Art History

WASC Assessment Plan for MA Program

First Year Learning Outcomes

Students spend their first year taking courses on the seminar level as well as directed studies with individual faculty. Language study provides proficiency in reading at least one language other than English. They will be prepared to do focused research for their thesis.

They are also encouraged to participate in the University’s Gluck Program, in which they make presentations on art and architecture to local schools and community groups, thereby improving their presentation and pedagogical skills.

1. Coursework, Pro-Seminar, Oral Presentations and Papers

   a) Through their coursework, students will have gained a solid, in-depth knowledge of the time period relating to their thesis and will have considerably improved their grasp of the discipline in general, as they must take at least two graduate seminars outside of their specialization. Students will be versed in the discipline’s methodology and history. They apply their factual, theoretical, and methodological knowledge in class presentations and written papers that fulfill scholarly standards and will prepare them to write a first outline of their thesis over the summer.

      **Assessment Method:** Completion of 40 units of required course work and grades

   b) The mandatory Pro-Seminar in Methodology is designed to develop the students’ understanding of the history and intellectual approaches of the discipline of Art History and related disciplines such as Philosophy, Literature, and Media Theory. The Pro-Seminar increases their skills in thinking historically and critically about the relationship between art, visual and verbal experience, and culture; it deepens their understanding of diverse critical methods as tools of intellectual problem-solving; and it provides important impulses to use these tools and information to evaluate readings critically and to formulate their own questions and ideas for research.

      Beginning in Fall 2014, the department revised and expanded the Pro-Seminar to encompass two quarters, Fall and Winter of the first year. Both quarters are required. One quarter is devoted to methodology, and one to the historiography of the discipline.

      **Assessment Method:** Completion of Pro-Seminar and final grade.

   c) The oral presentations and written papers for each seminar train and develop the students’ factual, theoretical, and methodological knowledge, and broaden their scope of knowledge. The requirement to take at least two courses outside their field and time period of specialization enables students to understand the
discipline’s broad range of subject matters, questions, and methods and sharpens their sense of historical and cultural differences.

**Assessment Method:** Oral presentations and written papers for each seminar and their grades.

d) Research skills and methods: In conjunction with the Pro-Seminar, first year students receive orientations and training with staff of the UCR Visual Resource Center and the UCR Libraries, in order to gain essential practical skills in conducting archival and collections research, accessing and working with images, and using research databases. Students continue to develop these skills through graduate seminars and in preparation for their work on their thesis.

**Assessment Method:** Written papers for each seminar and their grades.

2. Additional Assessment Tools: Faculty’s First Year Report on each individual student.

   At the end of their first year, each student is evaluated by the whole faculty, including the MA thesis advisor (if one has been designated), in a faculty meeting. The Graduate Advisor assesses the outcomes in a letter to each student, which provides the student with detailed information about his/her progress during the first year and recommendations for improvement.

   The First Year Report evaluates the student’s coursework, the quality of written and oral work and critical thinking, as well as the proposed thesis organization. The individual First Year Report serves as the final assessment tool for the first year of our graduate program. It also serves as a review tool for the thesis committee in establishing whether the student has met the degree requirements.

**Second Year Learning Outcomes**

In the second year, students apply their acquired knowledge and skills to writing an MA thesis of 50-60 pages. They train their writing and organizational skills in regards to their thesis and they will do independent bibliographical work and research under the direction of their thesis advisor.

During their second year, students are tutored by their advisor and other faculty in directed studies related to the topic of their research. Their research will be discussed and presented in an oral exam discussing their thesis draft near the end of the second year.

1. Course in Thesis Writing, Directed Studies, Oral Presentation of thesis draft

   a) The AHS 280 Seminar in "Research, Critical Analysis and Thesis Writing," which builds upon and complements the AHS 251 Pro-Seminar in Methodology, is mandatory and must be taken in the fall or winter quarter of the student’s second year. The goals of this seminar are to train students the tools of advanced research, to conceptualize a topic, organize and structure the material, to write a chapter of the thesis, and to define the contribution of the thesis to the present state of scholarship.
Students are required to give a critical review of a text that is at the center of their research and present in class a carefully conceptualized and formulated lecture. As their final product, they need to hand in at the end of the quarter a fully researched, clearly structured and well-written thesis chapter. The students will thus be guided into writing their thesis under the instruction of faculty.

The seminar also introduces students to related practical and professional skills, from applying for grants and internships to working with images and clearing image rights.

**Assessment Method:** Completion of Thesis Writing Seminar and final grade

b) Students must take Directed Studies (AHS 290, 297,299) with individual faculty, usually their advisor and members of their committee.

Directed Studies are an important tool to assess the individual student’s progress while writing his/her thesis. The regular meetings with faculty and the discussion of thesis related material (reading summaries, annotated bibliographies, discussion of chapters of their thesis) provide crucial feedback for students and involves faculty directly in the research and writing process. The students’ previous training will enable them to critically analyze and comment on both their readings and their own research. The training received in Directed Studies enables them to subsequently formulate their own, substantial text with original scholarly content, written in accordance with scholarly standards.

**Assessment Method:** Successful completion of Directed Studies: grade-based assessment on a Satisfactory/No Credit basis

c) In the winter or spring term of their second year, students submit a full draft of the thesis to their advisor and committee members. This draft is then discussed in an Oral Presentation (also called the Thesis Defense). This oral discussion is an open-ended forum that affords the student the opportunity to obtain detailed faculty input and suggestions for improvement of the thesis before it is finished and filed. It assesses the progress and quality of the thesis work to date and in relation to the program’s learning outcomes.

Criteria for assessment are:

• quality of research content
• scope of knowledge displayed
• originality of topic
• command of current methodology
• intellectual rigor and versatility
• structure and logic of arguments
• proficiency in writing

The discussion enables the student to revise and improve his/her thesis draft and finalize it in a timely manner.
Assessment Method: Discussion with committee and advancement to final version of thesis

Professional Preparation

Our Graduate Program in the History of Art prepares students for a wide range of careers academically and professional, as researchers, university professors and in secondary education, in art consultation, galleries and publishing houses, in cultural journalism, and in curatorial/museum work. It is our goal to produce self-confident, art historically trained and intellectually mature graduates who by the end of their second year have gained a more precise idea of career paths that match their strengths. For that purpose, we maintain close ties with art institutions to provide our students with internships in museums and galleries. We encourage students to participate in graduate and national conferences and to become members of academic and cultural societies early in their careers.

1. Assessment Tools and Methods

Through applications for fellowships, students gain professional skills in presenting their original research and obtaining funding for their project.

Traditionally, faculty in our department have kept in contact with students who have finished the program. We track placement and career success of our graduates and post announcements and biographies of alumni on our website.

In addition, we plan to implement two new assessment tools: Exit Interviews and a formal Professional Development Workshop.

a) Fellowship applications and their success

Students gain skills in writing fellowship applications through several fellowships we offer and programs that we participate in:

- UCR’s Gluck Fellows Program, for which they regularly apply and which fosters their educational and presentation skills
- the Department of Art History’s Brink and Carrott Travel Fellowships, for which their apply in their first year
- the annual Getty Consortium Seminar, for which they apply in the fall of each year

b) Exit interviews

Each graduate student meets with his/her advisor for a final consultation about the student’s professional career after completion of the program. These take place on an individual basis and students are asked to give feedback about the program while faculty gives them final advice for their career planning.
c) Professional Development Workshop

The workshop takes place in the fall quarter of the students’ second year before they apply for PhD programs and for related positions in the field. It will help students in developing criteria for their search of programs and positions, provide them with information about application processes and instruct them in writing successful applications. This workshop has been incorporated as part of the second year graduate seminar AHS 280, along with an individual assignment that counts towards the final grade in the seminar.