

**THE ASSESSMENT OF  
GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ART AND DESIGN**

**National Association of Schools of Art and Design**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	v
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>I. THE CONTEXT FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION</b> .....	2
A. Beyond the Institution .....	2
B. Institution .....	3
C. Art and Design Unit .....	3
D. Purposes of Graduate Programs in Art and Design .....	3
E. Goals and Objectives of Graduate Degree Programs in Art and Design .....	4
F. Goals and Objectives of Specific Curricula .....	4
G. Dissemination of Purposes, Goals, and Objectives .....	4
H. Evaluation of Purposes, Goals, and Objectives .....	5
<b>II. ACADEMIC PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES</b> .....	5
A. Research and Scholarship .....	5
B. Analysis .....	6
C. Studio .....	6
D. Synthesis and Integration.....	6
E. Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies.....	6
F. Breadth of Competence .....	6
G. Preparation for Teaching .....	7
<b>III. RESOURCES</b> .....	7
A. The Artistic and Intellectual Climate for Graduate Study .....	8
B. Size and Scope .....	8
C. Governance .....	9
D. Administration .....	9
E. Faculty .....	9
F. Library .....	10
G. Facilities and Equipment .....	11
H. Funding .....	11

**Table of Contents, continued**

**IV. GENERAL PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS ..... 12**

    A. Admission ..... 12

    B. Advisement ..... 13

    C. Retention ..... 13

    D. Degree Requirements ..... 13

    E. Residence ..... 14

    F. Proficiencies: Languages and/or Other Skills ..... 14

    G. Course Work ..... 15

    H. Final Project ..... 15

    I. Evaluations ..... 16

**V. DEGREE TITLES ..... 17**

**VI. SUMMARY ..... 17**

**APPENDIX: NASAD SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT ..... 19**

    I. Consultative Services..... 19

    II. Publications ..... 19

    III. NASAD Annual Meetings ..... 20

    IV. NASAD Accreditation Process ..... 20

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... 20**

## **PREFACE**

The document presented herein is designed to assist institutions and individuals making assessments about graduate degree programs in art and/or design for the purpose of:

- a. planning for the improvement of current programs
- b. examining the viability of current programs
- c. assessing the need for new programs
- d. planning new programs

The document is also intended to assist the user to develop a holistic view of graduate study in art/design both within and among institutions of higher education in the United States.

While this document reflects attention to the accreditation standards of NASAD, it is not presented as a policy position of the Association. It is intended only as a resource document for NASAD members and others involved with the historic effort of the field to develop and improve the quality of graduate education in the visual arts.

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# The Assessment of Graduate Programs in Art and Design

## INTRODUCTION

America's enterprise in the graduate education of visual arts professionals has produced tremendous cultural benefits. Over the years, the talents and abilities of thousands of individuals have been expanded through graduate study. These individuals serve our nation as a major cultural resource.

A number of factors have come together in recent years that pose serious questions about the future of graduate education. The relationship of resources to demographics receives significant attention; however, changing cultural patterns, public perceptions about education, and the continuing quest for an even greater degree of excellence also are prominent factors. It is clear, therefore, that there are serious questions and often difficult problems to be faced by all graduate programs whatever their size, level of resources, or reputation.

The higher education system in the United States thrives on diverse approaches to similar objectives. Accordingly, NASAD has devised this document to assist in the maintenance of such diversity. The document poses questions related to the operation and expectations of graduate degrees and curricula, but it does not attempt to create answers for the user. The questions suggested for self-assessment may be answered in a variety of ways; answers must be found for each local situation, since no institution shares the same characteristics with another institution.

The document also supports the need for a variety of purposes among institutions offering graduate degrees in art and design. Its primary thrust is to assist institutions in clarifying goals and in developing an objectives/resources equation appropriate to the level of results expected from each graduate degree being offered.

The primary role of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design is the accreditation of programs providing professional preparation. NASAD maintains accreditation standards concerning graduate programs in its *Handbook*. The *Handbook* is published annually and is available from the National Office of the Association or accessible from the NASAD Web site at <http://nasad.arts-accredit.org>. NASAD also publishes as part of the suite of *Membership Procedures* documents, *Procedures for Institutions*, which includes recommended questions for institutional self-studies in preparation for accreditation reviews.

This self-assessment document does not replace the accreditation process of the Association. However, the questions posed here should be useful to an institution reviewing its graduate offerings in conjunction with the accreditation process. The document also may provide a reference for institutions receiving questions about elements of their graduate programs in the course of a review by the NASAD Commission on Accreditation. However, the document is presented as a resource for assessment in a broad variety of contexts of which accreditation is only one. It is structured to provide assistance with analysis prior to action, recognizing that the depth, scope, and effectiveness of such analysis will have significant influence on the quality of graduate education offered at specific institutions.

The success of any comprehensive assessment process is dependent upon involving the largest possible number of faculty, administrators, and others concerned with graduate degrees in art and design. Before proceeding, it is recommended that all those involved in the assessment become familiar with NASAD standards for graduate study.

## **USING THE GRADUATE ASSESSMENTS DOCUMENT**

The purpose of this document is to provide a beginning for assessment work tailored to the needs of each user. The document is structured so that sets of questions about each topic can be used alone. It can also be used comprehensively either in the order presented or in some other order. Although the text contains many important questions about graduate study, it does not purport to contain every question pertinent to every institution. Note also that similar topics are often approached from different perspectives. Individuals wishing to utilize the document comprehensively will want to be judicious in eliminating or emphasizing multiple perspectives on similar questions depending on the nature and scope of their review.

### **I. THE CONTEXT FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION**

Graduate study involves the preparation of individuals capable of significant leadership roles in art and design. The field requires a large number of individuals engaged in many different activities: painting, drawing, sculpture, fashion design, industrial design, scholarship, teaching, and research are examples. It is clear, therefore, that only institutions with extraordinary resources can give adequate coverage to the entire field. Given these circumstances, the setting of goals becomes crucial to the developing capabilities of institutions offering graduate degrees in art and design.

Goals and objectives—clear, precise, rational, and focused—provide the essential framework of any operational structure. These goals and objectives cannot be charted in a vacuum, since they both affect and are affected by resources, policies, and numerous contextual circumstances. However, there is an objectives/resources/context equation which can be developed for each institution based on its unique circumstances. The questions presented below focus on the objectives component of this equation.

#### **A. Beyond the Institution**

Every graduate art/design program works in a context generated by a complex of forces beyond the institution. An assessment of this context is important as a base for the continuing study both of objectives and of other program elements.

1. What elements of the national condition have specific relationships to the ability of the institution to offer (a) master's degrees in art/design; (b) doctoral degrees in art/design? For example: demographics, economics, cultural directions.
2. What elements of state, regional, or local conditions relate to the institution and its (a) master's degrees in art/design; (b) doctoral degrees in art/design? For example: similar offerings in nearby institutions, special needs in the region, governance and funding agencies beyond the institution.
3. To what extent are the graduate degree programs in art/design able to influence the contextual elements described in A.1. and A.2. above, and to what extent are they controlled by these elements?



## **B. Institution**

All graduate degrees in art/design operate in an institutional context. Whether in an independent school of art/design or as part of the art/design program of a college or university, the institutional purpose, to the extent that it is defined as the framework for operations, has tremendous influence.

1. What are the overall institutional goals and objectives with respect to undergraduate and graduate education and the relationship between the two within the institution?
2. What are the factors, stated or not stated, which seem to be guiding decision-making at the institution?
3. How consistent has the institution been with respect to its overall purposes and goals? What is the probability that these will remain constant?

## **C. Art and Design Unit**

In most places, the graduate art/design offerings operate as part of or in conjunction with an undergraduate program. They also may be located in a unit which is involved with precollegiate students, continuing education, and a variety of specialized programs. Thus, the art/design program as a whole has significant impact on conditions for graduate study.

1. What are the goals and objectives that seem to be guiding the art/design unit? Special attention should be given to these goals and objectives at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels.
2. To what extent must governance, and therefore determination of goals and objectives, be shared with other units of the institution?
3. How consistent has the art/design unit been with respect to its overall purposes and goals? What is the probability that these will remain constant? What are the primary conditions that could alter them?

## **D. Purposes of Graduate Programs in Art and Design**

It is essential that each graduate degree program in art/design have a statement of purpose which defines its special, perhaps unique, function in the larger context of artistic endeavor.

This section deals with general issues concerning purposes. Subsequent sections will refer to specific goals and objectives related to degree programs and their operation.

1. What is the stated purpose of each graduate degree program in art/design? For example, what roles are the program and its graduates expected to play in the art and design enterprise?
2. How are these purposes related?
3. To what extent are these statements of purpose truly guiding each degree program? For example, as (a) the basis of making a distinction between initial master's, terminal master's, and doctoral degrees; (b) the basis for long-range planning, including the development of new curricula, innovative activities, expansion or reduction of the program; (c) the basis for operational decisions with respect to admission practices, selection of faculty and staff, and allocation of resources.
4. To what extent does the art/design unit have autonomy in setting the purposes for its graduate degree programs?

## **E. Goals and Objectives of Graduate Degree Programs in Art and Design**

Goals are broad statements of aim, the specific needs toward which efforts are directed, while objectives are the specific steps for reaching goals. Goals should imply something less remote and more definitive than purposes, while objectives should be components measurable in time, numbers, dollars, or specific activities.

1. How have the goals and objectives for the overall graduate art/design program evolved to their present form?
2. To what extent is there an organized process, either continuous or *ad hoc*, for developing goals and objectives for graduate art/design programs and for specific elements thereof? What office or mechanism has primary responsibility for leading the development process?
3. To what extent are goals and objectives guiding daily operational decisions as well as planning decisions (a) for the graduate art/design program as a whole; (b) for specific graduate degree programs? For example, (a) maintain nationally prominent doctoral programs in five areas of specialization in the face of adverse demographic projections [goal] which includes development of a more intensive recruitment and admission process [objective]; or (b) establish a five-year plan to enhance the Master of Fine Arts degree programs [goal] which includes hiring full-time artists-in-residence in drawing, painting, sculpture, interior design, graphic design, and photography [objective].

## **F. Goals and Objectives of Specific Curricula**

Goals and objectives relate not only to the graduate art/design effort as a whole, but also to the specific purpose of each curriculum.

1. What are the specific goals and objectives of each curriculum in art/design (a) at the master's level; (b) at the doctoral level?
2. How do these goals and objectives relate to the following basic approaches to graduate study: (a) continuation or enhancement of undergraduate study; (b) traditional research/scholarship-oriented graduate education; (c) traditional practice-oriented graduate education; (d) experimental or innovative graduate education?
3. To what extent are the individual goals and objectives of (a) graduate art/design faculty; (b) graduate students; (c) administrators consonant with the detailed goals and objectives of the graduate curricula to which they are most closely related?
4. To what extent do the faculty, students, and administrators involved with each curriculum have a specific concept of excellence for that curriculum beyond its current status? How does this relate to the ongoing definition of goals and objectives?
5. To what extent does each graduate curriculum prepare individuals to deal with matters of cultural policy, i.e. issues and procedures concerned with program content, funding, and management at local, regional and national levels (a) in their areas of specialization; (b) in other areas of art/design; (c) in the arts and arts education in general?

## **G. Dissemination of Purposes, Goals, and Objectives**

The communication of purposes, goals, and objectives to all constituencies involved in a graduate art/design curriculum is essential to preserve a sense of rationality about the variety of operations that cause it to function.

1. To what extent is there a continuous effort to promote common understanding of purposes, goals, and objectives among the constituents—faculty, students, administration—of each graduate degree program?
2. To what extent are responsibilities for communicating purposes, goals, and objectives delineated? How effectively are these responsibilities being carried out, both with respect to the program itself and to the institution as a whole?

#### **H. Evaluation of Purposes, Goals, and Objectives**

Periodic evaluation of purposes, goals, and objectives is essential to maintaining the appropriate framework for operational decisions.

1. When was the last major review of graduate art/design programs, and what were the results of that review?
2. What forces can generate the necessity for review, and to what extent are the goals and objectives consonant with those of the graduate art/design program?
3. How does the art/design unit evaluate its effectiveness in communicating its purposes, goals, and objectives for graduate study to its various constituencies?
4. To what extent are there ongoing procedures and mechanisms for review? Are these mandated in legal organizational documents of the institution or by some higher authority? Are they *ad hoc*? Who determines the procedures? Who has oversight responsibilities?
5. To what extent is the process for evaluation related to factors such as size, complexity, resources, and personnel?
6. To what extent can the art/design unit carry out the stated purposes, goals, and objectives of its graduate curricula under current conditions?

## **II. ACADEMIC PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES**

There are several common elements which must be considered in the development of graduate curricula: (a) research and scholarship, (b) analysis, (c) studio. Institutional perspectives on these subjects influence the goals and objectives of each curriculum and the intellectual climate for graduate study. They are also closely related to general requirements and procedures for specific degree programs. These elements are discussed in this section as they might apply to the total graduate art/design program of an institution.

### **A. Research and Scholarship**

1. What is the expectation regarding research and scholarship for all graduate art/design students irrespective of the areas of specialization?
2. What is the primary purpose of research and scholarship for all graduate art/design students?
3. How does the approach to research and scholarship for all graduate students coincide with the goals and objectives of the overall graduate art/design program? How does this approach contribute to the artistic and intellectual climate? How does it relate to each specific curriculum?

## **B. Analysis**

1. What is the expectation regarding analytical studies for all graduate art/design students irrespective of the areas of specialization?
2. What is the primary purpose of analytical studies for all graduate art/design students?
3. How does the approach to analytical studies for all graduate art/design students coincide with the goals and objectives of the overall graduate art/design program? How does this approach contribute to the artistic and intellectual climate? How does it relate to each specific curriculum?

## **C. Studio**

1. What is the expectation regarding studio studies and experiences for graduate art/design students irrespective of their areas of specialization?
2. What is the primary purpose of studio studies for all graduate art/design students? To what extent is the emphasis on (a) coverage of the studio media; (b) the experience of preparing works for public exhibition; (c) studies tailored to the needs and background of the individual student as assessed at admission or at some other point during graduate study?
3. How does the approach to studio studies for all graduate art/design students coincide with the goals and objectives of the overall graduate art/design program? How does this approach contribute to the artistic and intellectual climate? How does it relate to each specific curriculum?

## **D. Synthesis and Integration**

1. What is the expectation regarding the synthesis and integration of knowledge and skills in research, scholarship, analysis, and studio for graduate art/design students irrespective of their areas of specialization?
2. What are the primary purposes of the expectations for synthesis and integration for all graduate art/design students?
3. How does the approach to synthesis and integration for all graduate art/design students coincide with the goals and objectives of the overall graduate art/design program? How does this approach contribute to the artistic and intellectual climate? How does it relate to each specific curriculum?

## **E. Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Studies**

1. What opportunities are available for the study of relationships among art/design and other disciplines?
2. What opportunities are available for studying multi- cross-, and intercultural aspects of all visual media?
3. To what extent are students required or encouraged to avail themselves of these opportunities?

## **F. Breadth of Competence**

Breadth of competence is important for all visual arts professionals, for through its development comes synthesis and integration of knowledge and skills in art and design. The sections above concerning research and scholarship, analysis, and studio are structured to give some profile of the institution's approach to elements involved in achieving breadth of competence. The questions below are suggested to place these elements in a larger context.

1. To what extent do the graduate art/design program's approaches to research and scholarship, analysis, and studio develop graduates whose interest in art/design is characterized by the fusion

of artistic and intellectual skills that support an understanding of the cultural and intellectual background of the visual arts?

2. How is the concept of breadth of competence related to (a) admission policies; (b) policies and guidelines for advisement; (c) general degree requirements and procedures?
3. How does the program to develop breadth of competence relate (a) to the size and scope of the graduate art/design offerings; (b) to the specific goals and objectives for an artistic and intellectual climate; (c) to the goals and objectives of each specific curriculum?

### **G. Preparation for Teaching**

Many of those who are enrolled in graduate degree programs in art/design are or will be engaged in teaching at some time during the course of their careers. Therefore, each graduate curriculum must reflect some specific determination about preparation for teaching.

1. Does the overall graduate program, or specific areas of specialization within it, have clearly defined goals and objectives with respect to the development of teaching skills?
2. How is this element of the institution's graduate curricula related to its policies and procedures for admission, advisement, final project, etc.?
3. How does the issue of preparation for teaching relate to the specific objectives for an artistic and intellectual climate?
4. If there is a program of graduate teaching fellowships, are there mechanisms in place to evaluate and assist students engaged in these programs?
5. To what extent is preparation for teaching integrated into the various teaching methods employed by faculty?
6. To what extent do graduate students have opportunities to teach other students? For example, are they given teaching experience as a part of classroom, seminar, and tutorial work? To what extent are these teaching experiences supervised?
7. To what extent are graduate students capable of teaching in their own area of specialization?
8. To what extent does the program develop competence in teaching art and design to individuals who are not art/design majors? For example, is there preparation which would lead to capabilities for teaching art/design in general studies at a college or university or within continuing education programs in the community as a whole?

## **III. RESOURCES**

Resources are more than dollars, or even what dollars buy. For graduate programs, resources involve the creation of an environment for graduate study which by its characteristics should clarify the distinction between (a) undergraduate and graduate study, (b) initial graduate degree programs, and (c) terminal graduate degree programs. In addition, this environment should foster realization of the functions of graduate study outlined at the beginning of this document.

While the presence of sufficient resources is essential, effectiveness is dependent on the appropriate deployment of resources in support of graduate study.

## **A. The Artistic and Intellectual Climate for Graduate Study**

Graduate study demands that skills development and the application of skills to practice, research, and scholarship go well beyond the levels expected for undergraduate work. At the graduate level, such factors as quality of thought, initiative, and originality become increasingly important.

The various elements in the institution and the art/design program should produce an intellectual climate for graduate study. These elements should be assessed regularly for their contribution to intellectual climate both individually and collectively.

1. What are the interrelationships of the artistic and intellectual climates present in (a) the institution as a whole; (b) the total graduate program of the institution; (c) the graduate program in art/design?
2. To what extent is there a “community” of graduate students, and what effect does this have on the artistic and intellectual climate?
3. Is there organized attention to the concept of an artistic and intellectual climate for graduate study in art/design? Are assessments made concerning the development of increased artistic and intellectual capabilities by students as a result of their presence in the environment of the institution?
4. How significant is the distinction between the institution’s approach to undergraduate study and graduate study in art and design? Is this distinction a matter of design or does it result from the aggregate of operations? How do these distinctions and conditions contribute to the artistic and intellectual climate?

## **B. Size and Scope**

In most cases, the size and scope of a program have direct impact on (a) the resources available; (b) the reputation of the program locally, regionally, and nationally; and (c) the relationship between reputation and resources.

Size and scope considerations also should be related directly to the purposes, goals, and objectives of each graduate curriculum.

1. What are the relationships among the size and scope of each graduate art/design curriculum and the goals and objectives of (a) each graduate degree program; (b) the total art/design program; (c) the institution?
2. What is the relationship of the size and scope of each graduate curriculum to the maintenance of the requisite artistic and intellectual climate for graduate study in art/design? (Programs of all sizes will find challenges in pondering this question.)
3. Can the institution provide for each of its graduate curricula no less than one-half of the required work in courses intended for graduate students only (this includes work in the major as well as supportive studies in art/design)?
4. To what extent do the size and scope of the program relate to the maintenance of a community of advanced students and distinguished faculty in the major areas of study offered?
5. How do the size and scope of the graduate art/design program relate to its instructional profile? For example, what is the incidence of instruction in studios, lectures, seminars, tutorials, master classes, individual projects, etc. How does this instructional profile in turn relate to the maintenance of the appropriate artistic and intellectual climate for graduate study as indicated by the objectives for each graduate curriculum?

6. What projections are made regularly about the size and scope of the graduate art/design program, especially as related to the stability and continuity of resources, including the maintenance of key faculty positions? How are these projections related to employment trends in areas covered by major curricula?
7. Have size and scope issues been considered in relation to the work of educational institutions in the same geographic area or beyond? For example, to what extent have there been local, regional, or national analyses of (a) the need for each of the graduate degrees being offered in art and design; (b) the possibility of sharing resources and other cooperative efforts?

### **C. Governance**

Governance implies both a decision-making process and supervision of policy implementation.

1. What are the primary governance structures affecting the (a) initial master's program; (b) terminal master's program; (c) doctoral program?
2. How does the governance structure relate to (a) the maintenance of an artistic and intellectual climate for graduate study; (b) the size and scope of the program; (c) basic funding?

### **D. Administration**

Administration implies regular decision-making as well as the means by which such responsibilities are accomplished. Normally, there is a strong connection between administration and governance.

1. What are the primary administrative structures related directly to the operation of graduate art/design curricula? How do the graduate art/design faculty relate to this administrative structure? How does this administrative structure relate to other graduate administrative structures in the institution?
2. What is the relationship between administration and the maintenance of an artistic and intellectual climate related to the graduate curricula offered?
3. What is the relationship of administration to the allocation and deployment of resources? How are these allocation decisions related to those with direct responsibility for the content of (a) master's degrees; (b) doctoral degrees?
4. To what extent does the administration of the graduate art and design program have authority regarding curricula, students, and faculty at the (a) initial master's level; (b) terminal master's level; (c) doctoral level?

### **E. Faculty**

The success of any graduate program is dependent upon the quality of the faculty. The background, experience, and leadership of these individuals will determine the level of excellence the program can achieve.

1. What qualifications are expected of faculty who will teach at the (a) initial master's level; (b) terminal master's level; (c) doctoral level?
2. To what extent does the overall profile of faculty expertise match the size, scope, goals, and objectives of graduate curricula in art/design?
3. What policies and procedures are used to select faculty for service in each graduate art/design curriculum? How are these procedures determined? How are these procedures related to

- (a) goals and objectives; (b) maintenance of an appropriate artistic and intellectual climate; and (c) the size and scope of the art and design unit?
4. To what extent do the graduate faculty serve as role models or mentors for students? What do these role models represent, especially with respect to exemplifying a continuity of commitment to artistic and intellectual growth? What work is being produced by the graduate faculty?
  5. What mechanisms are in place to encourage continuous faculty development, including work in contexts beyond the institution?
  6. To what extent are graduate faculty members successful in encouraging creative artistic and intellectual work by their students, especially in those cases where student work may be significantly different from their own?
  7. How are teaching loads of graduate art/design faculty determined? What are the profiles of faculty teaching loads both individually and collectively? To what extent do these profiles seem to support the goals and objectives of the graduate art/design curricula and the presence of an artistic and intellectual climate?
  8. To what extent does the institution have effective mechanisms for providing mentors or other assistance to faculty new to teaching at the graduate level?
  9. How does the institution assist faculty primarily working at the undergraduate level who are also expected to do some teaching at the graduate level? How are these faculty members expected to develop an understanding of and working relationship with the institution's distinctions between undergraduate and graduate study?
  10. How is "leadership" defined by the institution and the overall art/design unit, and how is this definition related to the specific goals and objectives of each graduate curriculum, the artistic and intellectual climate, and the size and scope of the graduate art and design program? How are members of the graduate art/design faculty, both individually and as a group, exerting leadership in their areas of expertise (a) locally; (b) regionally; (c) nationally; and (d) internationally? How does the issue of leadership relate to hiring, promotion, and tenure policies and procedures?
  11. What other promotion and tenure policies are in place related to the graduate art/design faculty? To what extent are promotion and tenure policies developed in relation to the specific objectives/resources/context equation operating at the institution?
  12. How effective is the institution's evaluation system regarding creative work of the art/design faculty?

## **F. Library**

Library resources are critical to the success of a graduate program. Appropriate resources must be provided to support each graduate curriculum.

1. What are the overall characteristics of the institution's library system? How do these characteristics relate to the goals and objectives of the graduate art/design curricula and to the needs of the graduate art/design faculty?
2. How do the collections in art/design and related disciplines support the goals and objectives, the artistic and intellectual climate, and the size and scope of the graduate art/design program, as well as the specific curricula undertaken by graduate art/design students?
3. What mechanisms and personnel are in place to relate curricula and library resources in an organized and ongoing manner? To what extent are these mechanisms, including acquisitions



and collections management, effective in developing a collection which supports each graduate art and design curriculum?

4. How well do library facilities and services serve students and faculty? To what extent do these provide a supportive environment for study?
5. To what extent are (a) master's curricula; (b) doctoral curricula related to library resources? What is the scholarly/research/studio orientation of each graduate curriculum and how is this related to acquisitions policies?
6. Will the collection support the research, scholarship, and creative activity of faculty and advanced graduate students in their areas of expertise? If not, how is this need fulfilled? What are the working relationships with the nearest major research library?

## **G. Facilities and Equipment**

Many graduate art/design curricula require specialized facilities and equipment. The following questions are concerned with these resources.

1. To what extent do facilities for graduate study contribute to the artistic and intellectual climate and professional orientation of each graduate art/design curriculum?
2. To what extent are facilities adequate for the size and scope of the graduate art/design offerings?
3. How does the graduate art/design faculty influence the governance and administrative operations concerned with facilities and equipment?
4. How effective is the mechanism for evaluating facilities needs on an ongoing basis? How effective is the institution's program for maintenance, repair, and replacement of necessary equipment?

## **H. Funding**

The control exerted by funding is recognized most directly with respect to short-term operations. However, this control is equally significant with respect to possibilities for long-term achievement. Salaries, stipends, fellowships, scholarships, and other direct funding are important. However, the relationship of funding to larger issues related to quality should also be considered (for example: resources for personnel development, the maintenance of an artistic and intellectual climate, library resources, exhibition opportunities, etc.)

1. What is the relationship of present and projected funding to the purposes, goals, and objectives; the artistic and intellectual climate; and the size and scope of graduate art/design curricula? How are funding projections integrated into long-term planning?
2. How does this projection relate to continuity of each graduate curriculum or to plans for its expansion or diminution?
3. How are funding decisions made? For example, does the graduate art/design program receive funding primarily on a formula basis, tuition basis, or related to the adjudged merits of specific graduate programs? How effective is the graduate art/design program in maintaining and enhancing its funding?
4. How effective is the use of funds allocated to the graduate art/design program?

#### **IV. GENERAL PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

Previous sections have discussed elements of the objectives/resources/context equation. It is essential to add a fourth element: the specific areas of specialization to be undertaken by graduate students.

All procedures and requirements for graduate curricula should be assessed against these four elements both separately and as they interact with one another.

It is also recognized that graduate study presents an opportunity to focus on programs of study based upon the talents and objectives of individual students. This is to be encouraged; however, the individualization of programs calls for assessments of procedure and requirements on an individual level that is as rigorous and thoughtful as that applied to general programs for groups of students.

##### **A. Admission**

The admission of a group of individuals to graduate study does much to define the approach, style, and effectiveness of the graduate program.

1. To what extent does the institution have a defined set of entrance criteria related to the goals and objectives of each graduate art/design curriculum? Has there been an assessment of the type of student most likely to benefit from the particular characteristics of graduate curricula in place at the institution? Does the institution have policies regarding geographic distribution, cultural and ethnic diversity, and so forth?
2. To what extent are admission decisions based upon projections of an individual's capabilities for high level professional work in the area of specialization? What criteria are used to make these judgments? For example, does the admissions process take into account some national standard of proficiency as a base for its decisions?
3. To what extent are admission policies based on quotas or other measures which ensure requisite experiences for students at the graduate level (for example: opportunities for the creation and exhibition of original works, tutorials, independent study, etc.)?
4. How is the level of selectivity related to the specific objectives of each graduate curriculum? For example, what are the ratios of application to acceptance over the last five years?
5. How are individual admission decisions made in relation to the body of students already enrolled?
6. What are the major elements of the admissions process for (a) master's students in general and for each area of specialization at the master's level; (b) doctoral students in general and for each area of specialization in the doctoral program?
7. What is the rank order of importance accorded to the various elements in the admission process, and how does this relate to the profile of the objectives for graduate study (a) at the institution; (b) in the art/design unit?
8. To what extent are individual interviews and assessments part of the admission process? How are such interviews structured to support the objectives of each curriculum?
9. How does the art /design unit structure its battery of diagnostic examinations and portfolio reviews for entering graduate students?

10. What is the content profile of entrance examinations and portfolio reviews developed by the institution and the art/design unit? For example, to what extent do examinations test retention of facts, general comprehension of concepts, creative approaches to problem-solving, technical skills, interpretive skills, etc.? How does this profile relate to the objectives profile of the graduate art/design program as a whole and to the objectives profile of the specific curriculum for which the student is enrolling? How does the approach to portfolio reviews and entrance examinations reflect the artistic and intellectual climate of the program?
11. To what extent are standard published examinations utilized in the admissions process? How does the content of these examinations relate to the goals and objectives of each graduate curriculum in art/design?
12. What policies, procedures, or philosophies exist with respect to prerequisites requiring work in the field before entrance into (a) each initial master's degree; (b) each terminal master's degree; (c) each doctoral degree?

## **B. Advisement**

Advisement is the mechanism by which progress toward each student's professional potential can be most effectively guided. It is especially important for graduate students in art and design since they will begin graduate study with a diversity of previous education, background, and interests. A strong advisement program is an essential element in ensuring that each curriculum meets its educational objectives.

1. What are the elements of the advisement program? What is its size, scope, and intensity?
2. How is the process of choosing course work for individual students related to the advisement program?
3. How is the advisement program related to professional practice in the area of specialization? To what extent does it prepare students for career opportunities upon graduation?

## **C. Retention**

Retention relates both to decisions of students to leave a particular program and the decision of a program to sever relationships with a particular student.

1. What regulations and mechanisms are in place regarding retention of students (a) in the graduate program as a whole; (b) at specific degree levels; (c) in areas of specialization?
2. How are the retention mechanisms related to (a) the admissions process; (b) the advisement program?
3. To what extent have students left the program of their own volition? How many of these students have completed graduate work at other institutions? Were these decisions analyzed with respect to the institution's admission and advisement programs?

## **D. Degree Requirements**

It is recognized that a variety of academic elements comprise the degree requirements for any graduate program. In an overall sense, these requirements need continuous attention and evaluation.

1. In what ways does the profile of degree requirements relate to the objectives/resources/context equation and to the artistic and intellectual climate of each graduate curriculum?

2. To what extent do degree requirements relate to the projected future work of graduates? For example, does the institution have objectives that relate degree study to future work, or do its objectives deal more abstractly with the development of individual capabilities irrespective of relationships to the workplace?
3. To what extent are degree requirements structured to (a) encourage individual creativity in studio, scholarship, and research; and (b) include demonstration of the student's ability to produce professional-level work without supervision?
4. To what extent do degree requirements focus on (a) the student's area of specialization; (b) course work supportive of that specialization; (c) general knowledge of art/design; (d) general knowledge of other matters of art and culture?

#### **E. Residence**

Residence policies vary widely from institution to institution. It is recognized that no single residence policy will be appropriate in every case; however, the intensity of an individual's experience in the graduate community has tremendous influence on the contribution of graduate study to individual growth as an artist or scholar.

1. What are the primary forces driving the institution's residence policies for graduate study at the (a) initial master's level; (b) terminal master's level; (c) doctoral level? How consonant are these forces with the institution's objectives for graduate study as a whole, the objectives of graduate programs in areas of specialization, and the objectives for a particular artistic and intellectual climate at the institution?
2. Do residence policies encourage residence during the academic year?
3. How do residence requirements relate to the institution's admission, advisement and retention programs and to the degree requirements for the particular area of specialization?
4. To what extent do residence policies relate to the provision of experiences which approximate the eventual working situations of the student?
5. How are residence requirements evaluated with respect to their effectiveness in supporting the objectives of (a) the graduate program in art/design as a whole; and (b) each specific curriculum?

#### **F. Proficiencies: Languages and/or Other Knowledge and Skills**

Graduate students need certain extra-artistic skills in order to engage in professional work. The acquisition of languages and other research skills such as statistics, computer programming, and advanced mathematics also broaden intellectual horizons and capabilities. Traditionally, scholarship has required language skills and, certainly, these remain essential for those engaged in historical research. The current involvement of visual arts professionals in psychological and statistical research has brought forward the need for competence in these areas as well.

1. What specific language and/or research skills are required for each graduate curriculum? What level of proficiency is expected for each required skill? How are these related to general requirements for all graduate curricula in art/design?
2. How are these requirements established, and by what criteria are they chosen? For example, to what extent do projected student needs, the maintenance of an intellectual climate in the institution, tradition, the maintenance of similar requirements as other institutions, etc., produce the language proficiencies and other required skills profile of each graduate curriculum?

3. To what extent are skills requirements related directly to completion of the final project or to completion of other specific requirements for the degree, such as course work?

## **G. Course Work**

Utilization of course work as an aspect of graduate study varies widely among institutions, and even within institutions depending on the types and levels of graduate curricula being offered. Policies concerning course work must be tailored carefully to meet the exigencies of each particular situation. There are no particular formulas or methodologies appropriate to every institution.

1. What are the scope and sequence of course work required for each graduate curriculum at the institution? How are these related to the specific objectives of each curriculum?
2. How are course requirements related to the development and testing of specific proficiencies requisite for professional practice in the area of specialization? If these proficiencies are not expected to be achieved through course work, what other mechanisms for teaching, learning, and evaluation are in place to develop them?
3. At the master's level, what is the distinction between the style, approach, and philosophy of graduate course work and the institution's course work at the undergraduate level?
4. How is course work at the doctoral level structured? To what extent does it support the area of specialization? To what extent does it attempt to develop competence in areas other than the specialization?
5. To what extent is course work regarded as preparation for final examinations or qualifying examinations? To what extent is course work related to working conditions that the individual will be likely to face upon entry into the profession?
6. How does the content of course work for each graduate curriculum relate to the size and scope of the graduate art and design offerings?

## **H. Final Project**

The final project is normally structured to demonstrate professional competence in the area of specialization. For the purposes of this document, final projects include theses, dissertations, exhibitions, designs, or other original work. At the terminal degree level, it is expected to be comparable to high level work presented to the public by professionals in the field. It is recognized that institutions may have other final project requirements in addition to those exemplifying traditional formats.

1. List the titles or describe the final projects completed at the institution during the past five years for (a) initial master's degrees; (b) terminal master's degrees; (c) doctoral degrees. What does the content profile of these projects reveal about the graduate art and design program?
2. What does the final project content profile reveal about achievement of the purposes, goals, and objectives of the overall graduate art/design program and each specific curriculum?
3. To what extent is the final project regarded as a guided exercise or an independent exercise?
4. How are final project topics chosen? What is their relationship to a needs assessment of:  
(a) student development; (b) professional development in the area of specialization;  
(c) preparation for teaching; (d) preparation for other work in the visual arts; (e) other research in the field?

5. What significance does the final project have in graduation decisions?
6. How closely do final project requirements and procedures approximate professional conditions in the area of specialization? For example, how many individuals will have an opportunity to review the final project beyond the student's immediate faculty advisor or dissertation committee?
7. To what extent do research and final projects have a record of publication or production?

## **I. Evaluations**

Evaluations take place throughout the graduate program. Obviously, there are evaluations of course work, projects, and exhibitions. This section is concerned with the graduate program's overall approach to evaluation and, specifically, with summary evaluations such as comprehensive reviews or evaluations.

1. What is the institution's established philosophy with respect to comprehensive or summary reviews? How does this philosophy relate to the purposes and goals of the graduate program as a whole, and to the goals and objectives of each curriculum at the degree level being awarded?
2. To what extent does this philosophy cover both the content, timing, and level of expectations of comprehensive and summary reviews?
3. What is the content of comprehensive and summary reviews? How does this content relate to the goals and objectives of each graduate curriculum? How is this content related to admission, retention, advisement, and course requirements?
4. How does the operation of a comprehensive and summary evaluation system contribute to the artistic and intellectual climate desired by the graduate art /design program?
5. How are comprehensive reviews of candidates for (a) initial master's degrees; (b) terminal master's degrees; (c) doctoral degrees in compliance with NASAD requirements for comprehensive reviews for that degree? How are comprehensive reviews related to the specific objectives of each graduate degree curriculum?
6. How do comprehensive reviews relate to the doctoral program? How is the term "comprehensive" defined by the graduate art/design faculty with respect to doctoral degree candidates? Is this definition commonly understood among degree candidates? How are these definitions related to the goals and objectives of each doctoral curriculum?
7. Are there final examinations for doctoral students in addition to the comprehensive examination? How are these related to the specific goals and objectives of each curriculum and/or to the final project?
8. How does the policy for comprehensive evaluations encourage and assess the development of individual skills and creative approaches to disciplinary subject matter? How do such reviews indicate an individual's progress toward independence as a creative artist, practitioner, teacher, researcher, or scholar?

## V. DEGREE TITLES

Institutions offering master's and doctoral degrees in art and design exhibit a wide variety of goals and objectives. For this reason, all degree titles should reflect national practice and be consistent with the content of the degree.

1. How are master's and doctoral degrees characterized with respect to the distinction made by NASAD between research-oriented and practice-oriented curricula? (See *NASAD Handbook*.)
2. How do degree titles relate to the specific content, purpose, and operation of degree programs? For example, does the Master of Fine Arts in studio areas accept and graduate only those individuals who have the ability to perform at a professional level?
3. Do degrees with combination titles such as studio/art history have sufficient content and requirements to indicate dual professional preparation in both specializations contained in the title?
4. If the institution uses the title Master of Fine Arts, is there a significant distinction between the goals, objectives, content, and graduation requirements from degrees titled Master of Arts or Master of Science? For example, do the MFA degrees require at least sixty semester hours?

## VI. SUMMARY

The planning for and evaluation of graduate programs take place in a variety of contexts. As indicated in the preface, these include:

- a. planning for the improvement of current programs
- b. examining the viability of current programs
- c. assessing the need for new programs
- d. planning new programs

After completing the foregoing sets of assessment questions, a summary should be prepared to support decisions concerning graduate degree programs.

### A. Starting, Upgrading, and Deleting Programs

1. What are the real costs involved in beginning, improving, or deleting a particular program? If a new curriculum is being started or an existing curriculum is being upgraded, what is the probability that resources will be available to ensure an acceptable level of quality? If the curriculum is being deleted, what financial effects may be expected on the program as a whole? For example, will deletion of the curriculum result in a loss of resources or the ability to redirect resources into stronger programs?
2. What is the need for the existing or projected curriculum at local, regional, and national levels with respect to (a) its level of excellence; (b) the general, technical, and intellectual needs of the art/design field; and (c) the employment prospects for graduates?
3. What is the relationship of a projected curriculum to existing curricula with respect to objectives, resources, general requirements and general policies, both at the institution and at other institutions? The relationship to resource utilization is especially crucial, particularly with respect to prospects for excellence.

4. If a curriculum is being initiated, what degree of excellence can be expected given the institution's objectives/resources/context equation? How long will it take the institution to achieve this level of excellence? What is the relationship of this length of time to the development of a strong reputation for the curriculum?

**B. Synopsis**

1. What is the level of excellence being achieved by each existing curriculum being considered in this assessment program?
2. To what extent is there logical consistency between the philosophical and operational aspects of each graduate program element? To what extent do the concepts, policies, and operations of the various parts contribute to the functioning of the graduate program as a whole?
3. What critical issues will influence the future viability and effectiveness of the graduate program?
4. To what extent does the assessment reveal that the institution is in a good position to deal with these critical issues?



## APPENDIX: NASAD SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

### I. CONSULTATIVE SERVICES

NASAD offers three primary types of consultative services: staff consultations, on-site consultations, and Commission consultations.

The NASAD staff may be contacted at the National Office for information and assistance. The staff can provide suggestions and share appropriate information from NASAD records; however, the staff does not make evaluative judgments about educational programs. There is no charge for staff consultations.

NASAD will arrange for suitable on-site consultants to address needs identified by inquiring institutions. These consultants are nominated from among the most experienced individuals serving as visiting evaluators in the NASAD accreditation process. Arrangements for consultants are made by contacting the NASAD National Office. Institutions are responsible for the expenses of the consultant and a fee calculated on a per-day basis.

NASAD member institutions may also submit formal requests for consultation about proposed graduate curricula to the Commission on Accreditation. The Commission will review the proposed program and respond in writing without making an accreditation decision. Information about the process may be obtained from the NASAD National Office. There is no charge for Commission consultation, and this procedure is especially encouraged in the early stages of curricular planning.

### II. PUBLICATIONS

Several other publications produced by or available through NASAD have applications for institutions involved in assessments. All are available for download or purchase through the NASAD Web site, <http://nasad.arts-accredit.org>. The following items may be especially useful:

#### A. General Resources

**NASAD *Handbook***. Accreditation standards and guidelines for educational programs in art/design. The *Handbook* is published annually.

**NASAD *Membership Procedures Documents***. Questions appropriate to self-study in preparation for accreditation review, as well as “[Optional Supplemental Questions for Self-Study](#),” which may have additional applications beyond the accreditation process. These documents are normally updated on a five-year cycle.

**HEADS *Data Summaries for Art and Design***. Composite statistics from the annual reports of NASAD members and non-member responders. Enrollments, faculty numbers and salary ranges, budgets, and faculty/student ratios are included. HEADS Data Summaries are published annually.

**NASAD *Executive Summaries of Futures Issues***. Looseleaf series covers demographics, values and traditions, professional education, economics, K-12 education, technology, the values context, research, administrative leadership, and an overview. Issues are considered in terms of their meanings for the work of art/design units.

**NASAD *Sourcebook for Futures Planning***. A compendium of planning procedures oriented more to taking initiative than to demonstrating accountability. Focus is on realistic contextual analysis as the basis for action. Supplements to the *Sourcebook* are published from time to time.

**Achievement and Quality**. A Web resource addressing issues related to the consideration of achievement and quality in the arts. Sections on evaluating achievement and quality in the work of the individual and the institution may be particularly applicable.

**B. Specific Topics** (all of the following titles are available [here](#))

**Academic Advising:** A briefing paper, *Guiding the Arts Student*, identifies issues for institutions and administrators concerned with the provision of academic advising, career counseling, and mentoring for arts students.

**Arts Administration:** A briefing paper, *The Work of Arts Executives in Higher Education*, outlines the multiple roles and responsibilities of those who direct arts programs in higher education.

**Faculty Evaluation and Rewards:** Two documents by a joint arts accreditation task force discuss the work of arts faculties at the postsecondary level. *The Work of Arts Faculties in Higher Education* explains the basic nature of intellectual and creative work in the arts and presents lists of responsibilities undertaken by faculties in various arts disciplines. *Local Assessment of Evaluation and Reward Systems for Arts Faculties in Higher Education* poses a series of questions for use in assessment.

### III. NASAD ANNUAL MEETINGS

NASAD Annual Meetings are normally held the second or third week in October. Annual Meetings are designed to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among those who manage institutions developing visual arts professionals. Program information for each year's upcoming Annual Meeting is published on the NASAD Web site in late Spring or early Summer.

### IV. NASAD ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

NASAD accreditation procedures include full reviews for Membership and renewal of Membership as well as focused reviews of curricula initiated by member institutions in the interim between regular full reviews. Self-study is an integral part of both procedures.

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