

UI Center for the Book 3rd Semester Review, Thesis Abstract and Thesis Guidelines

- ✦ The following overview is to assist students in planning for the key events leading to the MFA degree. You should feel free to consult with your advisor if you have any related questions. For a complete timeline and list of requirements see [Summary of Procedures for Graduation](#).

3rd Semester Review

- ✦ As part of the MFA program, students take up a 3rd-Semester Review. This is a chance for students to show their progress and discuss potential thesis work with UICB faculty. At start of the 4th semester students will display their work for three hours and faculty may visit to see the work and talk with each of them. This is not an assessment of finished work or a ‘show and tell’ of everything accomplished in the previous 3 semesters. Rather, it is an assessment of progress and potential and an opportunity to help the student hone and focus for their thesis. Students are expected to carefully prepare what work to show (both finished and in-progress—the ability to edit is an important part of this process). By opening the review to all interested UICB affiliated faculty, the Review gives students the opportunity to receive feedback from faculty not regularly involved in their course work. Normally the Review will be held early in the spring semester.

Students should have a statement on hand that details a proposed direction. The writing can take the form of an artist’s statement, or an account of what the student has produced so far and the direction the student is considering from here.

The Review is the students’ primary opportunity to introduce their work to faculty, and to both receive feedback and begin a dialogue with specific faculty members. The one-on-one meeting between student and faculty member during review is an opportunity for faculty to ask questions, elicit conversation, conduct critique and communicate reservations, concerns, or optimism about the present state of the student’s work directly to the individual. These conversations held with individual faculty during review are the most important component of this process. It will benefit the student to fully engage with each faculty member attending the Review session and to take notes on those conversations.

Faculty will meet following the Review, and will be invited to provide input on the progress of each student. Faculty will vote on each MFA candidate, with options of “Pass” “Caution” and “Not Pass.” Students will receive notification on the Monday following the Review of the outcome of the vote.

For a majority vote of “Pass”

The student may proceed with preparation for their thesis work. Students should feel free to contact their advisor, or other faculty post-review via email or in person.

For a majority vote of “Caution”

The student’s advisor and UICB Director will confer on what action should be taken. In the two weeks following Review, the advisor will meet with the student to address concerns raised during the faculty meeting, and discuss plans moving forward. The student will meet with the advisor and the Director before the end of finals week, to assess their progress and readiness to proceed with their thesis work. The meeting will function as a typical critique of completed pieces and works-in-progress.

For a majority vote of “Not Pass”

In the two weeks following Review, the advisor will meet with the student to address concerns raised during the faculty meeting. The student is required to participate in a follow-up review, to be scheduled before the last Friday in April of that semester. A smaller group of faculty will be invited to attend this review; typically this will be the student’s advisor, the UICB director, and one additional faculty member of the advisor or director’s choosing. The student is invited to request one additional UICB faculty member to be present at this second review [for a total of four faculty, maximum]. The student is welcome to meet with their advisor prior to the follow-up review to discuss expectations. The review will function as a typical critique. It is expected that

the student address concerns from the initial review meeting. The student should bring work that indicates significant progress and a readiness to embark upon thesis work.

At or following this meeting, the faculty present will determine whether the student is cleared to proceed with their Thesis year. In the event of a “no” vote, the student will be given options for an exit from the program; this may take the form of graduating with a UICB Graduate Certificate, or, if the student’s accrued credits allow, and with approval from the Graduate College, may graduate with a Masters Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies - Book Arts. The student’s only option to remain in the MFA Book Arts program is to receive a “pass” at the follow-up review meeting.

Working Abstract

➤ A working abstract, submitted at the start of your thesis work, is a document you will return to and edit multiple times as you refine your thinking. It serves as a starting point, a guidepost for your thinking, which will likely evolve through the process. It also provides your committee with a summary idea of what you are thinking about and plan to accomplish

The working abstract should consist of a 1-2 page statement that lays out a rationale, plan, and rough timeline for the work the students intends to produce for the student’s thesis show. The abstract should indicate how the student’s prior work and interests led to the plan for the thesis, and how the thesis plan, in turn factors into the student’s career objectives, or creative directions, or both. Students may wish to prepare the abstract prior to this date in order to provide potential committee members with the abstract when requesting their participation on the Thesis Committee. It is expected that the abstracts to be read and carefully edited prior to submitting to your committee.

Thesis Guidelines

➤ As part of the MFA program, students will complete a thesis that consists of two components: 1) studio work that is exhibited in a group or solo exhibition during their last semester and 2) a written thesis that is submitted to the Graduate College. Protocols established by the Graduate College and the UICB govern this process. Institutional requirements for the thesis are established by the Graduate College and published at <http://www.grad.uiowa.edu/theses-and-dissertations>. Students will need to consult the UICB Summary of Procedures for Graduation for specific dates and additional requirements.

Studio Work

➤ Thesis work can take a variety of forms, from a body of work with thematic relationships, to a single bookwork, to an installation, to a research project involving a specific technique or process. In an interdisciplinary program such as the Center for the Book, with a variety of media and approaches, the direction a student’s work may take has a very broad range. The student will work with her or his committee and instructors to bring shape and focus to that direction. Regardless of format or media, the work should show rigor, well-developed skills, and aesthetic sensibilities. It should pursue a clear goal, addressing artistic, technical, or craft-based considerations that represent the student’s chosen direction. A requirement of the thesis is to mount an exhibition of the studio work, either in a solo venue or a group exhibition. Exhibits will take place during the student’s final semester, before the Final Examination Report is due. Students will have space to exhibit in the UICB’s K.K. Merker Gallery, but are welcome to find alternate space if desired.

Detailed Thesis Outline

➤ The detailed outline will delineate the content and structure of your written thesis. Return to your working abstract; what themes and references can you use and what new ideas have emerged? How do you want this written document to work with or to complement your studio work? The detailed outline is intended to 1) provide you a roadmap to the written thesis and 2) provide your thesis committee a clear indication of your intended direction and content in the written thesis. The detailed outline will be presented in a clear hierarchical structure of main ideas, supporting ideas, and supporting details, including where you plan to incorporate figures and any citations.

Submission of Digital Images

- ✧ 10-20 digital images from your thesis work will be submitted to the Program Administrator. Images files should be no larger than 1500 pixels in either direction. Please also include an image list including: title, date complete, dimensions, materials, edition size (if applicable).

Written Thesis

- ✧ A written thesis is required and a copy will be deposited with the Graduate College. The Graduate College's specific formatting requirements, found here or at the above link, must be followed, and failure to submit materials meeting these standards will delay a student's graduation.
- ✧ As with the studio work, the thesis exposition can take many forms. Content is up to the student, subject to the thesis committee's approval. It can be a brief artist's statement that describes artistic intent, supplemented with a series of figures (images) from the creative component of the thesis. It could also be an expanded artist's statement or research documentation that describes the process and thinking that went into this particular project or puts the work into a larger context, including discussion/analysis of contemporaries working in a similar vein. It could be a research project that examines a historical, technical, or critical area that the student finds pertinent to his or her direction in the book arts.
- ✧ Students will submit a final draft of the written thesis to their committee early in the 3rd month, 6th semester in order to receive feedback prior to submission of your written thesis to the Graduate College. For specific dates and deadlines, see the Graduate College Thesis Manual and the UICB Summary of Procedures for Graduation.