

BFA Degree in Studio Art or Design

The Bachelor of Fine Arts degree program in art and design is intended for the student who wishes to pursue a professional career in the visual arts or design. The program is organized into a four-year sequence of study that provides a solid understanding of art, design, and art history. The student has an opportunity to explore a variety of curricular options and then chooses an intensive and professional major concentration within one of seven areas (ceramics, painting & drawing, photography, printmaking, sculpture, industrial design, or visual communication design). In addition to a primary concentration, BFA students are encouraged to select a secondary area of interest to broaden their thinking and to enrich their creative study. BFA candidates share a close working relationship with the department's faculty who are active professional artists and designers. Intensive studio work is complemented by an academic education with strong art history and liberal arts components. The BFA degree consists of 66 credit hours in the department, of which 54 credits are in studio and design, 9 credits are in art history, and the remaining 3 credits are a department elective that can be taken in studio, design, or art history.

BFA Freshman and Sophomore Years

Students should complete a minimum of 24 credits (8 courses) in their freshman and sophomore years. The three foundational courses- Drawing I, 2D Foundations and 3D Foundations must be completed before Junior year. Completion of Photo I and Figure Drawing are also highly encouraged in these first two years. These five studio courses establish a base for the practice and principles for all visual expression. Students are encouraged to take at least one introductory course in their intended area of concentration before their Junior year (for example: Rapid Visualization, VCD I: Fundamentals of Design, Painting I, etc.). At the end of the fourth semester, students who have earned a minimum 3.25 grade point average in the program's courses will be accepted as candidates for the BFA degree. Students who do not qualify are eligible for the BA degree.

*Note: BFA candidates are waived from the second History/Social Science requirement and the University Fine Arts requirement.

**Note: Students applying to study abroad for a semester in their junior year are required to meet with the DUS in the fall of their sophomore year for approval. It may be beneficial to meet with the DUS and/or area head of intended concentration in the spring of freshman year to plan for this abroad experience. At most, students are allowed to bring 6 credits to their degree from an outside institution. Depending on the abroad program, it can be a challenge to find 6 credits that apply to this degree. Meeting early to discuss the impact of a semester abroad on your four year plan, complementary semester abroad programs, or choosing a summer abroad experience instead is highly encouraged.

Students can also look into funding independent travel for research purposes through CUSE:
<http://cuse.nd.edu>

BFA Junior Year

Those accepted into the BFA program begin a two-year primary concentration in one of the following areas: ceramics, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture, industrial design, or visual communication design. By the end of Junior year, BFA candidates should have a beginning concept for their Senior thesis project. In order to accomplish this, it is recommended that students devote several courses to their area of concentration during the Junior year.

Selecting a Thesis Advisor:

By midterm of the Spring semester, Juniors are required to select an advisor to work with for their Senior Thesis Project. You will sign up for the “3-credit BFA thesis” for the fall semester of your senior year with the selected advisor. With this in mind, it may be helpful to reach out to faculty around advising time in spring of your junior year. The faculty member must agree to serve as your thesis advisor (many things factor into this decision beyond the basis of your work). The advisor should be someone who is familiar with you and your work, and/or has expertise that is relevant to your project. Often, BFAs work with a faculty member from their area of concentration. You may work with a faculty member from another area, but they must be from the Department of Art, Art History & Design. It is recommended that you schedule a meeting with your advisor prior to the junior presentations to help guide you and determine availability.

Junior Thesis Presentations:

In April of the Junior year, students present to their thesis advisor and faculty in their area of concentration. The digital presentation should include the following:

- A portfolio of relevant work from the past three years (10-20 images)
- A conceptual direction for their thesis
- A research outline
- Inspiration, benchmarks and influences
- A summer schedule (outlining research/travel, benchmarking and/or material explorations)

Please contact your thesis advisor or area head in early April to determine the place and time of your presentation. At the presentation, expect to receive significant feedback and guidance on concept, research, feasibility, and timeline.

The feedback will be given orally and also in the written form of a rubric.

**Students who are studying abroad in the spring of their Junior year are required to present in April. Reach out to area faculty in March to determine the time and method of presentation. In most cases, students will present via Skype or another digital method.

Junior Advising:

During advising sessions in the Fall and in the Spring of your Junior year, carefully go over the degree requirements with your advisor. Make sure that you are on track and that you will not be overloaded in your Senior year. Internships, summer abroad, or summer school may be a way to catch up and relieve some of the coursework senior year so that you can devote as much time as possible to your thesis work. During spring advising, remember that in addition to signing up for your “3-credit BFA thesis” with your thesis advisor for the Fall semester of senior year, Juniors must also sign up for “Senior Seminar”. The Senior Seminar is a 3-credit course that meets in the Fall only, and addresses both academic and professional issues. If you have any questions or concerns, reach out to the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

GPA Standards Junior Year:

BFA students must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.25 throughout Junior year (as well as Senior year). Those who do not meet this minimum GPA will have to pursue the requirements for the department’s BA degree.

Under extraordinary circumstances, BFA students who have a GPA of 3.20—3.24 at the end of their Junior year may be considered for probationary inclusion in the BFA program. Students granted a probationary period will be allowed to continue their progress toward the BFA through the Fall semester of their senior year with the understanding that if they do not meet the GPA of 3.25 in A|AH|D courses by the end of the Fall semester, they will have to pursue the requirements for the department’s BA degree.

Extension of a probationary period is not automatic. Consultation between the student’s thesis advisor, the BFA Coordinator, and the Director of Undergraduate studies will determine if a student is granted a probationary period. The student’s course history in A|AH|D classes, quality of Junior end-of-year review, and the potential success of their thesis project are all contributing factors in the granting of a probationary period.

BFA Senior Year

During Senior year, all BFA majors must enroll in the “Senior Seminar” course (3-credit hour, Fall only), which addresses both academic and professional issues. Additionally, students must also be enrolled in the Senior BFA Thesis Courses with their thesis advisor (3-credit hours in Fall, 6-credit hours in Spring). The Thesis Courses allow BFA students to devote nine hours of coursework towards an independent thesis project highlighting the greatest strengths of their conceptual and technical development within their area of concentration. Students meet regularly with their thesis advisor during their senior year to receive feedback and guidance. The Senior year is rounded out with additional courses in the concentration, electives that support and supplement the concentration, and/or any remaining art history courses. The culmination of the BFA degree is the completion of a senior thesis project that is professionally exhibited and accompanied by an artist/designer statement in the Spring.

Senior Thesis Presentation (November):

Seniors present their thesis proposal in November to the entire studio and design faculty. This presentation is evaluated to determine success of concept, feasibility, and originality. The presentation should include the following:

- A clear statement outlining or describing the core of the thesis.
- A documentation of research that frames and supports the project. You should also include inspirations, benchmarks, and points of intersection between your project and the larger culture.
- A clear plan for the form that your solution will take. This should include sketches, rendering, prior work samples, and/or maquette.
- A beginning plan for exhibition strategies for the work.
- A timeline for research, production, and exhibition components.

Presentation facts and tips:

- Presentation- Timing is important. Students will have a set time to present - usually 15 minutes total. Students should to present the required information in 5-7 minutes, so that there are 8-10 minutes for faculty questions and comments. Using PowerPoint or Keynote can be helpful, as the presenter tools help track timing and allow students to add personal notes apart from the visual display.
- Concept- Make sure that the concept for the thesis work is clear. What is the objective and intent with this work? Although the final output or final form may still be evolving- give clear insight into the current expectations or solutions in terms of execution and media.
- Process- Provide insight into the process- use benchmarking, research, case studies, influences, past work, and prototyping to give the project texture and context.
- Timeline- Is this project doable in the time available? Consider time in terms of research, process, production, and exhibition. Convey your timetable, including notable self-imposed deadlines to track process. Be objective. Ensure that the thesis is both ambitious and achievable.
- Exhibition- Ultimately, this thesis will be professionally exhibited. Consider method of display. What is the best possible way to exhibit the specific work that you are doing? Are your display plans achievable? How does the display enhance or become the thesis? Consider and research methods of display within your given area to help guide you. (i.e. Look at or visit galleries, museums, trade shows, conferences, etc.).
- Statement- It may be helpful to the faculty to end on a final slide of your statement. This will reiterate the core of the thesis that can serve to direct inquiry back to the key components of your project.
- Rehearse- You cannot be over prepared. Rehearse your presentation out loud several times. Practice it with other BFA students, your friends, or record it.
- Edit- Make sure the technology works. Ensure YouTube clips and websites are currently working and are built into your presentation (rather than opening a separate window). Check and check again for typos. A typo can undermine the professionalism of your presentation.

Possible Outcomes for November Presentation:

The faculty review of the BFA Presentations allows for three potential outcomes decided through majority vote of faculty in attendance for all of the presentations. A rubric will be used to ensure consistency and clarity.

1. **Pass:** The student has illustrated the core aspects of the project, shared the research and inquiry that has shaped the project, and demonstrated a strong likelihood of success. There may still be some questions or concerns that are shared with the student through their advisor. The Greif Award is granted upon passing the BFA presentation.

2. **Re-present to a Committee-** A student may be asked to re-present if there are concerns about the clarity of concept, originality or feasibility. The committee will consist of the thesis advisor, the director of undergraduate studies and a selection of faculty relevant to project (selected by the thesis advisor). Re-presenting to the committee allows students the opportunity to respond to faculty feedback and implement further refinement to ensure the success of the project. The re-present must take place before the end of the Fall semester. Student will use a similar presentation format, but will add to or refine any areas of weakness. Students will receive feedback through a rubric and conversation with the thesis advisor. The Greif Award is granted upon completion of the Re-present.

3. **Re-present to the entire Studio and Design Faculty-** A student may be asked to re-present to the entire faculty if there are serious misgivings and concerns regarding the scope, methodology, and/or suitability of the project. Re-presenting to the entire Studio and Design Faculty necessitates a serious reworking of the project to convince the faculty of the project's viability. Should questions or concerns remain after re-presenting to the entire faculty, the student may not be allowed to matriculate through the BFA program and would instead receive a BA. The re-present must take place before the end of the Fall Semester. The Greif Award is granted upon successful completion of the Re-present to the entire Studio and Design Faculty.

The Greif Award:

Students who pass the November presentation receive the Greif Award. This award is given to underwrite the material costs for BFA thesis projects (related to cost of materials and/or supplies needed to execute your projects and methods of display). An award letter is sent out upon successful completion of the presentation detailing the specifics.

Final Thesis Evaluation:

The finalization of the BFA degree is an evaluation of the thesis project. The studio and design faculty formally evaluate the project using a rubric to determine the overall success. Based on the rubric criteria, students get feedback on the greatest strengths of their work, and areas they can continue to improve upon. If the standards of the rubric are not met, a student may be denied the BFA. In this case, the student will be awarded a BA degree.

**GPA reminder- students must also maintain the minimum 3.25 GPA in the department to receive a BFA degree. Students failing to maintain the 3.25 GPA minimum in their Senior year, may be awarded a BA degree.

Notable Dates:

Junior Year-

March: Begin the contacting potential thesis advisors

April: Present initial thesis concept to advisor and area faculty

Summer: Research, revise, think, plan, begin

Senior Year-

August: Schedule a meeting with thesis advisor to discuss summer enlightenment and layout a plan for the semester

November: (Second friday after Fall Break) Present thesis to faculty

Late March/early April: All thesis work must be complete and ready to drop of at exhibition site

Week of Opening: Thesis Defenses/evaluation/presentation

Mid April: Exhibition opening and award ceremony (work stays installed through graduation weekend)