



V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

Guidelines

The Master of Interdisciplinary Studies in Interdisciplinary Arts Virginia Commonwealth University Off-campus Graduate Art Program

The Master of Interdisciplinary Studies program in Interdisciplinary Arts, which is jointly offered by the School of the Arts and the Division of Community Engagement at VCU, offers a great deal of curricular flexibility as each participant plans a program, built around two focus areas, which culminates in an exhibition of work and a final paper documenting the work.

The information that follows is intended as a guide for planning a course of study and completing the M.I.S. degree. Kurt Godwin, Ginna Cullen and Sally Bowring make up the administrative team and serve as advisers. Please feel free to contact any member of the team with your questions.

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Degree requirements

The M.I.S. degree requires the completion of 39 graduate semester credit hours in the following pattern:

At least 9 and no more than 15 credit hours in each of two focus areas, from 3 to 15 credit hours of art electives, and 6 semester credit hours of an approved final project, which is a graduate exhibition and written documentation.

At least half of these hours must be 600-level or above. This means at least five courses (15 hours) plus the final project of six hours.

The time limit for degree completion is six years. Students may be accepted for any semester (fall, spring, summer) and must register in the semester of acceptance. Degree-seeking students are expected to enroll each semester of the academic year (fall, spring) and should notify the program director and request a leave of absence if this will not be the case. Students must be enrolled in the semester of graduation.

Focus areas and electives

The M.I.S. degree requires students to identify two different focus areas. Focus areas include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Craft and material studies
- Computers and the arts
- Drawing
- Mixed media
- Painting
- Photography
- Printmaking
- Sculpture

Other mediums may be chosen when courses are available.

A maximum of 6 credits may be transferred into the program. These credits may be from another institution or taken at VCU before formal admission to the degree program.

Advising

A student will be assigned an adviser when he or she is admitted into the program and may contact that adviser, or the program director, at any time for advising, but particularly at the time of registration for each new semester. It is essential that all students contact their advisers by the time they have earned 24 or more credits so that the degree plan can be approved and planning for the final project can be initiated.

Final project: exhibition and documentation

The final project is the creation of a graduate exhibition, which includes a public showing of a cohesive, focused body of artwork and the submission of a written paper with visual documentation. Students should register for 3 credits of exhibition during the semester in which the exhibition will occur.

Registration for documentation credit may be done 1 credit at a time until the paper is completed. The initial credit is a required online course. A total of 3 credits is required. Please contact the program director to register for final project courses. Students registered for final project courses are responsible for contacting their advisers in a timely manner.

Exhibition

The graduate exhibition should be a focused body of work, representing the student's creative, intellectual and technical mastery of the disciplines pursued during the M.I.S. program. The artist's statement (see documentation section) should be available at the exhibition. In addition, the artist may provide any autobiographical material or analysis of the work that might prove helpful to the viewer.

Students who have earned 24 hours should contact their advisers to begin preparations for the exhibition. It is important to procure a space early in the process — a year ahead is not too soon.

As the time for the exhibition approaches, students should register for the class and initiate meetings with their advisers to select the body of work to be shown. It is possible that more work will need to be generated to create a complete final show. Framing, matting and hanging decisions should be made with the adviser.

The exhibition should be announced by means of a postcard (regulation size is 6" long, 4" high and 0.016" thick). The front of the card should feature a work from the exhibition and the back should have space for the address and the following information:

Name of artist

The title of the show

Master of Interdisciplinary Studies
Thesis Exhibition

Virginia Commonwealth University

Dates of exhibition

Opening Reception
dates and hours

Place of exhibition and any necessary directions

Title of work on front, medium, dimensions, date

A reliable, inexpensive source for printing exhibition announcement cards is Modern Postcard, (800) 959-8365 or www.modernpostcard.com.

It is important that the announcement card contain the information listed above in the approved format. Be certain that you include the words, "Master of Interdisciplinary Studies/Thesis Exhibition/Virginia Commonwealth University." The design and wording of the postcard must be **approved** by the exhibition adviser before it can be printed.

The opening reception usually is scheduled for two to three hours and includes appropriate refreshments.

Invitations should be sent to the program director and the advisers. They also should be sent to Dr. Stephen Gottfredson (provost and vice president for academic affairs, VCU, P.O. Box 842527, Richmond, VA 23284-2527), Dr. Catherine Howard (vice provost, Division of Community Engagement, VCU, P.O. Box 843062, Richmond, VA 23284-3062) and Ms. Sue A. Messmer (chief of staff and VP university relations, VCU, P.O. Box 842512, Richmond, VA 23284-2512). Please contact the program director for a listing of the addresses of VCU off-campus art faculty. Fellow students may certainly be invited, but their addresses are not available from VCU.

Documentation (final paper)

The documentation (final paper) functions as a summary of studio work and a discussion of aesthetic views and artistic and other influences on the student's development as an artist while in the program. It demonstrates the interrelatedness of the pieces chosen for the exhibition and contains an analysis of the work. An adviser, who must approve the final draft, will be assigned to work with each student to assist with developing and editing. The documentation adviser will give specific instructions/requirements for each semester of documentation work. Students must expect to work through multiple drafts before completing a draft ready to be sent to the program director for final editing and approval.

It is recommended that students register for documentation 1 credit at a time. It may take longer than anticipated to finish the paper and students **must stay in continuous enrollment until the degree is completed.** Should a student finish before three semesters of registration, additional hours of registration can be added at the end of the semester during which the paper was completed. The initial credit of documentation will be a structured, online course required of all students.

Because the summer semester is so short, it is virtually impossible to complete all 3 credits of documentation during it. Please do not plan to do this.

During the online documentation course, students will be given information about the formatting guidelines for the final paper. A link to all necessary forms will be available from the instructor. The program director will send sample copies of completed papers of former M.I.S. students on request. In matters of grammar, punctuation and documentation (footnotes and bibliography), standard English style is required.

The final approved documentation, with digital images, must be submitted to VCU Libraries in electronic format. Instructions will be provided by the instructor. One hard copy of the final approved paper, with images, must be submitted to the M.I.S. program director. Students who wish bound copies of their papers should refer to the VCU Libraries Web site for a list of companies to contact. Visit www.library.vcu.edu.

Writing the paper

Preparation

Preparation for the final paper should begin early in the program as students think critically about the work they are producing. Students are encouraged to record and develop their thoughts on paper as they proceed through the program. The recommended way of doing this is by keeping an art journal, which should include research done about their artwork as well as individual metaphorical and symbolic interpretation of the chosen content. Students should look at their work as they write about it. This writing will prove helpful when beginning the final paper.

Students are expected to research the nature of their chosen content or imagery. This research typically includes art-historical sources and influential artists or movements. It also may include materials from non-art disciplines that are important to the body of work. This research expands the students' ability to think formally and critically about the work, forming the basis for informed, self-aware papers.

Writing

Consider the audience for the paper (experienced artists and/or art professors) and choose material appropriately; it is not necessary to explain the obvious. Keep the paper focused on the art rather than on autobiographical information.

Edit the paper carefully prior to submitting it.

There are no strict guidelines as to length; six to eight pages of actual text are generally sufficient. Digital images are required.

The contents of the paper should be arranged in the following order.

1. Blank sheet
2. Approval sheet (signature page)
3. Title page
4. Table of contents
5. Artist's statement

An artist's statement is a brief philosophical overview of the intent behind the artist's presented body of work. The statement should not include autobiographical information. The statement is usually one or two paragraphs long and should be made available at the exhibition.

6. Body of work

A brief introduction of one or two paragraphs is intended to help identify the student and what led him or her to the M.I.S. program.

The bulk of the final paper should be a general survey of the body of work. This includes an explanation of aesthetic views and artistic development as a result of the program. The discussion of a few key pieces of work (usually no more than six to 12 altogether with an emphasis on the primary focus areas) should suffice in the support of ideas or progress through the program. This discussion may include ways in which the two mediums do or do not relate.

The conclusion summarizes the statements the student has made in the paper. It also may include the effect of the experience on the student's life and teaching.

7. Bibliography
8. Appendix (slide list and slides or list of figures)
9. Résumé
10. Blank sheet

Before submitting the paper, be sure to edit it carefully. Follow standard English style in matters of grammar, punctuation and documentation. The assigned adviser will be able to help with this step, but the responsibility for a correct paper lies with the student.

Submitting a paper

One copy of an adviser-approved draft must be sent to the program director for final approval. The student will be notified that the paper is approved or that it must be revised. If further revisions are required, the paper must be revised and resubmitted. After the M.I.S. office has approved the paper and all the necessary changes have been made, print one hard copy for the M.I.S. program and electronically submit a copy to the VCU Libraries. Detailed instructions will be provided by the instructor.

Please note that the library will not accept documentation and students cannot graduate unless all required forms and payments are completed online.

Mail the final hard copy (with images) to: M.I.S. Off-campus Art Program Director, Virginia Commonwealth University, P.O. Box 843062, Richmond, Virginia 23284-3062.

Graduate School rules and regulations

The complete VCU graduate bulletin can be found [online](#). You are responsible for knowing the rules and regulations and following them throughout your program. If you have questions about

any statement in the Bulletin, please contact the program director for help, (804) 828-6931. Off-campus art program information may be found online at www.community.vcu.edu/programs/gradart/index.html.

Application/getting started

It is important to apply after you have taken a class or two. We still recommend that you “try it first,” but apply early. Application forms are available online at the [Graduate School](#). Beginning with the fall 2005 semester, a nondegree-seeking student who is later admitted as a degree-seeking student will not be allowed to apply toward a degree more than 6 credits earned as a non-degree-seeking student. Therefore it is recommended that students apply after taking one class.

All applicants to VCU who want to be classified as Virginia residents must complete the application for Virginia in-state tuition rates included in the graduate application. New students who have been classified initially as non-Virginians for tuition purposes may request a review of the initial residency determination by contacting Records and Registration/Residency at (804) 828-0366. Even if you are covered by third party agreements, it is important to do this after you have lived in Virginia for one year.

Students must register in the semester of admittance or their admission does not become official and they will be dropped from the program. Please contact the program director as soon as possible if you cannot enroll in the semester of admittance.

The special tuition rates enjoyed by part-time off-campus art students apply only as long as students are part-time and the courses taken are designated as off-campus courses. Part-time means enrolling in fewer than 9 credits in a single semester. Off-campus sections are indicated by the letter C (PAPR 605-C90).

Student must use [eServices](#), a password-protected service for viewing VCU student records online. Since VCU no longer mails grades, students must use eServices to view grades. A printout of grades serves as an “official” grade report. Visit the [VCU Web site](#) and click on the ‘Log in help’ icon to set an eID and strong eID password. In order to do this, you will need your student number, or V-number, which can be found on university bills. With this number, plus a birth date, students can access their eIDs and set up the required strong passwords.

Students must obtain an official VCU student e-mail account within one week of the beginning of their first semester of enrollment. This can be done by visiting <http://mymail.vcu.edu> and following the instructions. E-mail accounts are necessary for students participating in the online Blackboard classes.

Students with current charges of \$100 or more are eligible to participate in the university’s installment payment plan offered during the fall and spring semesters. There is a \$25 per semester fee and the bill will be divided into four equal installments.

Students who fail to meet payments when due will be assessed late payment penalties and will be denied registration for future classes until they have paid all accrued amounts owed.

Degree work/continuance

Students are responsible for the proper completion of their academic programs. Be aware of focus areas and fulfilling them. Read the requirements for the degree published each semester in the current online brochure.

Students must continue to make satisfactory progress toward their degrees. A student will receive no credit for a course in which a grade of less than a C is given.

Students are responsible for maintaining current mailing addresses and telephone numbers on file with the Office of Records and Registration. Please let the program director know when an address changes. She will see that it is changed in the records and on the off-campus art mailing list.

Please do not register or drop/withdraw yourself. The off-campus schedule does not match the deadlines associated with the on-campus schedule and you will not be able to do these things correctly. If you must change your schedule after registering at the first class, contact the program director.

Once admitted to a degree program, a graduate student is expected to enroll each semester (fall and spring).

Students may request a leave of absence from a program through written appeal to the program director, who will forward it to the Graduate School. A leave must be requested if students are not enrolled for more than two consecutive semesters. The time spent on leave counts in the five years allowed for the degree.

A graduate student who has completed course requirements for a degree must register at VCU each semester until the degree is awarded. After completing course requirements, students may not request a leave of absence.

A student who does not maintain continuous enrollment (registered or on leave of absence) must reapply to the program. This includes paying the application fee.

Final project/graduation

Students will be notified at the beginning of the semester in which they are eligible to graduate that a graduation application will be filed for them. From that point on, potential graduates must meet all deadlines and the final draft of the documentation must be approved by mid-semester by the program director. After approval, one final digital copy of the paper needs to be uploaded to the VCU Electronic Thesis and Dissertation site, and one final bound hard copy with completed Approval Forms must be in the hands of the program director one week before the end of the semester. Actual dates will be supplied each semester. All forms will be submitted by the program director. Candidates who do not meet the graduation deadlines will need to re-register and reapply at the beginning of the next semester.

A student must be enrolled in the semester in which he or she graduates.

At least one half of the courses presented for graduation must be those designated as exclusively for graduate students (600 level or above).

Degree applicants must have achieved an overall GPA of 3.0 (B) and must not have received a grade of C or below on more than six semester hours of course work.

All incompletes (I) must be converted to a letter grade by the last day of class of the semester in which the candidate plans to graduate.

Candidates who do not graduate at the end of the semester for which they have made application must re-register and reapply for graduation.

All course work must be taken within the prescribed time limits. Master's degrees must be completed within five years with two possible one-year extensions that must be requested before they are needed.

For course work that was taken more than seven years prior to the completion of the VCU degree, the program/department will evaluate the course work for acceptability and report those courses deemed acceptable to the dean of the Graduate School.