

GRAPHIC DESIGN, BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (B.F.A.)

The sophomore year in the graphic design program is focused on orientation to, and experimentation within, design practice. Students develop processes of making, meaning-building and critical engagement with ideas related to form, medium, materials and tools. This year provides a critical framework to develop a vocabulary allowing them to begin to discuss ideas around information hierarchies and meaning-making as well as legibility and translation.

The junior year is focused on experimentation with, and construction of, narrative structures, argument, advocacy and rhetoric (text, text and image, sequence). The underlying social, political and pluralistic demands of graphic design are emphasized. It situates the student and their work/practice within a context and community and introduces methods to facilitate collaboration with those directly and indirectly impacted by the end results of the design process

The senior year is focused on deepening, refining and situating individuated experiences; formulating and synthesizing learning by teaching others through participatory engagement; and building a situated design practice, while understanding that design is inseparable from the culture at large. The student experience in the program culminates in a capstone project that demonstrates their readiness and capacity to engage responsibly and creatively in the field and is presented in a public exhibition.

Admission

Students who have successfully completed the Art Foundation Program are eligible to apply for admission to the B.F.A. program in the Department of Graphic Design.

Students who wish to transfer into the graphic design program must first apply to the Art Foundation Program for evaluation. A transfer student must demonstrate equivalent preparation at other institutions and submit a portfolio of work for review by graphic design faculty. Transfer students admitted into the graphic design program must complete all major requirements determined to be missing from their academic design experience. Transfer students should expect to spend a minimum of five semesters in the graphic design program in order to qualify for a B.F.A.

Due to the sequence of the required graphic design courses, students are admitted only for the fall semester.

Standards of graphic design

Students must complete the required pre- and corequisites of the graphic design program in the order presented in the curriculum outline. This structure enables students to develop knowledge and skills based in graphic design that will prepare them for upper-level studio courses and successful entry into the graphic design profession.

Students must earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5 to be accepted to the graphic design program. Once accepted, students must maintain a minimum 2.5 GPA in GDES courses to continue in the program.

Students are required to meet regularly with the department undergraduate academic adviser each semester on scheduled advising dates to make sure they are completing courses as required.

A portfolio review of graphic design course work takes place at the end of the third semester. The student's portfolio, presentation, GPA and individual course assessments are evaluated holistically during this review to determine if the student may continue in the program. Additionally, the following courses must be successfully completed by the end of the third semester to be eligible for participation in the review:

Course	Title	Hours
GDES 220	Design Practices	4
GDES 221	Core Studio I	4
GDES 231	Theory Inquiry	3
GDES 222	Core Studio II	4
GDES 321	Core Studio III	4
GDES 331	Precedents Inquiry	3
GDES 380	Multi Studio I	4
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
GDES elective (300-500 level)		

Learning outcomes

Upon completing this program, students will know and know how to do the following:

- **Prioritize making as a primary mode of investigation and exchange:** Students will engage with labor as a physical and emotional activity that is fundamental to the design process. They will understand and practice design as a process that is not driven by assumptions, presumptions or preconceptions.
- **Understand that research is an essential component of the design process:** Students will employ research as a critical lens to understand context and to validate the relevance of design decisions and processes.
- **Develop capacity to design in collaboration with others:** Students will become equipped to participate in broad and diverse exchanges that expand the range and depth of design processes that are oriented to nonhierarchical learning and making.
- **Develop cultural literacy:** Students will be cognizant of forces that affect the formation and reinforcement of meaning and value. These forces define who we are and how the decisions we make can cultivate the dignity of individuals and communities.

Special requirements

Successful completion of ARTF 131, ARTF 132, ARTF 133, ARTF 134 and a minimum GPA of 2.5 is required for current art foundation students to major in graphic design. Core graphic design courses start in the fall semesters, only.

Students who wish to transfer into the graphic design program must first apply to the Art Foundation Program for evaluation. A transfer student must demonstrate equivalent preparation at other institutions and submit a portfolio of work for review by graphic design faculty. Transfer students admitted into the graphic design program must complete all major requirements determined to be missing from their academic design experience. Transfer students should expect to spend a minimum of five semesters in the graphic design program in order to qualify for a B.F.A.

Due to the sequence of the required graphic design courses, transfer students are admitted in the fall semester.

Once accepted, students must maintain a minimum 2.5 GPA in GDES coursework in order to continue in the program. Student major GPA is

monitored at the end of fall and spring semesters. Any student with a GDES major GPA that falls below 2.5 is placed on departmental probation and must meet the major GPA requirement by the end of the following two semesters. Students failing to bring their GDES major GPA to a minimum of 2.5 by the end of the following two semesters are no longer permitted to continue in the program.

Degree requirements for Bachelor of Fine Arts, Graphic Design (B.F.A.)

Course	Title	Hours
General education (https://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-study/general-education-curriculum/)		
Select 30 credits of general education courses in consultation with an adviser.		30
Major requirements		
• Major core requirements		
GDES 220	Design Practices	4
GDES 221	Core Studio I	4
GDES 222	Core Studio II	4
GDES 231	Theory Inquiry	3
GDES 321	Core Studio III	4
GDES 322	Core Studio IV	4
GDES 331	Precedents Inquiry	3
GDES 380	Multi Studio I (taken twice)	8
GDES 398	Dialogues (taken six semesters)	6
GDES 431	Critical Inquiry	4
GDES 440	Synthesis	6
GDES 480	Multi Studio II	2
Ancillary requirements		
Art Foundation Program		
ARTF 131	Drawing Studio	3
ARTF 132	Surface Research	3
ARTF 133	Space Research	3
ARTF 134	Time Studio	3
ARTF 139	Project Studio	2
or ARTF 138	Project Seminar	
ARTH 103 & ARTH 104	Survey of Art I and Survey of Art II	6
Additional requirements		
GDES electives (300 to 500 level)		8
Open electives		
Select any course.		12
Total Hours		122

The minimum number of credit hours required for this degree is 122.

Electives

Course	Title	Hours
GDES 301	Letterpress	4
GDES 302	Book Arts	4
GDES 308	Web Design	4
GDES 356	Studio Management	4
GDES 391	Lecture Topics in Design	1-4
GDES 392	Research/Individual Study	1-4

GDES 401	Experimental Letterpress	4
GDES 403	Design Activism	4
GDES 404	Typeface Design	4
GDES 412	Typographic Systems	4
GDES 414	Exhibition and Environmental Graphic Design	4
GDES 418	Design Center	3-9
GDES 481	Practicum	4
GDES 491	Studio Topics in Design	1-6

What follows is a sample plan that meets the prescribed requirements within a four-year course of study at VCU. Please contact your adviser before beginning course work toward a degree.

Recommended course sequence/plan of study

Freshman year		
Fall semester		Hours
ARTF 131	Drawing Studio	3
ARTF 132	Surface Research	3
ARTF 139	Project Studio	1
or	or Project Seminar	
ARTF 138		
ARTH 103	Survey of Art I	3
UNIV 111	Introduction to Focused Inquiry:	3
Play course	Investigation and Communication (satisfies	
video for	general education UNIV foundations)	
Introduction		
to Focused		
Inquiry:		
Investigation		
and		
Communication		
General education course		3
Term Hours:		16
Spring semester		
ARTF 133	Space Research	3
ARTF 134	Time Studio	3
ARTF 139	Project Studio	1
or	or Project Seminar	
ARTF 138		
ARTH 104	Survey of Art II	3
UNIV 112	Focused Inquiry II (satisfies general	3
Play course	education UNIV foundations)	
video for		
Focused		
Inquiry II		
General education course		3
Term Hours:		16

Sophomore year		
Fall semester		
GDES 220	Design Practices	4
GDES 221	Core Studio I	4
GDES 231	Theory Inquiry	3
GDES 398	Dialogues	1

UNIV 200	Advanced Focused Inquiry: Literacies, Research and Communication (satisfies general education UNIV foundations)	3
Term Hours:		15
Spring semester		
GDES 222	Core Studio II	4
GDES 380	Multi Studio I	4
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
General education course		3
Open elective		3
Term Hours:		15
Junior year		
Fall semester		
GDES 321	Core Studio III	4
GDES 331	Precedents Inquiry	3
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
GDES elective		4
General education course		3
Term Hours:		15
Spring semester		
GDES 322	Core Studio IV	4
GDES 380	Multi Studio I	4
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
General education course		3
Open elective		3
Term Hours:		15
Senior year		
Fall semester		
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
GDES 431	Critical Inquiry	4
GDES elective		4
General education course		3
Open elective		3
Term Hours:		15
Spring semester		
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
GDES 440	Synthesis	6
GDES 480	Multi Studio II	2
General education course		3
Open elective		3
Term Hours:		15
Total Hours:		122

The minimum number of credit hours required for this degree is 122.