



Completing and Defending your Thesis Exhibition: Best Practices

The completion of a successful MA degree requires careful planning and attention to detail. Students should begin planning a degree path shortly after arrival in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. While that path may change, it is essential to understand all degree requirements as soon as possible.

During their second semester, it is recommended that students select a primary thesis advisor. Students work with the primary advisor to set specific objectives and deadlines for the completion of the thesis. Regular communication with the primary advisor is essential for the successful completion of a thesis.

Students should provide at least two weeks for primary and secondary faculty advisors or editors to provide feedback on a draft.

Students are strongly encouraged to share drafts with fellow Art History graduate students or to consult with the UWM Writing Center. <https://uwm.edu/writing-center/>

Plan well in advance for Graduation

It may seem strange to think about graduation at the beginning of your MA trajectory but it is important to plan carefully if you plan to graduate by a particular date. **Students must apply for graduation at the beginning of the term that they wish to graduate.** Most students will defend and submit their thesis during the same term. For general information on the graduation process, see <https://uwm.edu/arhistory/graduate/graduation/>. **Deadlines to apply for graduation, along with deadlines for the thesis defense, thesis formatting, and final submission are set by the Graduate School on a semesterly basis.** They may be found here: <https://uwm.edu/graduateschool/graduation-dates-deadlines/>

The Thesis Exhibition Proposal

It is strongly encouraged that students select an appropriate primary thesis adviser by the end of their second term (usually the Spring term of the academic year). The 2nd reader is selected in consultation with the primary advisor. The student should both select a topic and develop a provisional object exhibition checklist in consultation with the advisor, the Gallery Curator, and the Gallery Director. If loans are proposed the Curator and Director must be consulted before the proposal is drafted. All loan letters must be approved by the Curator and Director. Throughout the second term the student will prepare the proposal under the advisor's supervision, a process that usually requires several drafts. **The final draft of the proposal must be approved by the primary advisor and 2nd reader by May 1st in order that it may be presented to the Gallery Committee for final approval before the end of the term. If the proposal is not approved by the Gallery Committee the student will be unable to enroll for ARTHIST 991 (thesis exhibition research).**

Funding your Thesis Exhibition: The Hayes Award



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Students are **required** to apply for the Hayes Award

[https://uwm.edu/arhistory/wp-](https://uwm.edu/arhistory/wp-content/uploads/sites/118/2015/12/Hayes-Fund-Application.pdf)

[content/uploads/sites/118/2015/12/Hayes-Fund-Application.pdf](https://uwm.edu/arhistory/wp-content/uploads/sites/118/2015/12/Hayes-Fund-Application.pdf) in order to assist with expenses related to the exhibition, among them the cost of loans, installation, display, catalog printing, creation of didactic materials, and any final research needs. Students who fail to submit applications for the Hayes Award will not be eligible for financial assistance from the Department and will forfeit their minimum \$600 exhibition award.

Approval and Printing of the Thesis Exhibition Catalog

Students pursuing the Curatorial Track MA in Art History follow a multi-step process for the approval, printing, and final submission of their thesis.

Step 1: Submission of a complete catalog draft for evaluation and approval by advisors.

After several drafts have been completed in consultation with your advisor, a complete draft of your thesis exhibition catalog text and all other written materials should be submitted to your advisor and 2nd reader by December 1st or May 1st the semester before your exhibition dates. The format for the complete draft should be as follows:

Cover (with UWM logo)

Title Page

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Thesis Exhibition Text (broken up into chapters, sections, or essays)

Exhibition Checklist (this can be illustrated or not, though you should consider including images of figures you reference in your text)

Bibliography / Works Cited page

This draft must be evaluated and approved by both readers before the end of the semester for the process to continue. It is subject to the evaluation categories listed below.

1. **Approval as submitted:** Both the advisor and second reader recommend approval. The exhibition continues as scheduled.

2. **Approval with minor changes:** Both the advisor and/or second reader recommend minor changes. If changes are agreeable to the student and advisors, changes are made and the exhibition progresses. If not, a compromise must be reached, changes must be made, or the exhibition does not progress.

3. **Major changes:** Both the advisor and second reader recommend major changes. In this instance, a student may be advised either to not to print a catalog, transition the project into a traditional thesis paper, or not progress with the exhibition as planned. In consultation with both advisors, and if need be the Director of Graduate Studies, the student shall either make the changes and incorporate them into the catalog in the time before the opening, make alternate arrangements to create a brochure or other didactic material in a shorter format than a catalog, or alter the project under the guidance of the advisors.

4. **Rejection:** Both the advisor and second reader recommend rejection. A 3rd reader is selected in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. A decision by a majority of the three readers is binding. This may result in not having a catalog for the opening reception and/or cancellation of the exhibition.

NB: *Page length of the thesis will vary depending on several factors: the topic itself (e.g., some topics require more extensive literature reviews), citations, etc. Generally, the main text of a UWM Art History MA thesis exhibition catalog will comprise 25-30 pages in length.*

Step 2: Submission of the Thesis Exhibition catalog text **and catalog layout** for evaluation and approval by advisors.

After completion of Stage 1, your thesis exhibition text and catalog layout must be approved by both your Advisor and 2nd reader before it can be sent for printing. There are four general outcomes of this evaluation stage listed below. Note that your catalog text will have already been approved by your advisor and 2nd reader by the end of the semester prior to your exhibition dates. The catalog layout is subject to the evaluation categories listed below.

1. **Approval as submitted:** Both the advisor and second reader recommend approval.

2. **Approval with minor changes:** The advisor and/or second reader recommend minor changes. If changes are agreeable to the student and advisors, changes are made and resubmitted to both readers for approval before printing. If not, a compromise must be reached, changes must be made, or the catalog is not printed.

3. **Major changes:** Both the advisor and second reader recommend major changes. In this instance, a student will be advised not to print a catalog. In consultation with both advisors, and if need be the Director of Graduate Studies, the student shall either make the changes and incorporate them into the catalog in the time before the opening, or make alternate arrangements to create a brochure or other didactic material in a shorter format than a catalog. If the advisors recommend the latter and the changes are agreeable to the student, the student shall incorporate those changes into the final submission to the Graduate School.

4. **Rejection:** Both the advisor and second reader recommend rejection. A 3rd reader is selected in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. A decision by a majority of the three readers is binding. This may result in not having a catalog for the opening reception and/or cancellation of the exhibition.

The Thesis Exhibition Defense

After the thesis exhibition catalog is printed the student must pass an oral defense of the thesis exhibition. The student will be examined by both the advisor and 2nd reader. The student must receive approval from the advisor in order to schedule the defense. The defense is typically scheduled during the course of the exhibition's display and takes place in the gallery. The



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defense must be scheduled in consultation with the advisor, the 2nd reader, and Mathis Art Gallery staff, and must take place by the deadline provided by the Graduate School. **It is essential that students know the defense and submission deadlines to graduate on time.** Please check the Graduate School website for more information.

During the defense, students are generally required to give a brief discussion of the scholarly significance of the thesis. This is followed by questions from the advisor and 2nd reader. The defense length is a minimum of 1 hour. Students must bring a copy of the thesis to the defense.

Immediately following the defense, the advisor and 2nd reader will decide whether to approve the paper as submitted, approve with minor changes, request major changes, or reject. Remember, this applies to the final submission of the thesis exhibition to the Graduate School, not the printed catalog. Additional changes may be required to meet these final submission guidelines.

- 1. Approval as submitted:** Both the advisor and second reader recommend approval. Any necessary changes are made by the student before final submission to the Graduate School.
- 2. Approval with minor changes:** Both the advisor and/or the second reader recommend minor changes. The student must make the recommended changes, secure both advisors' approval, and make final submission to the Graduate School within the deadlines set by the Graduate School.
- 3. Major changes:** The advisor and/or second reader recommend major changes. The student must make the recommended changes, secure both the advisor and 2nd reader's approval, and make the final submission to the Graduate School. Under the guidance of the advisors and if need be the Director of Graduate Studies, the student may be required to postpone his/her graduation date.
- 4. Rejection:** Both the advisor and second reader recommend rejection. A third reader is selected in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. A decision by a majority of the three readers is binding. Under the guidance of the advisors and if need be the Director of Graduate Studies, the student must postpone his/her graduation date.

Reformatting and Submitting the Thesis Exhibition Text to the Graduate School

In order to graduate your thesis exhibition catalog must be submitted to the Graduate School. This requires that the catalog be reformatted in the style of a regular thesis. All students are **required** to attend the Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation Formatting Workshop prior to submission.

The Graduate School does not dictate the citation format for MA theses. An advisor may have preferences where the use of footnotes or endnotes are concerned. Whatever the format it must be employed consistently throughout. Students should use the most recent edition of the Chicago Manual of Style or the particular style guide preferred by the thesis advisor.



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For the full list of requirements for the Graduate School submission, including instructions for spacing, font, margins, page numbering, tables and figures, appendices, etc., consult the Graduate School's website:

<https://uwm.edu/graduateschool/thesis-dissertation-formatting/>

In order to make final submission to the Graduate School, the contents of a successfully defended thesis exhibition must be ordered as follows:

Preliminary Pages:

Title page – required

Abstract page - required

Copyright page - optional

Dedication – optional

Table of Contents – required for all except creative works

List of Figures – required if figures appear in thesis

List of Tables – required if tables appear in the thesis

List of Abbreviations – optional

Acknowledgements – required if permission to reproduce copyright material is necessary

Frontispiece (illustration) or Epigraph (quotation) – optional

Main Body:

Main text

References

Appendices – optional

Approved by Department of Art History Faculty March 15, 2019