative output at the CADVC, or similar appropriate venue approved by their Thesis Committee, during the Spring term of their final semester in the IMDA M.F.A. Program. The student and Thesis Committee will discuss the content, format and venue of the presentation with regularity and consistency throughout the period following their Advancement to Candidacy. Additionally, students will adhere and participate in policies and procedures required for mounting a professional exhibition. This may include publicity, loan and liability forms, equipment and space negotiations, wall labels, etc. See Appendices for more information.

### **Written Thesis**

Students will prepare a written thesis for both an academic format that will be uploaded to the USM electronic archive; and a published physical copy as part of the IMDA Thesis Journal. In the written Thesis, the student should present the conceptual basis of the student's artwork; address its historical context; discuss influences; explain the conceptual, philosophical and theoretical foundations of the work; and if appropriate indicate future directions. It is expected that visual material will be integrated into the text of the thesis to support its points. All visual material should be captioned appropriately and cross-referenced in the text. [See the Graduate School's guidelines, **Instructions for Preparing Final copies of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations** for specific requirements.]

Following the Thesis Exhibition, students will prepare and include documentation of their Thesis Exhibition work as a publication that will be part of the IMDA Thesis Journal and a permanent record for the Department of Visual Arts.

#### Thesis Submission Policies and Requirements:

- 250-word introductory abstract
- 5,000-word text [plus or minus 250 words]; word count does not include abstract, captions under visual material, footnotes, or appendices.
- Written format follows the guidelines of the Graduate School [available on their website or in their catalog].
- 2 copies: one deposit copy submitted to the Graduate School electronically and one publication copy submitted to IMDA.
- Each copy shall include exhibition documentation. The electronic copy may include documentation as an appendix.

### **Final Examination Committee|Thesis Committee**

In most cases, the Final Examination Committee will be the same members of the student's own Thesis Committee. The Final Examination Committee governs the Oral Defense|Final Examination procedures explained in the following section. The formation of the Final Examination Committee should adhere to Graduate School guidelines for completion of Master's Degrees.

- The Chair of the Final Examination Committee must be an Associate or Regular member of the University of Maryland Graduate School of Baltimore [UMGSB] Graduate Faculty.
- There will be a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 members on the Final Examination Committee|Thesis Committee [including the Chair], of whom at least 3 must be members of the UMGSB Graduate Faculty. All must hold at minimum the M.F.A. degree, or equivalent.
- To propose an individual who is not a member of the UMGSB Graduate Faculty, submit a curriculum vitae, including professional affiliation and credentials, to the GPD.

**Questioners**

The student in consultation with the Thesis Committee will also nominate to the GPD the names of three or four individuals who will serve as Questioners at the student's Oral Defense. The Questioners' qualifications should adhere to the requirements of members of the Final Examination Committee/Thesis Committee, ie: they must be a member of the UMGSB, or hold a minimum of an M.F.A. or equivalent. One Questioner may be a member of the Final Examination Committee.

**Oral Defense/Final Examination**

The Oral Defense [also referred to as the Final Examination by the Graduate School] will last approximately one hour. The Defense will take place after the opening of the student's Thesis Exhibition, around the beginning of April. The student will present their Thesis Exhibition prior to the Oral Defense. The student, Final Examination Committee [Thesis Committee] and Questioners will be in attendance. The Defense is open to all members of the Graduate Faculty, members of the Department of Visual Arts community and outside invited guests. All attendees should arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the scheduled Oral Defense. The proceedings are sealed, meaning no one may enter or exit during the examination. The Oral Defense will be recorded and archived by the Department of Visual Arts.

The Chair of the student's Final Examination Committee will act as moderator, and questions based on the Thesis Exhibition and written Thesis, will be addressed to the student primarily by the designated Questioners. During the final minutes of the Defense, the Chair will open the discussion to other members of the Final Examination Committee. At the conclusion of the Defense, the Final Examination Committee and Questioners will meet to discuss the Oral Defense. Once the Final Examination Committee has left to convene with the Questioners, the student may open the discussion to the attendees.

The Final Examination Committee and Questioners will focus on whether the student's Thesis Exhibition and written Thesis have met the appropriate criteria for the M.F.A. While the Questioners will advise the Final Examination Committee in this regard, they will not cast a vote. Acceptance of the Exhibition, Thesis and Oral Defense rests with the Final Examination Committee.

The Final Examination Committee has ultimate responsibility for accepting the student's written Thesis, Thesis Exhibition, and Oral Defense. The Final Examination Committee will vote to:

- accept the Thesis, Exhibition and Defense
- accept the Thesis, Exhibition and Defense with minor revisions
- reject the Thesis, Exhibition and Defense

Should two members vote no to accepting all or part of this work, the work is not accepted. If a student's Thesis, Thesis Exhibition and Oral Defense are rejected they may try again the following year. Upon a second rejection the student is dismissed from the program.

The Chair of the Final Examination Committee [most often the student's Thesis Chair] will meet with the student immediately following the Committee's meeting to summarize the discussion, to announce their decision and to indicate any minor changes that are required before the Thesis Exhibition and/or written Thesis acceptance is granted. A timetable for implementing any revisions will be established at this time. For a student to be awarded the M.F.A. degree during the semester of their Oral Defense, all corrections to the written Thesis and/or Thesis Exhibition will be submitted to the Final Examination Committee. A final version reflecting those corrections must be submitted to IMDA as a publication. The deposit version of the Thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School. See Appendix for "*At a Glance: Calendar of Thesis Requirements*", [imdainfo.umbc.edu](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu) and the graduate school website for more information.

### **Awarding of the Master of Fine Arts Degree**

Contingent on the Final Examination Committee's acceptance of the Thesis Exhibition, written Thesis and Oral Defense, plus the student's adherence to the Thesis submission policies stated above, and the completion of all course work with a minimum grade of B or better, the student will be awarded the Master of Fine Arts degree.

## APPENDIX

### **FORMS**

#### **Graduate School Forms**

While there are many forms throughout the MFA process, there are several forms the Graduate School requires during the Master's student final semester. All forms are linked from the [imdainfo.umbc.edu](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu) site. All forms require multiple signatures and are hand delivered to the Graduate School by the student or the Department of Visual Arts GPC [Eva Holley]. Students who submit forms to the Graduate School themselves should request a time-stamp and photocopy of the form by the Graduate School.

#### **IMDA Forms**

In addition to Graduate School forms, IMDA submission and related submission links are also available from [imdainfo.umbc.edu/forms](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu/forms), or go to [imdainfo.umbc.edu](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu) and select Forms and Guides.

#### **CADVC Forms/Procedures**

Center for Art Design and Visual Culture [CADVC] requires paperwork related to insurance, loan agreements, equipment and other matter significant to the M.F.A. Thesis Exhibition. These forms are typically emailed by the CADVC. Contact Symmes Gardner, Executive Director of the CADVC [[sgardner@umbc.edu](mailto:sgardner@umbc.edu)] or appropriate staff/RA for more clarification.

### **GUIDES**

The latest version of this IMDA Graduate Handbook, and other guides such as UMBC's Graduate School Catalog cited in this document, the RA Handbook, and written thesis guidelines, etc. are all available from [imdainfo.umbc.edu/imda-grad-guidelines/](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu/imda-grad-guidelines/), or go to [imdainfo.umbc.edu](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu) and select Forms and Guides.

## APPENDICES

See your IMDA Faculty Advisor/Thesis Chair or GPD for copies of the following advising forms.

## APPENDIX: More Course Descriptions

### **More Course Descriptions**

ART 638 Teaching Practicum [2] is a teaching assistant course designed for graduate students desiring to gain teaching experience at the university level. The student will work closely with a faculty in order to develop effective strategies for teaching by providing the practical and conceptual skills necessary to teach an undergraduate course independently, often a Foundation course. Students observe the teaching of each class meeting, assist with grading, develop a project and teach all aspects from presenting objectives, demonstrating methods, troubleshooting and leading a critique. ART 638 is a Pass/Fail course.

#### ART 792 Exhibition and Thesis Preparation

In this course, the student will work closely with the Chair of the Thesis Committee on work leading to the Exhibition and Thesis. The main requirements of this course are the completion of a 250-word preliminary Abstract for the Exhibition and Thesis and the approval of the Abstract by the Thesis Committee. The Abstract will outline the conceptual concerns of the Exhibition and will briefly describe the work to be produced. Students enrolled in ART 792 during the same semester may meet together periodically to discuss issues of mutual concern [eg: Thesis Exhibition planning with CADVC staff].

#### ART 798 Graduate Thesis

The written Thesis and bibliography should present the conceptual basis of the student's artwork and should address the following: historical context, influences, conceptual/philosophical/theoretical foundations, and future directions. The format of the Thesis guides the student through a structure for containing the necessary contents towards preparing a professional artist's talk. It is expected that visual material will be integrated into the text of the thesis to support its points. All visual material should be captioned appropriately and cross-referenced in the text. [See the Graduate School's guidelines **Instructions for Preparing Final copies of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations** for additional specific requirements.] Within two weeks following the Thesis Exhibition, professional and archival documentation of the exhibition will be prepared by the student and added to the Written Thesis as an appendix.

#### ART 799 Thesis Exhibition and Publication

The student presents her/his final work in a professional context at the Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture [CADVC] in a show of all graduate students completing their M.F.A. degree work, and will submit a written thesis in a published format required by IMDA within 4 weeks of presenting the MFA Thesis Exhibition. Consideration must be given to the accessibility of the work to the public and the Department of Visual Arts community. If the CADVC is inadequate presentation platform for the students work, the student may elect to propose to present in an alternative venue. This requires approval from the students Thesis Committee and the IMDA Graduate Program Committee through the GPD. If the alternative exhibition plan is approved, a display element summarizing or encapsulating the off-site exhibition will be presented at the Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture's Gallery at the time of the MFA Exhibition.

## APPENDIX: Social Media and Sharing Account Info

Social and sharing media currently used by IMDA includes Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, Google Calendar and forms, Flickr, the IMDA listserv, an IMDA email account, 2 websites and Decision Desk. The GPD, Charles Meyers and an IMDA RA have access to almost all passwords relevant to IMDA computers and social media. [imda@umbc.edu](mailto:imda@umbc.edu) is the owner of the Twitter account. Steve Bradley and Lisa Moren are administrators to the IMDA Facebook page and any faculty|staff are encouraged to request participation as “editors” of the IMDA Facebook page.

### ¡HEADS UP!

[imdainfo.umbc.edu](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu) has a link called “HEADS UP” on the splash page. This is the primary space for posting important announcements, Graduate Review Day and when forms are due.

### [imda.umbc.edu](http://imda.umbc.edu) vs. [imdainfo.umbc.edu](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu)

There are two IMDA websites that are linked:

- [imda.umbc.edu](http://imda.umbc.edu) is primarily for general program information.
- [imdainfo.umbc.edu](http://imdainfo.umbc.edu) is a backdoor website for internal use, information and access to important IMDA documents, forms and handbooks. There is no password for this site.

Google calendar allows the IMDA community to add events, such as booking rooms for Thesis Committee meetings, or announcing an event. The IMDA listserv is a group of engaged faculty|staff and all current graduate students. Anyone in the UMBC IMDA|Visual Arts community is invited to participate in the IMDA listserv upon request. Please contact: [Charles@umbc.edu](mailto:Charles@umbc.edu), [imda@umbc.edu](mailto:imda@umbc.edu) or the GPD to be added to the IMDA listserv or Google Calendar.

Faculty, staff and graduate students are encouraged to “like” us Facebook, “follow” us on twitter and upload relevant images to our Flickr account. Note that any images from our Flickr account may be added to our website. *Please add to news and images to our accounts:*

### **imda@umbc.edu**

Please send all announcements, news and information that we may share. This is reviewed regularly for communication and recruitment.

### **imda@lists.umbc.edu**

IMDA|Visual Arts affiliated faculty and staff

### **Email, Google Drive Calendar**

[imda@umbc.edu](mailto:imda@umbc.edu) is the owner

### **Facebook**

Like: [IMDA MFA @UMBC](https://www.facebook.com/UMBC.IMDA)  
[www.facebook.com/UMBC.IMDA](https://www.facebook.com/UMBC.IMDA)

### **Twitter**

Follow: IMDA MFA

### **Vimeo**

#### **IMDA**

Please send videos|links to [charles@umbc.edu](mailto:charles@umbc.edu)  
 Or use box [[box.umbc.edu](http://box.umbc.edu)] to share a large file.  
[vimeo.com/groups/262919](https://vimeo.com/groups/262919)

### **Flickr**

Login: [imda\\_mfa](http://imda_mfa)  
 Password: artMatters1  
[www.flickr.com/search/?q=imda\\_mfa](http://www.flickr.com/search/?q=imda_mfa)

### **ITE Computers**

These computers are connected to the same server as the ones in Fine Arts Building. Login with the same name|password as in the FA: [[xxx@umbc.edu](mailto:xxx@umbc.edu), changeme]

### **Vinyl Room**

Passcode for the key: IMDA [or 6432]  
 Immediately repeat the passcode to lock the key again.