

Advisory Regarding Credit Hour Requirements for the Master of Fine Arts Degree in Art and Design

A Statement of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design

While understanding that each institution has responsibilities and prerogatives to set degree requirements, NASAD notes that many institutions of all types recognize the 60 semester credit hour or 90 quarter credit hour Master of Fine Arts degree as the terminal degree. Degrees with other titles intending to serve the same terminal function as the MFA are expected to have the number of hours as the MFA. These requirements support the assertion that the MFA in a studio field is equivalent to the doctorate in other fields. Over the years there have been many tragic cases of individuals graduating with a degree labeled MFA that required fewer than 60 semester or 90 quarter credit hours who, upon application for tenure in colleges and universities, find that the degree they hold is not accepted by that institution as a terminal degree. Many promotion and tenure committees are unwilling or legally unable to make conversions or declare equivalencies based on time and content or level of achievement. The number of hours is not a significant concern to individuals who work in art and design professions outside higher education. However, since there is a growing need for highly qualified faculty, especially in the design fields, each institution is encouraged to consider its credit policies in light of the strategic need to ensure that the most qualified and educated professionals can reach their career potential in higher education. For all these and other reasons, NASAD standards require 60 semester or 90 quarter hours for degrees titled Master of Fine Arts. The same accreditation standard and the same expectations of institutions are operational in the fields of theatre (accredited by NAST) and dance (accredited by NASD).

Please refer also to “The Master of Fine Arts Degree and Faculty Policies.” The requirements discussed both in that document and above support the following historic policies of NASAD, NASD, NAST, and many distinguished institutions and professional organizations: **holders of the M.F.A. have parity with holders of other terminal degrees for purposes of hiring, promotion, and advancement within faculties of higher education.**

For further information about specific standards for the M.F.A. in the various disciplines, and their relationships to other faculty qualifications, please refer to the *Handbooks* of NASAD, NASD, and NAST.