

Guidelines for the —

**MFA Thesis in Graphic Design** { serves as syllabus for DHA 8990 }

Project and Paper (12 credits: 6 one semester, 6 the next recommended)

Thesis project undertaken with graduate committee's consent and input, and requires an outline of project proposal to register for thesis credits.

*The MFA Creative Thesis Project (75-80% of credit) 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
- Investigation of new media's potential
- Critical engagement through peer and faculty assessment

*The MFA Creative Thesis Paper (20-25% of credit) should demonstrate:*

(proposal stage)

- 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 cultural 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

*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: present final design in appropriate venue for criticism and review  
Oral Examination and public display

*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 structure** (written) – recommend 60-80 pages

- i. faculty adviser(s) signature sheet
- ii. title page
- iii. copyright
- iv. acknowledgements
- v. table of contents

I. Introduction

II. Abstract (200-300 words summarizing thesis)

III. Description of topic, subject matter (“problem to solved,” opportunity to be exploited, area of inquiry, etc.) .

IV. “Literature review” (can also be precedents, influences, prior knowledge, examples) – visuals okay.

V. Project

A. Conceptual underpinning

B. Working process (medium, materials, techniques, methodology)

C. Forms (finished project, tangible entity, formats)

VI. Viewer response (feedback from public display, interaction, interviews)

VII. Evaluation (self-analysis of success, challenges, lessons learned, etc.)

VIII. Conclusion (wrap it up!)

IX. Bibliography (publications and sources, including online, media, exhibits, lectures, films, etc.)

X. Appendices (tables, figures, software used, hardware used, inserts, etc.)

## **Timeline**

Timeline and checkpoints, within academic year (or two semester timeframe):

Thesis project requires constant consultation graduate advisor (minimum bi-weekly meeting recommended), and full committee should be convened at least once *prior* to Oral Exam.

<i>by week 3</i>	Meet with graduate advisor to discuss topics, select committee members
<i>by week 6</i>	Select topic, begin research and discovery (including literature review), begin documentation of process, draft proposal
<i>by week 10</i>	Final proposal due, including review of research and discovery materials (interviews, sketches, photographs, studies, quotes, audits, comparisons, etc.)
<i>by week 16</i>	Rough iterations of project, paper begins working process stage; committee feedback*
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<i>by week 1</i>	Progress assessment by grad committee*
<i>by week 5</i>	Peer reviewed crit of prototypes, testing, feedback; committee feedback* Project refinement; paper enters descriptive phase
<i>by week 8</i>	Production phase of project, final draft of paper (stages 1+2); committee feedback*
<i>by week 12</i>	Project due two weeks ahead of paper, public presentation/exhibition, Oral Examination* Oral date to be announced, per grad committee schedules
<i>by week 16</i>	Follow-up and assessment
	<b>*these will have fixed and required due dates, with interim assessment</b>

Notes (student must seek out additional info on requirements as necessary):

- Thesis format determined by Graduate School; thesis delivery requirements determined by student's grad committee
- 2 copies of bound written thesis paper (one to Department of Design, Housing & Apparel, one to thesis advisor) are required
- An archival document / artifact of the thesis project itself must be turned in to thesis advisor (typically on CD-ROM or DVD). Using a plastic disk sleeve mounted to the inside of the back cover is recommended.