

NASAD Competencies Summary

Degree: BA or BS in Art or Design Studies, *a liberal arts undergraduate degree*

Essential Note: Items below are excerpts from the *NASAD Handbook*. Items 1 through 6 indicate the content and natures of the competencies expected of those graduating with the above degree.

Only the *Handbook* in its entirety contains all standards and guidelines applicable to and used by all phases of NASAD membership reviews. In the text below “H.” indicates the location of the excerpted text in the *Handbook*; “(All)” indicates standards applicable to all liberal arts undergraduate art and design degrees; “(Studio Art)”, “(Design Studies)”, “(Art History)”, and “(Museum Studies)” indicate specific standards for those majors.

Item 1. (All)

General Studies (H.VII.D.)

1. Competencies

- a. Competencies.** Specific competency expectations are determined by the institution. Normally, students graduating with liberal arts degrees have:
- (1) The ability to think, speak, and write clearly and effectively, and to communicate with precision, cogency, and rhetorical force.
 - (2) An informed acquaintance with the mathematical and experimental methods of the physical and biological sciences, and with the main forms of analysis of the historical and quantitative techniques needed for investigating the workings and developments of modern society.
 - (3) An ability to address culture and history from a variety of perspectives.
 - (4) Understanding of, and experience in thinking about, moral and ethical problems.
 - (5) The ability to respect, understand, and evaluate work in a variety of disciplines.
 - (6) The capacity to explain and defend views effectively and rationally.
 - (7) Understanding of and experience in one or more art forms other than visual arts and design.
- 2. Operational Guidelines.** These competencies are usually developed through studies in English composition and literature; foreign languages; history, social studies, and philosophy; visual and performing arts; natural science and mathematics. Precollegiate study, regular testing and counseling, and flexibility in course requirements are elements in achieving these competencies.

Item 2. (Studio Art)

Major in Studio Art (H.VII.E.)

2. The curriculum should aim primarily toward breadth of experience and understanding rather than professional specialization. The primary objective of such training is not necessarily preparation for a career in art or design.
3. For the purpose of this section, studio includes, but is not limited to, the program areas outlined in Standards for Accreditation IX.
4. Upon graduation, students must possess:
 - a. A developed visual sensitivity.
 - b. The technical skills, perceptual development, and understanding of principles of visual organization sufficient to achieve basic visual communication and expression in one or more media.

- c. Ability to make workable connections between concept and media.
 - d. Some familiarity with the works and intentions of major artists/designers and movements of the past and the present, both in the Western and non-Western worlds.
5. Students should understand the nature of contemporary thinking on art and design, and have gained at least a rudimentary discernment of quality in design projects and works of art.

Item 3. (Design Studies)

Major in Design Studies (H.VII.F.)

3. The curriculum should aim primarily toward breadth of experience and understanding rather than professional specialization. The primary objective of the liberal arts curriculum is not preparation for entry into professional design practice upon graduation, and not necessarily the preparation for an eventual career in design. Liberal arts design curricula are significantly different from professional undergraduate design curricula in purpose, structure, course requirements, content, and results. The limited number of design-focused studies possible in a liberal arts degree is not intended to and thus does not develop the full range of competencies possible in the professional undergraduate degree (see Standards for Accreditation II.I.1.g.).
- In addition to providing the benefits of a broad general education, liberal arts design curricula can provide a general foundation for later design study toward professional competency in design practice, or in scholarly areas such as design history and criticism, or for future studies in business, technology, planning, architecture, and many other fields.
4. For the purpose of this section, studio includes, but is not limited to the development of design basics and may provide introductory studies in one or more of the design program areas outlined in Standards for Accreditation X.
5. In addition to the general studies competencies outlined in Standards for Accreditation VII.D., basic studies in the following areas are especially relevant to gaining an introductory understanding of various areas of design practice, including the work of interdisciplinary design teams, and to research and the scholarly study of design: anthropology and cultural studies, business, communications and rhetoric, computer science, engineering, psychology and human factors, and history.
6. Upon graduation, students must possess:
- a. Technical skills, perceptual development, and understanding of design and other principles of visual organization sufficient to achieve basic visual communication using one or more media associated with design.
 - b. Basic ability to demonstrate how relationships among design principles and the material qualities of objects are incorporated into the production of design work, and how they contribute in terms of use and interpretation.
 - c. Functional knowledge of how the design of communication, products, environments, systems, and services both reflects and shapes various aspects of the context in which they are produced.
 - d. Understanding of the various levels at which design problems can be formulated and addressed, and the ability to discern observable or potential consequences of specific design action in large, complex systems.
 - e. Ability to identify differences among audiences/users for design, and an understanding of how audience/user values and behaviors are reflected in the design of communications, products, environments, and services.
 - f. Understanding of design process, including abilities to consider probable or potential future conditions, think divergently in the generation of multiple solutions, and use design principles and elements of the design process to converge on ideas and results that are

effective in realizing project purposes.

- g. Awareness of the critical perspectives in the evaluation of design, including the history of ideas about the role of design in culture and of ideas informing design practice over time.
- h. For students emphasizing design scholarship, the ability to use overview knowledge of design practice, history, theory, criticism, and technology and the tools and techniques of research, scholarship, and communication in the production of scholarly analytical work about design.

Item 4. (Art History)

Major in Art History (H.VII.G.)

- 2. Upon completion of the major, graduates must have attained the following:
 - a. A general knowledge of the monuments and principal artists of all major art periods of the past, including a broad understanding of the art of the twentieth century and acquaintance with the art history of non-Western cultures. This knowledge should be augmented by study in greater depth and precision of several cultures and periods in the history of art and concentration in at least one area to the advanced seminar level. Study at the advanced level should include theory, analysis, and criticism.
 - b. A general knowledge of world history.
 - c. Knowledge of the tools and techniques of scholarship. Active research and the writing of analytical and critical essays should continue throughout the program.
 - d. Functional knowledge of the creative process. Normally, this is accomplished through one or more foundation or other studio courses; however, there are many methods of ensuring this competence.
- 3. The student should achieve adequate mastery of at least one foreign language to support research through the reading of primary source materials.

Item 5. (Museum Studies)

Major in Museum Studies (H.VII.H.)

- 2. Preparation in museology includes a strong major in the history of art (see Standards for Accreditation VII.G. and XI.B.). In addition, museum studies courses, taught by qualified museum personnel, should acquaint students with the specialized operational procedures encountered in museums of art. The curriculum also provides first-hand participation in museum operation through internships and/or other on-the-job learning opportunities.

Item 6. (Art Education)

Major in Art Education (H.VII.I.) [see separate sheet on Art Education degrees]

Please Note:

For specific information regarding curricular structure, see H-VII.C. Normally, between 30% and 45% of a 120 semester hour program is in art and design studies to develop the requisite competencies.

For a table of contents for all standards, see [NASAD Handbook](#).