THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Design

Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Program

Graduate Studies Handbook

AUGUST 2025
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Purpose

Purpose of the Graduate Studies Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to define the expectations of graduate student performance as it relates to the Department of Design's philosophy, goals, policies, and procedures.

The Graduate Studies Handbook has been developed by the Department of Design's Graduate Studies Committee with cooperation from the Design Graduate Faculty to provide information on policies and procedures pertinent to graduate study in the department.

This document is a supplement to regulations contained in The Ohio State University Graduate School Handbook, and the Department of Design Patterns of Administration and generally does not duplicate the standard policies and procedures presented in those documents.

The Graduate School

The Graduate School at The Ohio State University is comprised of university faculty (the Graduate Faculty) authorized to give graduate instruction, a representative advisory body (Graduate Council), and the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Dean of the Graduate School, and administrative staff.

Rules, policies, and guidelines relating to graduate education are established by the Graduate Council, which includes graduate faculty and graduate student members.

In addition, the Graduate School serves graduate students, graduate faculty, and the university community through professional development programs and administrative services that support all stages of a graduate student's program.

Visit the Graduate School's website for additional information, including the Graduate School Handbook.

The Department Graduate Studies Committee

The Department of Design's Graduate Studies Committee is responsible for the conduct and administration of the department's graduate program. The chair of the committee maintains all confidential records for each student. The committee is also responsible for hearing and resolving grievances registered by graduate students.

The committee formulates rules and procedures relevant to the department's graduate program within the policies established by the Council on Research and Graduate Studies of the Graduate School and the graduate faculty of the Department. Actions taken by the Committee are subject to approval, modification, or reversal by the graduate faculty in the Department.

Other responsibilities of the Graduate Studies Committee are identified in Section 13 of the Graduate School Handbook

Graduate Program Mission and Goals

The Department of Design's advanced degree program focuses on the development of experts and professionals who are knowledgeable about design processes and methods of discovery.

Unique to the Department of Design is an interdisciplinary approach to design activity and research. Candidates are expected to evaluate relevant factors from the humanities, social and natural sciences, and technology, with the creative ability to reach a tangible embodiment, and to ensure its appropriate implementation. Based on current technical and professional needs, design must be a cross-disciplinary activity engaging and aligning with the broader range of social, economic, and scientific fields of study and application.

Goals of the Graduate Program

The program of graduate study leads to a Master of Fine Arts (MFA), the terminal degree in design practice. It is aimed at achieving the following goals in the areas of professional orientation, professional development, and professional contribution.

Students are expected to have achieved these goals upon completion of the program:

- Develop a body of work over a three-year course of study. Practice processes of visualizing and making that inform possibilities and propose solutions.

- Conduct project-based research that is the product of iteration, prototyping, critical thinking and informs the body of work for the purpose of expanding the student's contemporary design practice and thinking.

- Write a high-quality paper presenting their work.

- Apply research-based knowledge, historical and intellectual perspectives, and key theories to design-led engagements.

- State, support, and defend their body of work and design approaches verbally; in writing; and with visual representations, simulations and/or prototypes.

- Develop skills to become an effective team leader, team member and facilitator when working in collaborative interdisciplinary environments.

- Develop an awareness of the impact of their design practice in social and environmental domains in a variety of scales.

General Structure

Structure for the Graduate Program in Design

The MFA degree program is centered on a body of work developed by the student and typically produced over a three-year course of study. With the help of their advisory committee, students identify and explore a design-centered conceptual or aesthetic basis for their body of work. Completion of a project, paper, defense (oral examination), and exhibition of this body of work marks completion of the program. An oral final examination administered by their advisory committee is required. This is a public presentation by the student defending their body of work. The student must write a high-quality paper presenting their work. When approved by the advisory committee, this paper will be submitted as a thesis to the Graduate School.

The department offers a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree, requiring a total of 60 credit hours in the following two areas of emphasis.

Design Research and Development (DRD)

Individual and collaborative research is devoted to the development of knowledge and skills possessed by successful designers, such as the critical factors of environmental and social awareness, novel methods for human-centered and systematic analysis, and creative problem-solving. An emphasis is placed on the creation of outcomes that address and contribute to contemporary issues in a global society.

The program is centered on design research with the objective of practicing new concepts, theories and outcomes that are developed through exploratory design research approaches and may also be tested with methods of evaluation for performance, usability, and user satisfaction. The methods and tools applied may be those traditional to design and/or research practice, or those evolving from experimentation and/or digital media. Critical to this discovery process is the engagement of a primary research effort.

Digital Animation and Interactive Media (DAIM)

In collaboration with the Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design (ACCAD), the DAIM program provides opportunities for an experienced animation student to develop their own creative vision in a research environment for multidisciplinary and collaborative activities. In DAIM, students' work will be technology based, in the areas of digital animation and interactive media that may extend to real time graphics and virtual environments, performance animation, game art, responsive and interactive media and installations providing new ground for the design and creation of meaningful content by the animation designer.

Master of Fine Arts Degree (MFA)

The Department of Design requires students pursuing the MFA degree to complete a thesis. This requires the consistent development of a cohesive body of work related to Design.

A thesis is the documentation of a substantial, cohesive body of scholarly work produced in standard thesis paper format, as specified by the Graduate School. A thesis is a hallmark of our MFA program and is meant to demonstrate the student's knowledge of an area of specialization. Theses are publications and, as such, are accessible to researchers, scholars, and others interested in the subject. Theses are contributions to the knowledge base in design.

Curriculum Organization for the Graduate Program in Design

The content and structure of the Design MFA is based on a 60-credit-hour degree program.

Credit hours must be taken from four general modules of study, which are:

- Thesis application courses (Design 7998, 7999)
- Foundation seminar courses (e.g., Design 6101 [*legacy 6200*], 6102 [*legacy 6300*])
- Graduate Design Studios and Seminars (e.g., Design 6110 [*legacy 6100*], 6130, 6430, 6441 [*legacy 6400*], 6410 [*legacy 6500*])
- Specialization or elective courses in the categories of:
    - History/Theory/Critical Analysis
    - Interdisciplinary/Collaborative
    - Studio/Labs
    - *Specialization and elective courses are to be related to the student's thesis research and may be in departments other than Design.*

Common to both the DRD and DAIM emphasis, department core courses address the specific methods, theories, and practices related to the development of design research and/or design solutions. Studio and laboratory courses facilitate the implementation of theory and concept.

Specialization or elective courses may be Design courses in some cases, but it is encouraged that courses be taken in areas such as the Department of Computer and Information Science, Social Work, Psychology, Communication, Integrated Systems Engineering, Business, Education, History, English, Film Studies, and the Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design (ACCAD). Electives may be selected as they relate to specific research interests and must be approved by the student's MFA Advisor or Mentoring Committee (see next section).

The distribution of credits for History/Theory/Critical Analysis, Interdisciplinary/Collaborative, Studio/Labs is different for DRD and DAIM as follows.

	DRD	DAIM
Design Credits	39	30
Theory/History/Criticism Electives	6 – 9	12
Research Electives	3 - 9	N/A
Interdisciplinary Electives	6	6
Studio Electives	3 - 6	12

For the most current distribution of credits, Curriculum Maps are available on the department's

website. These forms must be maintained and updated in consultation with the Mentoring Committee or MFA Advisor. Candidates must complete the appropriate Curriculum Maps form.

Graduate Student Advising

Mentoring Committee

During the summer before first-year graduate students arrive, each incoming student is assigned a Mentoring Committee consisting of two faculty members from the Design department. This assignment is based on the expressed support from coordinating faculty members for applicants and the applicants' interest in working with specific faculty members. Mentors are available to assist the student in acclimating to the university environment and departmental procedures, as well as to assist with course selection and other student matters. The Mentoring Committee is designated based on expressed interest in the student's application, research statement, and interviews that may have been conducted prior to acceptance. Upon beginning the program, first-year students are expected to discuss their research interests with their Mentoring Committee and receive guidance to identify research directions and resources. While members of the Mentoring Committee may also serve on the MFA Committee based on shared interests and the faculty members' research expertise, this transition is optional rather than mandatory.

Members of the Mentoring Committee meet with students both collectively and individually. Meetings are expected to occur at least three times per semester during the first year. In the spring semester of their first year, DRD students enroll in DESIGN 7193 (Research Elective), which involves working with two mentors. This course, ranging from 0.5 to 6 credits, is integrated into the curriculum and can be applied as designated mentoring sessions. DAIM students use their 6230 courses as time to work with studio faculty and should schedule regular meetings with their Mentoring Committee throughout the academic year to keep them abreast with their progress and research direction.

MFA Committee

The MFA Committee is a critical component of the graduate program. The student's research topic and approach to research activities is developed and agreed upon in consultation with the committee and MFA Advisor (see next section). The MFA Advisor (committee chair) must be designated by December 1 of the student's second year (autumn semester). The full committee must be established by February 1 of the student's second year (spring semester).

The student's research is guided and approved by their advisor and committee. Potential topics and research methods may be points of discussion in some graduate courses, but the primary means of advice and guidance is to be conducted with the advisor, with support and advice from other members of the committee.

Graduate students pursuing the MFA degree are required to have three committee members with Category M or P status.

Current tenure-track faculty at the university are eligible for appointment as either Category M or P Graduate Faculty. Graduate Faculty accept the responsibilities of that role as detailed in Section

Graduate students are encouraged to seek one external committee member to the department of Design, whose research and advice is relevant to their research topic. Practicing designers or other professionals (see External Members) may be invited as a fourth committee member by submitting a Committee and Examination Petition in GradForms to the Graduate School. Speak with the Graduate Program Coordinator for assistance submitting the petition.

External Members: Individuals who are not graduate faculty members at Ohio State University may serve on master's examination committees. This appointment is based on the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee of the student's program and requires a request by the student through a Committee and Examination Petition in GradForms. Petitions must include a curriculum vitae for the external member. Approval by the Graduate School is granted upon special petition by the Graduate Studies Committee, outlining the special qualifications and expected contributions of the proposed committee member. Speak with the Graduate Program Coordinator for assistance submitting the petition.

MFA Advisor

The MFA Advisor (committee chair) should be chosen first—by December 1 of the second year, during autumn semester. Additional committee members should then be identified in consultation with the committee chair by February 1 of the second year, during spring semester and prior to the preliminary review to be held during Week 8. The selection of committee members should align with the topic of the research. Faculty members must have proven expertise and/or interest in the research area the candidate wishes to investigate.

MFA Committee and Advisor selection occurs during the first and second year in the program. The full committee must be chosen by February 1st of the second year. In the latter half of the second year, students should assemble their MFA committee to present their current research direction and receive feedback from the committee members.

Students and their Advisor must hold a formal second-year review, in which all members of the committee attend and approve the research direction for the student's final year.

MFA Advisor and Graduate Student Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the MFA Advisor:

- Provides guidance to the student in their graduate studies, including advising for the student's research topic and methods for conducting their research.
- Approves or rejects, in consultation with the committee, the student's research topic and proposed methods for conducting their research.
- Conducts all formal reviews following the First Year Review with the participation of the MFA Committee members, including the final master's examination.
- Advises the student in planning a course of study that is based upon both the department's recommended structure for graduate study, and the needs of the individual student.

- Reviews the course ladder on semester-by-semester basis, advising on best sequence of courses and completion of degree requirements.
- Reviews and guides revision of the student's writing towards the thesis, including multiple drafts of the thesis paper. The review and revision process should be agreed upon by the Advisor and student, but it is expected that 3-4 drafts of the paper be reviewed prior to completion.

In consultation with the MFA Advisor, it is the student's responsibility to:

- Meet and communicate on a regular basis with all members of the MFA Committee, either as a group or individually, regarding progress
- Maintain knowledge of the rules, regulations, and policies set forth in the Graduate School Handbook and the Department's Graduate Studies Handbook.
- Stay informed of all department and Graduate School correspondence, requirements, and deadlines.
- Ensure an appropriate course load which reflects considerations of the student's Graduate Associateship, fellowship, previous academic record, and the nature of the courses to be taken.

Meeting with the Committee and Advisor

It is the student's responsibility to meet regularly with each member of their committee. The student is the primary means of communication between the committee members and should not underestimate the importance of seeking guidance and feedback from each. The student is responsible for keeping each committee member informed of progress in their studies.

Graduate students and their committees are highly encouraged to meet as a group on a regular basis. The frequency of meetings is to be determined by the committee and student. The committee shall collectively meet at least once prior to the final master's examination. Specifically, the committee must meet to conduct the formal MFA Committee review, which must be scheduled during the Spring semester of the second year.

Change of MFA Advisor or MFA Committee Members

Occasionally a student or graduate faculty member may feel that it would be beneficial for the student to change the MFA Advisor or Committee members. This might be due to the departure of a faculty member. It might also be needed when the specific area of research is clarified, or if there is dissatisfaction on the part of either party. Changes of this nature are infrequent. The change requires the agreement of the Advisor and Committee, and the approval of the Graduate Studies Committee. The student shall initiate the change by submitting a written request to the Graduate Studies Chairperson.

This request must be signed by all faculty members on the committee from the department, and by the incoming faculty member from Design who will serve on the committee because of the change. External members are not required to sign the change request.

Responsible Research

Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Unless research is being conducted as part of the requirements for a course in which a student is enrolled, all research activities involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved by an OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) unless the Office of Responsible Research Practices (ORRP) prospectively determines that the research falls into a category of exemption

established by federal regulation.

An application for review or exemption must be submitted by the student and receive approvals before conducting any research covered by the IRB. A graduate faculty member will serve as Principal Investigator (PI) for the study and the student serves as Co-Investigator. Both the faculty member serving as PI and the student involved in research with human subjects must be certified through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) web-based human research course.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure all forms are completed appropriately and submitted under review and approval of the participating faculty. For more information, see The Ohio State University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP).

Course Load and Scheduling

Student Course Load

The student and their faculty mentors or advisor mutually determine the courses and number of credit hours taken each semester.

Graduate courses are designated with a "G" in the course offerings bulletin. For graduate credit, the course must be listed at 6000-level or above, at 5000-level with appropriate instruction, or 4000 to 4999- level if the course is listed outside of the student's home program and is taught by a non-graduate student course instructor. Courses that appear with a "UG" designation only may not be applied as graduate credit. Specifics are noted in the Graduate Studies Handbook in Section 4.0.

In certain cases (such as fellows, graduate associates, and international students), minimum enrollment requirements apply. For those with a GA appointment of 50 percent or greater, the requirements are as follows:

- Graduate Associates: 8 credit hours (4 in summer)
- Fellows: 12 credit hours (6 in summer)
- International students: 8 credit hours (Autumn and Spring)

Fellows must hold no other paid appointment or employment during the term of the fellowship appointment. The Graduate School supports GTA and GRA experiences occurring during intervening years.

A student may not enroll for more than 18 credit hours per semester, including audited courses, without Co-mentor or Advisor, and Graduate School approval. Enrollment in excess of 18 credit hours will incur additional fees.

Four credit hours must be taken during each semester a 25 percent appointment is held (except during the summer term, when the minimum is two.)

Course Work Plan

The student will begin to develop a course work plan of study during the first semester of residence. The first draft of the course plan is completed in collaboration with the two-person mentoring committee.

Once the student has selected an advisor, the course plan may be revised to reflect the needs of the individual student, as well as follow the recommended structure for the Design Research and Development or Digital Animation and Interactive Media track.

The course work plan of study is a "living document". Once established, the course work plan of study may receive minor modification and alteration through the mutual agreement of the student and their advisor based upon sound rationale and reason.

Successful fulfillment of the course work plan of study constitutes completion of the course work requirements for master's degree candidacy. In situations where the Design MFA program structure changes, the student will be given the option to modify their plan of study. Students have the option to adhere to the program structure and the Graduate Studies Handbook that is in place the year of entry in the program.

The curriculum map must be approved and signed by the MFA Advisor and the Graduate Studies Chair.

Requirements for Formal Progress Reviews and Graduation

Project and Paper

In fulfillment of the MFA, each candidate completes an MFA Creative Thesis Project, Thesis Paper, and defends the Thesis via oral examination. The written component does NOT constitute nor substitute for the exhibition of the final body of work.

Thesis Credits in third year: 12 credits

- Autumn semester: 3 credits Design 7999 (paper) and 3 credits Design 7998 (project)
- Spring semester: 3 credits Design 7999 (paper) and 3 credits Design 7998 (project)

Thesis is undertaken with the graduate's advisory committee's consent and input and requires passing for the Year 2 Preliminary Review and a project proposal (detailed below) to register for thesis credits in Design 7998 and Design 7999.

MFA Creative Thesis Project Prep and Thesis Production Courses

These are the courses within the 60 credit MFA curriculum which are specifically designed to help to prepare MFA students for thesis work.

This sample timeline is based on a typical student who completes the program in 3 years and maintains full-time status, usually 9 credits per semester for six semesters + two summer semesters of 3 credits.

THESIS TIMELINE

	Autumn	Spring
First Year (Exploration)	Design 6101 [*legacy 6200*], 3 credits Design 6110 [*legacy 6100*], 3 credits (DRD) Design 6130 [*legacy 6400*], 3 credits • **Faculty Exploration Passport**	Design 6102 [*legacy 6300*], 3 credits Design 6441 [*legacy 6400*], 3 credits Design 7193, 0.5 to 6 credits (DRD) • **First Year Review** - first week of April
Second Year (Practice & Application)	Design 6230 [*legacy 6400*], 3 credits Design 6410 [*legacy 6500*], 3 credits (DRD) ARTEDUC 7725, 3 credits (DAIM) • **Designate Thesis Advisor/Committee Chair** – Dec 1	Design 6441 or 5650 [*legacy 6400*], 3 credits Design 6430 [*legacy 6400*], 3 credits (DAIM) • **Declare Thesis Committee Members** – Feb 1 • **Committee Preliminary Review** - week 8 • **Presentations to Design Faculty** • **Second-Year Review**
Third Year (Synthesis)	Design 7998, 3 credits Design 7999, 3 credits • **Committee Progress Presentation** – week 6 • **Graduation Review** - after Thanksgiving Break	Design 7998, 3 credits Design 7999, 3 credits • **Thesis Project Completion** • **Thesis Paper Completion** • **Thesis Defense** • **Thesis Exhibition**

The thesis project requires constant consultation by the graduate advisor (minimum bi-weekly meeting recommended), and the full committee should be convened at least once per semester prior to the Oral Exam.

Year 1

FIRST YEAR REVIEW

Graduate students pursuing the MFA degree are subject to a formal **First Year Review** scheduled near the end of spring semester of the first year. All first-year graduate students and graduate faculty participate in the review. The schedule and format of the review are determined by the Graduate Studies Committee. In general, each student will make a brief presentation of their progress to date and receive feedback from the graduate faculty.

The purpose of the First Year Review is to determine satisfactory progress in the program. If the decision of the graduate faculty is that satisfactory progress has not been made, the student will be placed on department probation for one semester, and a second progress review will be required to take place prior to a designated date the following autumn semester. The student will additionally receive a letter from the Graduate School regarding their probationary period. The review committee for a probationary review will consist of at least two members of the Graduate Studies Committee and the entire mentoring committee. If that review is not satisfactory or not completed, the student will be denied continuation in the program. See the rubric in the appendices.

Year 2

In the second year, there are three milestones that students must perform.

1. The **Preliminary Second-Year Review** provides the student with an opportunity to propose their MFA thesis project to their faculty thesis advisory committee **by week 8 of the spring semester.**

2. **Presentations to Design Faculty** are completed in a discussion-oriented format to create an environment conducive to rich, open dialogue between faculty and MFA students. This event happens on a single day during finals week of Spring Semester. Each student will have three paired faculty visits/discussions of 30 minutes. Students will prepare a 10-minute overview of their topic and applied project and allot 20 minutes for questions/discussions with the faculty.

3. The **Second-Year Review** is completed following the faculty presentations and must involve the entire thesis advisory committee. All reviews must be completed and summaries sent to the Graduate Program Coordinator by the 2nd Friday in May. The **Second Year Review Rubric** (in the appendix) outlines the criteria by which the design faculty and committee will assess the quality of the proposed thesis project.

PART 1: PRELIMINARY SECOND YEAR REVIEW

Purpose

The aim of the Preliminary Review is for the student to present their proposed thesis topic, related creative **project prototype**, background research, and project production plan to their MFA Thesis Advisory Committee and to receive critical feedback for preparing the materials for the Second Year Review. In the Preliminary Review, the student must submit a **thesis proposal draft** to the committee one week prior to the preliminary review. Following the review, the

student will incorporate the committee's feedback to revise the proposal in preparation for the Second Year Review.

Components of Preliminary Review

- **Project Prototype** - serves as a proof of concept that addresses the proposed topic and research questions. It is a simple experimental model of a proposed solution intended to quickly and economically test or validate ideas, design assumptions, and other parts of its conception so that the designer(s) can make necessary refinements or changes in direction.
- **Thesis Proposal Draft** - communicates the focus, structure, and scale of your proposed thesis project and must include the developing content for the key elements outlined in the Second-Year Review below. ***Follow the Proposal outline listed below, in the SECOND YEAR REVIEW section.***

PART 2: PRESENTATION TO DESIGN FACULTY

Purpose

The aim of the Presentations to Design Faculty is to help students refine their projects, enhance their critical thinking skills, and gain valuable insights from faculty with different areas of specialization, ultimately supporting their academic and creative growth.

Process and Components of the Presentation to Design Faculty

- Each student will have three paired faculty visits/discussions of 30 minutes.
  - Students will prepare a 10-minute overview of their topic and applied project.
  - Students will leave 20 minutes for questions/discussions with the faculty.
- Faculty will score the "Second Year Faculty Presentation Rubric" after each meeting; rubrics will be given to the faculty advisor of each committee as well as collected for the GSC program assessment.
  - Rubrics should be used by the student's advisory committee to inform their interpretation of student success
  - Rubrics will be used by the GSC for program assessment
- Following the Presentation to Design Faculty segment, each student will submit a written summary of the feedback and questions received from the design faculty. The summary should highlight key insights, including three successes and three areas for improvement, and will be discussed during the Second-Year Review with the Thesis Advisory Committee.
- Students will then have the second-year review with their committee at a time to be determined by the student and their committee members.

PART 3: SECOND YEAR REVIEW (PRESENTATION TO THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE)

Purpose:

The goal of the Second-Year Review is for the student to discuss their **Project Prototype** and **Thesis Proposal** to receive feedback and evaluations from Thesis Advisory Committee. This review provides an opportunity for valuable input and assessment. Approval of the review marks significant progress toward the completion of both the thesis and the MFA degree.

Components of the Second Year Review

- **Project Prototype -** a proof of concept that addresses the proposed topic and research questions, a simple experimental model of a proposed solution intended to quickly and economically test or validate ideas, design assumptions, and other parts of its conception.

- **Thesis Proposal** - a comprehensive document outlining the practical and theoretical aspects of the project. Below are the key elements that must be included. *The numbers do* <u>*not*</u> *indicate chapters, nor do they necessarily dictate an order, but rather they function as a list of elements that should be covered in the proposal.*

1. **Thesis Title / Thesis Project Statement**
   a. This is a clear, concise title or statement of your proposed thesis project that encapsulates your focus, argument, or claim. It should immediately indicate the core idea or theme you will explore.
2. **Research Objective/Questions**
   a. **Primary Objective**: Clearly state what the main goal of your thesis project is. This objective should outline what you aim to achieve and why it is important.
   b. **Main Questions:** Define the specific questions you seek to answer through your thesis project. These are the central problems or gaps in knowledge your research intends to address.
   c. **Sub-Questions**: Depending on the scope of your project, there may be sub-questions that further detail specific aspects of the research.
   d. **Describe what parts of the project you have already completed and the results and remaining questions:** Provide a visual and text summary of the parts of the project you have completed or prototyped along with a brief summary of what you learned from this practice that informs your way forward on the project.
   e. **How You Will Achieve It**: Describe the approach and methods you will use to meet the objective. This ties into your research questions, methodology, and methods sections, as the goal should align with your thesis project.
3. **Contribution and Audience**
   a. **Anticipated Contribution**: Describe the potential impact of your thesis project. How will it contribute to the field, and what makes it significant?
   b. **Audience**: Define the intended audience for your work (e.g., academics, practitioners, or the general public) and explain why the thesis project is important to your intended audience.
4. **Supporting Background Research**
   a. **Background:** Provide **brief** background information that justifies your project's relevance, drawing on prior work or existing knowledge in the field, such as case studies, academic articles, media scans, or previous creative work.
   b. **Connection to the Thesis Project**: Explain how the background research directly supports or ties to your thesis project work.
5. **Methods/Evaluation**
   a. **Methodological Approach**: Explain the methods you will use to answer your research questions. This can include design thinking, user-centered design, iterative

design, double diamond, qualitative and/or quantitative, prototyping, or problem-framing depending on your project's nature.

   b. **Evaluation**: How will you know if your project is successful? Describe the criteria for success. If you plan to do user evaluation of your project, explain the evaluation methods/process you will use.

6. **Planning / Timeline**
   a. **Timeline:** Provide a timeline for your thesis project that includes key milestones, deadlines, and phases of work.
   b. **Next Steps**: Clearly outline what comes next, including research plans, course plans, production schedules, and any specific tasks you need to complete before final submission.

7. **Feasibility and Rationale**
   a. **Challenges:** Discuss any potential challenges or limitations you foresee and how you plan to mitigate them. This shows you have thought critically about the feasibility of your project.
   b. **Points of Concern**: Acknowledge any areas of concern or potential risks and suggest ways to address them moving forward.

After the Second Year Review

The student advancement toward the third and final year of the MFA program, is determined solely by the student's advisory committee, using the Second-Year Review Rubric as the basis of judgement.

The Second-Year Review conclusion for each student will be followed by the Thesis Advisory Committee's submission of **Second-Year Review Result Form** signed by the committee and the students, which summarizes the result status (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory – Delay Progression/Unsatisfactory – Dismissal), recommendations, and comments. This form should be sent to the Graduate Program Coordinator for record-keeping purposes by the 2nd Friday of May.

If the student receives a "Satisfactory" result - The student's Thesis Advisory Committee will provide recommendations to the student on how to advance and proceed toward the third year.

If the Thesis Advisory Committee determines that the student's progress is unsatisfactory - the student will be placed on departmental probation for one semester. A second progress review will be required in the following autumn semester (no later than October 31st). The student will also receive a probationary letter from the Graduate School. If the second review is unsatisfactory or not completed, the student will be dismissed from the program.

If a student misses their Second Year Review or requests a delay - The student will be able to reschedule with permission from their thesis committee and the Graduate Chair. **A delay must be requested in writing to the Graduate Program Coordinator no later than one month before the presentations to design faculty date**. Re-scheduled reviews should be completed no later than October 31st the following autumn semester.

Autumn Semester of Year 2

Week After Thanksgiving Break (by December 1st)	Thesis advisory committee is finalized by candidate with advisor approval. This information must be transmitted to the department using the **Declaration of Thesis Committee Form**.

Spring Semester of Year 2

By Week 1	Meet with graduate advisor to discuss topics
By Week 2	In coordination with your graduate advisor and Design 6230 work, confirm selected topic, and begin research and discovery. - Begin Creative Thesis Project Prototype - Begin Thesis Project Proposal
By Week 7	Proposal due to committee members
By Week 8 (after spring break)	**Preliminary Review** with Advisory Committee Project prototype and thesis proposal draft
By Week 10	Revisions for thesis project and paper based on Preliminary Review feedback back to committee
Last Week of Semester	Presentations to Design Faculty
Second Year Review (SYR)	Formal thesis proposal presentation meeting with committee to include: - Prototypes of project - Paper begins working process stage - Committee feedback - Summer research plan If satisfactory progress has not been made, a Second Year Review makeup must be completed by October 31 of the following autumn semester.

Year 3

The **Graduation Review** occurs at the end of the student's first semester of the third year, typically the first week in December.

Students present the thesis progress to the full faculty of Design for feedback. The Graduation Review is also the context in which the students' progress indicates their readiness for spring semester **Thesis Project Completion, Thesis Paper Completion, Thesis Defense (Oral Examination), and Thesis Exhibition.** The review is followed by the filing of a Graduation Review Report, which is reviewed by the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee and the Department Chair.

The Thesis Project, Paper, Defense, and Exhibition is the culmination of the MFA program, in which students present their thesis project and paper for review. The Project/Paper standards are defined by and scored on the MFA Project/Paper Rubric

Autumn Semester of Year 3

By Week 1	- Enroll in Design 7998 and 7999 - Set up weekly meeting with advisor to commence on project and writing
By Week 6	Progress presentation to thesis advisory committee
First Week of December	**Graduation Review** - Project prototype and thesis paper draft

Spring Semester of Year 3

Be sure to check exact dates with the OSU Graduation Calendar

By Week 1	- Enroll in Design 7998 and 7999 - Set up weekly meeting with advisor to continue project and writing - Apply to graduate.
Last Week of February	Submit thesis paper for review by advisory committee *Formatting must follow Graduate School format features*
Mid-March (after Spring Break)	**- Oral defense** - Receive thesis paper feedback from committee
Early-April	Thesis Paper Format Check (recommended)
Mid-April	Revised thesis paper component submitted to Graduate School

By Last Day of the Semester	Archival documentation of the thesis project must be submitted to Graduate Studies Coordinator via a OneDrive link.

Thesis Project

The MFA Creative Thesis Project (75-80% of effort) should demonstrate:

- Creative depth
- Conceptual depth innovation and experimentation
- Contextual awareness of the project's design process
- Contextual awareness of the project's venues for dissemination
- Technical prowess
- Appropriate craftsmanship

Suggestions for project's working process:

- Investigation and exploration of topics: areas of interest, needs assessment, opportunity seeking and problem-solving potential
- Discovery/research phase: gather information, create database of images and text
- Prototyping stage: create rough iterations of design, test if necessary
- Refinement stage: continue honing project based on testing, feedback
- Production phase: gather resources and materials to create final design solution
- Presentation phase: Oral Exam and present final thesis project in annual MFA student show

Thesis Paper

The MFA Thesis Paper (20-25% of effort) should demonstrate:

Proposal Stage

- Framing of research project and questions
- Identification of project's purpose and objectives
- Exploration of related literature (visual, written, performative, etc.)
- Discussion of discovery (research, visual data gathering, interviews conducted, etc.) prior to project's design

Working Process Stage

- Discussion of project's design context
- Discussion of project's conceptual framework
- Discussion of related projects, movements, and key influences
- Description of project's design and production process, including samples of roughs, prototypes, drafts, image files, etc.

Critical Feedback Stage

- Description and visual documentation of the project itself

- Concluding critical analysis of the project
- Discussion of limitations of the research and creative process and future opportunities

Suggestions for paper's organizational structure

- Introduction (purpose, conceptual framework, cultural context)
- Related ideas, concepts, discovery
- Discussion of project (processes, description)
- Critical analysis (reflective discussion and incorporation of feedback)

Thesis Paper structure (written)

Recommend length of the body of the paper is 25-40 pages. Formatting must follow the thesis paper template dictated by the OSU Graduate School. See Formatting Guidelines for theses.

Archival Thesis Documentation

This material is documentation of the thesis project to the following elements, uploaded to the Department's OneDrive link by the last day of the semester. Reach out to the Graduate Program Coordinator for the link.

1) Non-time-based projects - provide 6-8 descriptive images of project
2) Time-based projects - provide the following
   a. Video explanation of your research
   b. Or a complete thesis film
   c. Or a game play-through with explanation
   d. Or an interactive play-through with explanation
3) 150-word summary of the project
4) 300-word summary of the project
5) Full Credit list for the project

Master's Oral Examination

The master's examination is a test of the student's knowledge of the field. It is the final validation of performance for that degree. The master's examination is taken after submitting the Application to Graduate in GradForms and during the term in which the student plans to graduate. The candidate must complete the Application to Graduate by the 3rd Friday of the semester of graduation.

A student must be registered for at least three graduate credit hours during the term this examination is taken. The master's examination must include a written portion (thesis) and an oral portion.

The purpose of the master's examination is to determine the candidate's qualification to be granted the degree (see Section 6.2 in the Graduate School Handbook.) The content of the examination concerns, but is not limited to, the area of study pursued. Unanimous approval by the master's examination committee is necessary for satisfactory completion of this requirement.

All members of the MFA Committee must be present for the examination either in person or via video conference. Guidelines as stated in Appendix B.1 of the Graduate School Handbook need to be followed for all exams conducted by video conference. Appropriate exam accommodations should be tested before an exam takes place to ensure that all exam participants will be able to see and hear each other as well as have access to any related materials used during the exam.

A master's examination in Design is a maximum duration of two hours. The advisor determines the format and conducts the proceedings of the examination. The format typically includes a presentation by the student followed by questions from the committee.

Design Graduate Students may also elect to attend. The student has the option of inviting additional guests in consultation with the MFA Advisor. The MFA Advisor has the option of dismissing all visitors during the committee's question and answer session. In all cases,

comments or questions by visitors can be made only when allowed for and called upon by the MFA Advisor.

Once the oral examination is scheduled, students must inform the Graduate Program Coordinator of the date, time, and location at least 10 business days in advance. Students must also submit the thesis title, a brief description of the thesis, and a few images to the Graduate Studies Coordinator for inclusion in the Research Gallery and the thesis defense announcement.

The Graduate School accepts thesis documents in electronic format only. The chair of the Graduate Studies Committee must receive an electronic copy of the written document (that has been accepted by the MFA committee) prior to graduation. After approval by the committee, it is the student's responsibility to submit an electronic copy of the written thesis to the Graduate School. Note the 8:00am deadline on the final submission day, as well as the Graduate School's recommendation that the thesis review should be completed before the *examination* deadline (usually a week before the thesis submission deadline).

Time Limit / Dismissal Policies

Time Limit

The entire work for the master's degree must be completed within a period of four calendar years from the date of entry into the graduate program in Design. If the time limit is exceeded, the student must formally re-apply to the program if they wish to continue. Re-admittance is not guaranteed and is based upon evaluation by the graduate faculty.

Under exceptional circumstances, a student may request that this rule be waived by submitting a request in writing to the Graduate Studies Committee. This request should specify the circumstances warranting the waiver and the semester and year in which the student plans to graduate. The Graduate Studies Committee will review the request and make a recommendation to the graduate faculty. A vote by the faculty constitutes a final decision in waiving the time limit.

Leave of Absence

Unexpected circumstances may at times require a student to suspend their course of study for an extended period. In such cases, a written request for a leave of absence must be submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee. When a leave of absence is approved by the Committee in advance, the duration of the leave is not counted against the time limit.

Dismissal Policy

Grounds for dismissal from the graduate program in Design include failure to receive approval from the graduate faculty and/or MFA Committee for the following formal reviews:

- First Year Review
- Second Year Review
- Final Master's Examination
- Final Thesis paper and/or project documentation

See the appropriate sections in this handbook for details on requirements of the formal reviews.

Additional grounds for dismissal relate to deteriorating performance, ethical standards, and/or academic misconduct, as defined in the Graduate School Handbook, Section 5 – Academic and Professional Standards.

In cases where graduate faculty and/or the MFA Committee give an extension after failing to pass a formal review in the Spring, a limit of one additional review is granted and must be conducted by the end of October. Any exceptions to this rule must be petitioned in writing by the student and addressed to the Department's Graduate Studies Committee and accompanied by a written response to the request from the student's MFA advisor or mentoring committee.

Grievances and Resolutions

All grievances regarding time limits or dismissal from the program must be submitted in writing to the Department's Graduate Studies Committee. Decisions regarding grievance resolutions are made by the committee in consultation with the Chair of the Department of Design and the Design Graduate Faculty.

To petition decisions made by the Department regarding master's examinations, a student may file a grievance with the Graduate School. The Dean of the Graduate School will not review such petitions if the above departmental review process has not yet been conducted. For more information, see Appendix D in the Graduate School Handbook.

Graduate Associates and Fellowships

Rules pertaining to Graduate Associates (GAs) within the Department of Design are in accordance with those established by and administered through the Graduate School and the Office of Human Resources. Rules established by the Graduate School are listed in Section 9 of the Graduate School Handbook.

Stipends and Fee Authorizations

There are two types of Graduate Associateships (GA) available in the Department of Design: Graduate Teaching Associate (GTA), and Graduate Research Associate (GRA). The availability of a GA position is related to budgetary resources of the Department and comes under the authority of the Chairperson of the Department of Design. Stipends and work hours follow the accepted standards in the University and are assigned at the discretion of the Chairperson of the Department in consultation with the Graduate Studies Committee. All appointments are made conditional on the availability of funds.

All GAs receive a fee authorization that includes the instructional and general fees, and nonresident fees as relevant. The student must pay any other mandatory fees (e.g., COTA (Central Ohio Transit Authority) bus fee, computing fees, etc.) unless the contract provides otherwise. Students who hold an appointment for two consecutive semesters (autumn and spring) are also eligible for a summer semester fee authorization (fee waiver). They are required to take a minimum of 0.5 credits during the summer.

Workload

Appointments are typically made on a semester basis. A 50% appointment involves 20 hours per week, and a 25% appointment involves 10 hours per week. (A 25% appointment includes only a 50% fee authorization.) For GTAs, this includes time spent in preparation, in classroom and laboratory, in evaluation of student work, and in counseling students, or any combination of these activities, depending on the type of appointment.

A GA may not hold an appointment for more than 75 percent time, whether as a single appointment or combination of appointments.

International students may not be appointed for more than 50 percent time either as a single or a combined appointment.

Associateship workloads in combination with academic loads are to be reviewed by the Graduate Studies Committee and recommendations are to be made to the Department's Chairperson in individual cases. Reference should be made to the Graduate School Handbook for guidelines in these matters.

Students who hold a GA appointment cannot hold any other job, either in or out of the University unless approval is obtained from their advisor.

Term of Appointment

All Department-sponsored associates are appointed by the Chairperson of the Department of Design, typically for a term of two semesters with possible renewal as determined by the Chairperson and performance reviews. For those associateships funded externally, the needs of the project or research will determine the length of the appointment.

The term of a two-semester appointment runs from August through May, vacation and sick leave are not accrued during a GA appointment. OSU observed holidays and breaks are detailed in the Graduate School Handbook. No student is required to work on a legal holiday.

A typical GA appointment is for autumn and spring semesters; however, work patterns are determined locally and may vary due to summer term staffing needs. GAs should be hired for no less than a full semester, unless prior approval has been established with the Graduate School.

Reappointment

Appointment renewals are to be made in accordance with the published policies and subject to the availability of funds. In general, no graduate student who has accumulated 6 semesters (3 years) of academic study at this University may be awarded a graduate associate appointment. (Summer semesters do not count towards this limit.)

No graduate student who is currently on academic probation in the Graduate School may be awarded a graduate associate appointment. A graduate student may petition the Department's Graduate Studies Committee for an extension or waiver of these conditions for appointment. The Graduate Studies Committee will determine the student's eligibility for appointment and will notify the Graduate School of its decision.

Department Funded Graduate Associateships

A limited number of department-funded GAs are available each year. Responsibilities may vary on occasion regarding the specific course or lab assignment. Responsibilities are as assigned by the Department Chairperson and the graduate associate's immediate supervisor.

The GA titles for these assignments are:

- Graduate Research Associate (GRA): varies with faculty research project
- Graduate Teaching Associate (GTA): varies with need for undergraduate course support

The qualifications for associateships from externally funded sources will normally be specified in proposals or other documents describing the project. A copy of these qualifications must be provided to the Department Chairperson. The project director must submit their request for assistance in accordance with regular selection procedures.

All graduate associates enrolled in the graduate program of the Department of Design are subject to the procedure and policy guidelines of the Department. Regardless of sponsorship (internal or external funding), all GTAs, GRAs, and GAAs are subject to and protected by these guidelines.

Evaluating and Reporting Graduate Associate's Performance

All GAs are evaluated on a semester basis. Evaluation of performance is based on the job description for that position and the specific tasks as outlined for the associate at the beginning of the semester or the year. Associates should meet with the supervisory faculty member each semester to discuss the performance evaluation.

If a problem arises in the classroom or in the performance of duties, the supervisory faculty member who is working with the student informs the Department Chairperson. A meeting is held between the GA, the supervisory faculty member, and the Department Chairperson to discuss the problem.

Appointments are subject to the availability of funds and may be rescinded due to deficient performance, withdrawal from the program, inadequate number of enrolled credit hours or other justifiable situations described in Section 9 of the Graduate Studies Handbook.

Termination of a GA appointment can occur for the following reasons:

- GA is no longer enrolled in Graduate School
- GA is registered for fewer than the required hours
- Performance is determined to be unsatisfactory
- The GA graduates
- Employing unit has insufficient funds
- A research project or special project ends
- Other situations determined appropriate by the Chairperson

The Council on Research and Graduate Studies has published information on grievance procedures, copies of that are available at the Graduate School. These procedures are also described in Appendix D of the Graduate School Handbook.

Fellowships

Fellowships are awarded at the time of acceptance into the program and are non-service appointments providing a monthly stipend and payment of resident and non-resident tuition and fees. They are regarded as the most prestigious form of support awarded to graduate students, and they are offered on a highly competitive basis. Graduate School Fellowships are awarded to those applicants who show outstanding scholarly accomplishment and the most outstanding potential for graduate study.

Information regarding fellowship structure, appointments, eligibility, terms, and benefits can be found in Section 10 in the Graduate School Handbook

Appendix

First Year MFA Review Assessment Rubric for Design Faculty

First Year MFA Review
Assessment Rubric For Design Faculty

The First-Year Review focuses on student engagement in creative exploration as it is evidenced through a body of work created during the first year in the MFA program. As part of the first-year review, the student will be required to provide:

1. a visual portfolio of realized work of their first-year exploration;
2. a summary paper (4-6 pages) of their first-year exploration, presenting a thematic orientation of their future research;
3. a 15-20 minute summary presentation of their first year's exploration.

In evaluating the student work through a summary paper of their research orientation, portfolio and presentation, faculty reviewers are to assess whether that student successfully engaged in *Exploration*, translating for:

- DAIM as new prototyping experiences and practices that enhance their acuity with new media;

- DRD as experiences expanding their practice with generative research methods and their reflectivity on the design process and contemporary issues.

The student's body of work will be assessed by all Faculty members of the Department of Design. Faculty will assess MFA Candidate works for each rubric category as one of the following: Exceptional, Good, Adequate, or Insufficient.

Following the 1st year review, the faculty will make an overall assessment in the form of a recommendation.

DATE: ___/___/___

CANDIDATE NAME: _____

MENTORS: _____

_____

RECOMMANDATION:

[ ] Continue in the MFA Program

[ ] Conditional Pass, Delay review for one semester*

[ ] Deny Continuation in the MFA program

* For "Conditional Pass," please indicate in the "Comments" box what specifically the student must change/address for you to pass the paper.

CREATIVE EXPLORATION
Student demonstrates capacities and skills to prototype (conceptualize, develop, evaluate and present) multiple experimental design projects oer the course of the first academic year, showing evidence of challenging themselves with new ideas, methods and technologies.

[ ] Exceptional [ ] Good [ ] Adequate [ ] Insufficient

COMMUNICATION
Student articulates complex thoughts and ideas using precise vocabulary, appropriate visualization strategies and demonstrates the ability to write effectively following academic standards.

[ ] Exceptional [ ] Good [ ] Adequate [ ] Insufficient

WORK ETHIC, ENGAGEMENT AND EFFORTS
Student demonstrates capacity for self-driven initiation, self-motivation and rigorous project management, evaluation and development. Students work demonstrates evidence of practising/exersing time management skills.

[ ] Exceptional [ ] Good [ ] Adequate [ ] Insufficient

RESEARCH ORIENTATION
Student work demonstrates the capacity to identify and critically examine aand explore a research topic and expend its horizon by establishing innovative bridges between conceptual, creative or technical variables.

[ ] Exceptional [ ] Good [ ] Adequate [ ] Insufficient

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

First Year Review for the MFA in the Department of Design
(Updated 2022)

Date: _____

Candidate: _____

The Design graduate faculty members have reviewed the research and coursework of
the candidate above during the second semester of their graduate enrollment.

The results of the review are as follows:

____ Continue in the MFA program
____ Delay review for one semester (a rationale must be specified on this form)
____ Deny continuation in the program (on second review)

A delayed review will cause the student to be placed on departmental probation until a
subsequent review that must take place during the following semester, at which time
departmental probation will be removed or the student will be denied continuation in the
program.

Recommendations:

Faculty Mentor (print and sign): _____

Faculty Mentor (print and sign):_____

Candidate's Signature:_____

Office Use Only

Date Received: _____ Graduate Studies Chair's Approval: _____

Second Year MFA Review Faculty Presentation Rubric

Date: _____

Candidate Name: _____

Faculty Name: _____
____Yes, I am a member of this thesis committee
____No, I am not a member of this thesis committee

	Proficient (2)	Sufficient (1)	Unmet (0)	Score
Project Goals and Deliverable	Outstanding goals statement or research question, clear, ambitious outcomes or deliverables	Clearly stated goals or research question, clear outcomes or deliverables	Goals or research question are undefined, no clear outcomes or deliverables	_____
Significance, Value, Benefit to field of Design	Strong explanation of value, benefit, significance to field	Clear explanation of value, benefit, significance to field	Incomplete explanation of value, benefit, or significance OR no discussion relative to field	_____
Technical Skill Development	High level of exploration and expansion of technical knowledge and skills in proposed project	Adequate level of exploration and expansion of technical knowledge and skills in proposed project	Negligible exploration and expansion of technical knowledge and skills in proposed project	_____
Methodological Approach	Clearly and competently explains plan for appropriate research methods.	Identifies appropriate methods.	Methods not appropriate to research question/problem or no methods discussed	_____
Background/Context of Problem	Demonstrates depth of knowledge and thorough preparation in review of literature and/or seminal work	Adequate literature review and review of seminal work.	Literature and seminal work review is incomplete, inaccurate and superficial.	_____
Feasibility of project goals within timeline and MFA scope	Clear and realistic timeline with clear linkage to scope of project; ambitious, yet feasible	Clearly stated timeline and appropriate for scope of project	Vaguely stated timeline; not appropriate for scope of project; OR no linkages made	_____

Comments:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Design MFA – Second Year Review

Second Year Review Committee Result Form

Date: _____

Candidate Name: _____

The purpose of the **Second Year Review** is for the student to present their proposed thesis topic, related creative project, background research and project production plan for review by their MFA Advisory Committee. Approval by the committee advances the student towards completion of the thesis, and the MFA program.

The undersigned Graduate Faculty members have reviewed the research and coursework of the candidate above at the end of their 2nd year of Design MFA coursework.

The results of the review are as follows:

_____ **Satisfactory Progress – Continue** in the MFA Program

_____ **Unsatisfactory Progress – Delay** review for one semester

_____ **Unsatisfactory Progress – Dismissal** from program

A delayed review will cause the student to be placed on departmental probation until the subsequent Thesis Committee Review that must take place by October 31st of the same year, at which time departmental probation will be removed, or the student will be denied continuation in the program.

The Second Year Review written requirement must be given to each committee member one week prior to the review and must be attached to this form.

Recommendations (continued on back if necessary):

_____
_____

Committee Advisor (print & sign): _____

Committee member (print & sign): _____

Committee member (print & sign): _____

Committee member (print & sign): _____

Candidate (print & sign): _____

For Office Use Only:

Date Received _____   Graduate Studies Chair Approval _____

MFA Oral Exam of Project & Paper Rubric (At Graduation, Year 3

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

MFA Oral Exam of Project & Paper Rubric (At Graduation, Year 3)

Date: _____
Student Name: _____
Thesis Project Title: _____
Thesis Paper Title: _____
Committee Members: _____

Project	Excellent (2)	Pass (1)	Unmet (0)	Score
Project Research Problem / Design Context	Communicates a high level of sophistication in presenting and situating research question/problem	Clearly presents research question /problem	Research question/problem unsophisticated or not clearly presented.	_____
Project Significance, Value, Benefit to field of Design	Outstanding explanation transformative value, benefit, significance to field	Adequate explanation of value, benefit, significance to field	Incomplete explanation of value, benefit, or significance OR no discussion relative to field	_____
Project Technical Virtuosity	Demonstrates exploration and expansion of technical knowledge and skills in body of work	Adequate exploration and expansion of technical knowledge and skills in body of work	Negligible exploration and expansion of technical knowledge and skills	_____
Project Methodological Approach	Describes and competently implements appropriate methods.	Methods appear sound, appropriate and related to purpose and research questions.	Incomplete and little description of methods. Methods appear inappropriate or unrelated to purpose and research questions.	_____
Background/Context of Project	Demonstrates depth of knowledge and thorough preparation in review of literature and/or seminal work	Adequate literature review and review of seminal work.	Literature and seminal work review is incomplete, inaccurate, and superficial.	_____