

## **Graduate Advising, Evaluation and Retention**

### **Advising**

#### **Year 1**

First-year graduate students will be assigned a faculty mentor and a peer mentor. The faculty mentor serves as a guide, facilitator and resource for a student's progress prior to the selection of a thesis committee.

At the beginning of your first Fall semester, meet with the Director of Graduate Studies to:

- Identify proficiencies and deficiencies from transcripts: life/professional experience will be evaluated and documented in your student file
- Discuss curricular path and areas of interest
- Complete/finalize registration for Fall semester

Meet with your faculty and peer mentors throughout the first year when needed and as questions arise. At mid-Fall and end of Spring semester (year 1), each graduate student will meet with the Director of Graduate Studies for a formal evaluative session.

#### **Year 2**

At the start of the second year, MFA candidates will request two faculty mentors to serve as pre-thesis advisors. These advisors will assist the candidate in their creative research throughout the year and their thesis proposal at the end of the Spring semester. After the thesis proposal, both the candidate and the pre-thesis committee must assess the options of moving forward. These options are: 1) the pre-thesis committee remains intact, thereby comprising two out of the three members required for a full thesis committee; 2) retaining only one of the two original pre-thesis committee members; or 3) forming a thesis committee with three entirely new personnel. Candidates should be aware that faculty members are limited to serving on only two thesis committees per MFA class.

If there are concerns regarding a student's progress, that student will be advised of these concerns throughout the year in order to maximize a student's success in completing the Graduate Program. These concerns may be addressed by the teachers in each of your courses, in the formal evaluation meetings, and/or by your graduate advisor. Students are strongly encouraged to seek out other faculty for advice, particularly for classes that a faculty member teaches and/or if that faculty member's expertise relates directly to one's area of interest or focus.

There will be periodic meetings for all graduate students. These meetings allow needed information and announcements to be conveyed to all graduates, and for

discussion as a group of any concerns, questions or issues that may arise throughout the year.

## **Evaluation**

The evaluation process consists primarily of semester-by-semester advising, grading in all course work, faculty reviews, and supervision of thesis-related work. Your academic and studio work and over-all progress will be evaluated in the following ways:

- Observation by faculty in all course work
- Feedback from instructors in all course work
- Informal one-on-one feedback on project(s) work
- Graduate Advisor conferences in the first year
- Faculty review of thesis proposals in Thesis Research Studio
- Thesis committee involvement in thesis-related work

While graduate students receive feedback and guidance throughout their studies they are also expected to be self-motivated, directed and responsible for seeking faculty contact as well. Grades serve to provide an immediate and relative assessment of competency, reflecting one's general progress and standing in the Department.

There are several evaluative moments during your studies:

- Mid- and end-of-first-year conferences with the Director of Graduate Studies.
- Faculty Review of Thesis Proposal in Thesis Research Studio – fourth semester.

Thesis proposals are formally presented to the full faculty for discussion and feedback at the conclusion of Thesis Research Studio – fourth semester. Each student will receive written and/or verbal comment on his or her proposal presentation. Students may be asked to re-work and refine the proposal as per faculty suggestion, or asked to significantly re-think their proposal if the proposal and the work that supports it are not acceptable. To assist in the development and preparation of this proposal, each student will be assigned a pre-thesis faculty mentor in addition to the teacher(s) in Thesis Research Studio. This mentor need not necessarily serve on one's final thesis committee. Once a thesis proposal is approved and a thesis committee selected, the evaluation process significantly shifts to one's thesis committee.

## **Retention**

At the end of both Fall and Spring semesters of every year, a student evaluation/review will result in one of the following actions:

- Positive Faculty Review, allowing one to progress on with their graduate studies.
- Counseled Out. If a student's ongoing work in any area of the curriculum is unacceptable, they will be graded accordingly and placed on probation or be advised out of the program as per the decision of the full faculty.

Students must maintain all of the following standards to stay in the Graduate Program:

- Candidates for a Master's of Fine Arts Degree are required to maintain a 3.0 or higher GPA (B average or higher). Failure to maintain a 3.0 GPA places that student on probation and will trigger an immediate and mandatory full faculty review of that student. This review may result in the removal of that student from the Graduate Program. Once placed on probation, failure to raise one's GPA or satisfy other retention requirements in subsequent semesters will result in that student being removed from the Graduate Program.
- A grade below B- for any course work taken within the Department will place that student on probation and trigger an immediate and mandatory full faculty review of that student who will be required to justify their continuance within the program. This review may result in the removal of that student from the Graduate Program. Two grades below B- for course work taken within the Department will result in the automatic removal of that student from the Graduate Program. A grade below C- in a required graduate course cannot be applied towards a graduate degree and that course will have to be repeated.

Candidates must receive a grade of **CR** (credit) for credit/no-credit courses taken in the Department. If a student receives a grade of **NC** (no-credit), that course will have to be repeated. A **NC** grade will place that student on probation and trigger an immediate and mandatory full faculty review of that student who will be required to justify their continuance within the program. This review may result in the removal of that student from the Graduate Program. Two **NC** grades for course work taken within the Department will result in the removal of that student from the Graduate Program.

Students placed on departmental probation are ineligible for departmental merit-based scholarship support until they again meet departmental academic standards. Once a student meets departmental academic standards, the student

is then considered in good standing, though their probation will remain on their record.

Candidates will be informed of their probationary status through a letter from the department Chair. Probationary candidates wishing to continue their program of study in the department will be invited to articulate a justification in writing to be presented formally to the full faculty. After a period of questioning from the faculty, the candidate will be dismissed for the remainder of the faculty deliberation. Candidates will then be notified of the results of the faculty review and any change to their probationary status in a formal letter from the Chair.

The focus of the Graduate Program is mature, in-depth artistic and scholarly research. Success in completing the Master of Fine Arts degree requires self-directed thought as well as sustained and completed efforts in all coursework and departmental responsibilities. It also requires responsibility, accountability and collegiality in one's dealing with the faculty, other students and the department at large. If the full faculty agrees at the end of the first and/or second year of study that the candidate's citizenship is counterproductive to sustaining the collegial dynamics necessary to complete all endeavors and maintain the social fabric that those endeavors require (which include but are not limited to classroom seminars, studio classes, theater crew, TA responsibilities and rehearsals) that student will be called in for discussions with the director of Graduate Studies, the department Chair and any other relevant faculty for the sake of due process. In the case that the student is found at fault and unable or unwilling to implement the correctives discussed and agreed upon in writing, the candidate may be dismissed from the Graduate Program.

