

Graduate Student Handbook

Stephen F. Austin State University
Nacogdoches, Texas



Prepared by

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INTRODUCTION

Mission

The mission of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies is to support and promote the research, scholarly and creative activities of the Stephen F. Austin State University community while encouraging compliance and scholarly integrity. SFA seeks to afford qualified students the opportunity and a supportive environment in which to gain sufficient mastery of their chosen fields so, by virtue of their depth and breadth of knowledge and the extent of their expertise, they may contribute significantly to those fields.

The faculty and administration of Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) welcome you to Nacogdoches and to this institution of higher learning. It is anticipated that your studies here will be of intellectual, professional, and personal benefit. The purpose of this handbook is to make your experience with SFA as pleasant and rewarding as possible by giving some information about the university.

Financial Information

These links will help you find financial planning information you will need for your financial planning:

- [SFA tuition and fees](#)
- [Determining Texas \(in-state\) residency](#)
- [Tuition calculator](#)
- [Financial aid and scholarship](#)
- [Paul L. Boynton Scholarship for graduate study](#)
- [Graduate assistantships and employment](#)

Residence Life

Graduate students at SFA who are enrolled in nine or more credit hours can choose to live on campus. [Learn more about on-campus living](#)

Graduate Assistantships

A number of departments offer graduate assistantships to carefully selected students. The stipends vary according to the office in which employment is offered and the extent of the assignment. To be eligible for an assistantship, a student must have clear admission to Research and Graduate Studies and be in good academic standing. If you are hired as a graduate assistant, you have the same types of responsibilities as faculty and staff, tempered by your special role as teacher-student, researcher-student or graduate assistant-student. SFA is a state regional university and, as such, is controlled by a variety of legislative mandates, as well as regulations established by the Texas Higher Education Board and the SFASU Board of Regents. It is important that you understand the constraints as well as the privileges that apply to you in your position as graduate assistant, whether teaching assistant, research assistant, administrative assistant, or student worker. The Graduate Assistant publication, as well as the graduate assistant online orientation program will attempt to familiarize you with your legal and professional responsibilities.

The graduate assistantship offered to you provides unique opportunities. It helps finance your

graduate education while providing you with the status of professional staff member. It is a recognition of your achievements and a statement of faith in your future academic accomplishments. Some graduate assistants will assist regular faculty in the classroom, the laboratory, or the studio. Some will work as research assistants. A few will teach their own courses and will be responsible for the academic content of the course and the entire process whereby grades are assigned. Others will help with administrative functions or research assistance. (*Policy 6.12*)

There are three types of graduate assistantships:

Teaching Assistantship - A graduate teaching assistant (GTA) works with students in a specific course or laboratory to provide support for the faculty member in charge, and in some cases, to teach the course as the primary instructor, under the guidance of a faculty member.

Research Assistantship - A graduate research assistant (GRA) is normally employed by the principle investigator of a funded research project or may be employed by an academic department in the pursuit of its broader research mission. The graduate research assistant will be assigned a range of duties, such as library searches, fieldwork, laboratory experiments and preparation of reports. Work on a research project often leads to a thesis or dissertation or a professional presentation or publication, and provides long-range direction for the student's development as a scholar.

Administrative Assistantship - A graduate administrative assistant (GAA) works with the administrative staff of a department, college or campus office primarily in gathering, organizing and analyzing information. The duties should be more advanced than those performed by undergraduate student workers.

Graduate assistants assigned to the 50-percent rate are required to serve 20 clock hours per week in the department to which they are assigned. Those assigned to other percentages are required to work a proportionate number of clock hours per week. Except for the Ph.D., Ed.D. and M.F.A. programs, graduate assistantships are usually limited to four semesters. A student interested in a graduate assistantship should contact the appropriate academic department well in advance of the semester in which she or he is interested in the assistantship. If the student accepts, she or he will then contact Human Resources to set up an appointment for new employee orientation. Additionally, an online graduate assistant orientation program is offered to all new graduate assistants at the beginning of each semester. Details to the orientation session are provided through the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. A graduate assistant only needs to complete the orientation one time. Graduate assistantships are considered security sensitive positions by the university, and criminal histories will be checked.

Employment

In addition to graduate assistantships, jobs are available both off and on campus. Graduate students have access to [Jobs4Jacks](#), an online employment platform hosted by the [Center for Career and Professional Development](#), where numerous positions are available throughout the year. To access Jobs4Jacks, click on "Student," click on the "Stephen F. Austin State University" button, and then enter sign-on credentials for mySFA. Account information is pre-loaded for all current SFA students. Students should complete their profile and then can search for positions. SFA Human Resources also lists information for [on-campus student worker positions](#).

Graduate students also have access to all CCPD services, which include career coaching, professional document critiques, career expos, mock interviews, and the career closet, where students can borrow professional clothing for presentations or interviews. All these services can be requested via the Jobs4Jacks platform.

For more information on Jobs4Jacks or any CCPD services:

Center for Career and Professional Development

Third Floor, Rusk Building

<http://www.sfasu.edu/ccpd/>

ccpd@sfasu.edu

(936) 468-3305

Federal Work Study

Many students take advantage of the [Federal Work Study Program](#), in which students are awarded money as part of their financial aid package that they can earn through an on-campus job. In order to qualify for the program you must demonstrate financial need, maintain satisfactory performance in your studies, and meet varied time and work load requirements in departments and divisions across the campus.

Payroll Information

If you are receiving an official salary from the university as a graduate assistant or student worker, it is very important that you sign all of the necessary payroll papers in your department. Necessary information and forms for payroll and insurance must be completed and forwarded to Human Resources and business offices in a timely fashion to ensure payment on schedule. All work payments are electronically transferred to your bank of choice through the business office.

Payment Schedule for Graduate Assistantship Stipends

Fall Semester - Four (4) equal installments to be released on the first university workday of October, November, December and January.

Spring Semester - Five (5) equal installments to be released on the first university workday of February, March, April, May and June.

Resources for Graduate Students:

Academic Assistance Resource Center (AARC)

Students with academic problems beyond those with which a graduate teaching assistant is able to deal should be urged to go to the AARC desk on the ground floor of the Library. It is on the right-hand side within the glass-walled room. They should seek a conference with a staff member, who will then attempt to arrange an assistance effort with one of the student tutors working for the center. Lab assistance is essentially a self-help process, but with the aid of capable undergraduate and graduate assistants. Additionally, if a graduate student needs help with writing, the AARC has assistance with writing tutors.

Library Facilities

The staff of the Ralph Steen Library is very competent and efficient. They will be more than happy to help you with special requests like putting books and journals on reserve for your students or you. The electronic catalog system is very easy to learn and makes search and retrieval of information quick and convenient.

General

All graduate students are responsible for understanding the material in the Graduate Bulletin, Graduate Handbook, ORGS Website, Exhibition, Thesis and Dissertation Guide. If you have questions, start with your advisor or department program coordinator.

Getting Started in Graduate School

Graduate school is different from undergraduate school as all of your graduate coursework will be specific to your field of study. It is specific so a graduate student will become knowledgeable about their subject and thus qualified for their chosen career. Graduate studies are typically a little over two years of study to completion. The graduate programs are known as M.S., M.Ed., M.A., M.F.A., M.S.W, M.S.N., Ph.D., and Ed.D. Graduate students should be familiar with the general requirements for earning their graduate degree, including all formal paperwork requirements.

Relationship with Faculty

Graduate students may have a closer connection with their faculty because of the smaller number of graduate students in most graduate programs. It is important to be proactive in your connections with your instructors and advisors. There are rewards for keeping a positive connection. Many times graduate faculty members are able to foster graduate students' self-confidence, steps for successful continuation towards degree completion, and share publication and presentation offerings. There varying amounts of time spent on advising; however, you should establish your needed sessions along with prepared questions to discuss during advisement. Communication is key to successful advisement.

Academic and Research Integrity

Any research conducted while a graduate student at SFA requires adherence to ethical principles and professional standards. Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university polity on penalties for cheating and plagiarism. Definition of Academic Dishonesty is that academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials on any class assignment or exam; (2) falsifying or inventing of any information, including citations, on an assigned assignment; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help other student(s) in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own.

Examples of plagiarism include: (1) submitting an assignment as one's own work when it is at least partly the work of another person; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. (*Policy 4.1, Student Academic Dishonesty at <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/4.1-studentacademic-dishonesty.pdf>*)

Acceptable Student Behavior Graduate student behavior should not interfere with the instructor's ability to conduct the dissertation writing experience or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (*see policy 10.4, Student Code of Conduct Code, <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student-code-of-conduct-10.4.pdf>*). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom, research sites, in electronic settings, or in one-on-one meetings within faculty offices.

Graduate Representation in University Affairs

There are many opportunities for graduate students to be represented on different university committees. One example is that one graduate student serves on the University Graduate Council. This council has the major responsibility for reviewing all curriculum at the graduate level. Other areas of representation are on the Graduate Research Conference Committee. One student is appointed to the SFA Board of Regents.

Milestones

Key milestones during your graduate education may include:

1. Degree Plan
2. Qualifying Oral and/or Written Examination
3. Research Proposal
4. Candidacy for Degree
5. Complete Thesis, Exhibition, Dissertation
6. Complete Coursework within 6 Years for a master's degree
7. Final Written and/or Oral Examination or Culminating Experience

Theses, Exhibitions and Dissertations

Select research committee members that have expertise in disciplines that will help you complete your research. Consult with your major professor regarding prospective committee members and determine who should ask the faculty members if they are willing to serve on your committee. Be prepared to discuss your proposed coursework and research with the prospective committee member, upon consultation with your major professor.

Degree Plan and Research Proposal

Complete a degree plan and a research proposal as early as possible. These documents will outline the requirements agreed upon between you and your research committee for graduation. Once approved, refer to the degree plan and proposal frequently in order to insure that all course work and research objectives are being completed. Any deviation from the objectives outlined in the degree plan or research proposal should be approved by the research committee. If the degree plan is modified, a change of degree plan form must be submitted through the major professor, the academic dean, the dean of Research and Graduate Studies,

and the Registrar's Office.

Communication

Stay in regular contact with your major professor. Each semester, inform your major advisor of office hours when you can be reached. If doing field research, inform your major professor when you will be going to the field, where you are going, and who will be working with you. On a regular basis, meet with your major professor regarding the progress of your research. You should inform your major professor prior to any contact with your research committee or others on issues regarding your coursework or research. In addition, your major professor should be notified, if you have been contacted regarding your work. **Your major professor should be the first person to review any document regarding your research, including your research proposal and thesis or dissertation.** Follow the rules and procedures regarding requests for equipment, office supplies, vehicle use and staff assistance for your department. Your major professor should grant prior approval before your requests. Reference the SFA Office of Research and Graduate Studies web site for the steps involved in preparing a proposal. <http://www.sfasu.edu/academics/orgs/graduate-students-faculty/theses-exhibitions-dissertations> Graduate students often underestimate the time required for the major professor and the research committee to review the thesis or dissertation and to make corrections. A thesis or dissertation should be in a “**defensible**” condition before the final examination is scheduled. Recognize that your major professor, faculty and staff have time constraints and other demands imposed on them.

Assuming that your thesis or dissertation draft is complete and of good quality, a reasonable period for review and corrections prior to scheduling a final examination is:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. First review by Major Professor | 2 weeks |
| 2. Corrections | 1 week |
| 3. Review by Research Committee | 2 weeks |
| 4. Corrections | 1 week |

Additional reviews requested by your research committee, incomplete and poorly written documents, and unavoidable conflicts will extend the time required for review and corrections and further delay scheduling the final examination.

The Office of Research and Graduate Studies (ORGS) must approve the format of your thesis or dissertation. Deadlines each semester for scheduling the final examination and final thesis or dissertation approval by the ORGS are published on the Office of Research and Graduate Studies website. <http://www.sfasu.edu/academics/orgs/graduate-students-faculty/important-dates>

Data Management

Any Research involving human subjects must complete and receive approval from the IRB. (*Human Research Subjects Protection Policy 8.4*)

Proper credit should be given to the work of others. Copyright violations and the use of data collected by others without permission are unethical. Falsifying or fabrication data is unethical and may be grounds for removal from the program. Data collection should be done in a manner that will allow evaluation by peers in your field of study. Become

familiar with and honor the confidentiality and proprietary rules regarding the data.

Authorship

Discuss with your major advisor protocols regarding authorship of published work.

Master's Theses

The thesis should be an independent and original study. That does not mean that it must treat a subject never before considered, but rather that it should treat the subject in an original way. The thesis is derived from original research (i.e., laboratory, field or library) and must be prepared under the guidance of a thesis director and advisory committee. The thesis must be acceptable in both content and expression and must be presented in a format consistent with the discipline and the thesis guide.

See the [Graduate Bulletin - Catalog](#) for details on the requirements and procedures for students seeking the master's degree. <http://catalog.sfasu.edu/?catoid=10>

Policies and Procedures

It is your responsibility to follow the guidelines below while developing a thesis.

Thesis Advisory Committee

The initial step in establishing an advisory committee is to select a thesis director. Next, with the advice of the director, select a thesis topic as soon as possible. Following completion of these two steps, the balance of the committee can be formed. The committee includes a chair (thesis director) and at least three other members of the graduate faculty — two selected by the thesis director in consultation with the student and one appointed by the department chair from a list of candidates provided by the dean of graduate studies. Committee members with adjunct graduate faculty membership may serve where deemed appropriate with the approval of the dean of graduate studies but may not serve as the thesis director.

Thesis Proposal

Under the supervision of the thesis director, prepare a thesis proposal that is then submitted to the advisory committee for approval. After each committee member has signed the thesis proposal approval form, the proposal and form are submitted to the academic unit head and academic dean for final approval. The proposal approval form, with the proposal attached, is then sent to the dean of research and graduate studies. The thesis proposal must be submitted the semester prior to the semester of intended graduation. Any research proposal that uses human participants, laboratory animals or hazardous materials must be accompanied by a memorandum of approval from the chair of the appropriate university committee: the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, the Institutional Biosafety Committee, and the Environmental Safety and Health/Radiation Committee.

Thesis Proposal Preparation

The thesis proposal should be prepared in a format that is consistent with the field of study involved. The proposal should address the following topics, in the exact order shown below. Office of Research and Graduate Studies thesis guide specifications should be used for reference on margins and pagination. The body of the thesis should be appropriately formatted according

to chosen style manual such as APA, MLA, Chicago/Turbian, etc. The Thesis Proposal Approval Form should serve as the cover sheet. Components of the Thesis include, Title, Introduction, Objectives, Literature Review, Justification/Significance/Contribution, Proposed Methods of Study, and References/Bibliography/Literature Cites.

Registration for Thesis

When preparing a thesis, enroll in the appropriate thesis course. Until the thesis examination is held, continue to register each full semester and summer term during which the resources of the university (faculty, library, laboratories, etc.) are utilized. You must be enrolled during the semester in which the thesis examination is conducted; however, enrollment is not required for the semester or summer session of graduation if the thesis examination is completed in a prior semester or summer session. Until the thesis is completed, a grade of withheld is given for each section of thesis enrollment. When the final copy of the thesis has been approved and signed by the advisory committee, it is the responsibility of the thesis director to turn in grades for all thesis courses.

Supervision of Thesis Research and Writing

You conduct research and write the thesis under the supervision of the thesis director and the thesis advisory committee.

Thesis Defense - Thesis Draft

A thesis draft may serve as the basis for the thesis examination/defense. The thesis draft must meet the following requirements:

- complete in all aspects
- mechanically correct (See items under final manuscript preparation in the thesis guide.)
- figures, plates and tables in final form (photos may be high-quality reproductions.)
- and approved for content by all members of the thesis advisory committee.

An electronic copy of the complete thesis must be sent to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies before filing the application for the thesis examination.

Thesis Examination

The application for thesis examination form can be submitted only after the thesis draft is submitted to and approved by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. This form must be filed at least one week before the examination and no later than four weeks before the day of commencement. The thesis advisory committee also serves as the thesis examination committee. A copy of the final thesis draft must be in the hands of each member of the thesis examination committee and one copy submitted to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at least one week prior to the examination. The thesis draft submitted to the thesis director must contain original figures and plates. The thesis examination is held at a time and place agreed upon by you and all members of the thesis examination committee. If the thesis examination committee requires changes or additions to the thesis more extensive than just improvements in language, punctuation, format or illustrations, approval of the thesis will be delayed until each committee member has a chance to examine a new draft incorporating the changes.

Report of Thesis Examination

Following the examination, the thesis director submits the report of thesis examination to the

dean of graduate studies.

Final Corrections, Approval and Signatures

Following the thesis/dissertation examination, all changes and corrections required by the thesis/dissertation examination committee and the Office of Research and Graduate Studies must be incorporated into the final draft. Email the revised thesis/dissertation to the graduate office to gunterm1@sfasu.edu for approval. After receiving approval, submit a minimum of one copy of the thesis/dissertation that meets all specifications of the thesis guide to the Steen Library. The final product also must be uploaded into [ScholarWorks](#).

It is your responsibility to check the thesis guide for proper arrangements and page numbering.

Binding and Shipping Fees

Prior to graduation:

- Determine the number of copies to be bound. Have one deposit copy bound for archival purposes, and any required by the department or needed for personal use.
- Complete the thesis/dissertation worksheet, including contact information, etc.
- Deliver copies of the approved thesis/dissertation to the library to be bound in the correct page number order.
- Pay fees at the circulation desk or online through the [Steen Library website](#).

Submission of Final Copies of Thesis

Each copy of the final thesis/dissertation should be placed in a separate envelope with a copy of the cover page taped to the front of the envelope. Take the final copies to the Steen Library for binding. After binding, one copy will be retained by the library, and other copies will be sent to you.

Checklist of Procedures:

- Request thesis director.
- Form thesis advisory committee.
- Enroll in a thesis course, and prepare and submit thesis proposal.
- If appropriate, submit protocol for human or animal subjects review, biosafety, and/or environmental safety and health/radiation committee review.
- Enroll in thesis course(s)/write thesis.
- Submit thesis to committee.
- Receive approval of thesis draft from the Office of Research and Graduate Studies.
- Submit application for thesis examination form.
- Complete thesis examination.
- Make final thesis changes and corrections.
- Obtain signatures, and make final thesis changes and corrections.
- Submit signature page(s) to the dean of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies for signature and seal.
- Upload final thesis in [SFA ScholarWorks](#).
- Pay fees for binding and shipping to the library.
- Submit final thesis to the library.

Final Manuscript Preparation

The final manuscript is signed by the Thesis Advisory Committee and the dean of graduate studies and subsequently submitted to the library and uploaded to ScholarWorks. The manuscript must be of the highest possible quality with respect to content and presentation.

You bear the primary responsibility for quality, but each member of the Thesis Advisory Committee also bears responsibility and is not obligated to sign the manuscript until satisfied with the overall quality of the thesis. Before making copies of the manuscript, thoroughly proofread all pages of the thesis to make sure all mechanical specifications have been met. Failure to meet one or more specifications could result in the manuscript being returned for correction. Mechanical specifications include font type, pagination, spacing, margins, headings, tables and figures, and reference citations. The parts of the thesis include the flyleaf, title page, signature page, abstract, preface (optional), acknowledgements (optional), table of contents, list of figures, list of tables, text, bibliography/references, Appendix (optional), and vita.

Journal Model

Departments may elect to use a specific journal's format for the body of the thesis; the journal should be a respected scholarly journal well known in the major field. The decision to follow the journal model must be approved by the student's academic dean, department chair, and advisor. Following the journal model means that while each manuscript will follow the same structure for front and end matter, the body of the document will be structured according to the journal's standards (with a few exceptions). Continuity is provided by a **common abstract, introduction, detailed review of the literature, and conclusion** that ties together the major results and reference sections. Unavoidably, this will duplicate some of the introductory and concluding material in each article. The structure for a journal model includes the front matter of title page, signature page, dedication (optional), abstract, acknowledgements (optional), preface (optional), table of contents, list of tables, and list of figures. The body of the document should include and introduction, literature review, study area, literature cite, articles (each in its own chapter) and summary or conclusions of all research

Formatting

The following items are formatted according to the selected journal's instructions to author (**note that SFA standards supersede journal instructions**): location of table titles, location of figure titles, and heading styles. Margins, font style, page numbering, and chapter designation follow SFA standards. Do not use column formatting.

If tables and figures are placed in a separate section, they should include a chapter designation as well as a table/figure number (Table 1.1, 1.2, 1.3; 2.1, 2.2, 2.3) both in the text and in the caption.

The end matter includes bibliography or list of references, appendix, and vita

While each chapter in the body text may have its own list of references, a complete list of all references will be compiled for the bibliography or list of references at the end of the document.

Formatting

End matter is formatted according to SFA standards; however, entries in bibliography or list of references will be formatted according to journal's standards.

Checklist for Body of Journal Thesis

The thesis body should conform to the following specifications:

- Separated into chapters with chapter titles.
- Appropriately formatted according to chosen style manual, such as APA, MLA, Chicago/Turabian, etc.
- Headings and subheadings are consistently formatted throughout the document. Do not change heading structure midway through the document.
- A subheading at the bottom of the page must have at least one line of text beneath it. Otherwise, the subheading may be moved to the next page.
- Text is double-spaced throughout. Do not insert extra blank lines or spacing to separate text.
- You may insert blank lines at the bottom of one page in order to keep a single Table from breaking, or when inserting a Figure.

Dissertations

The dissertation should be an independent and original study. That does not mean that it must treat a subject never before considered, but rather that it should treat the subject in an original way. The dissertation is derived from original research, i.e., laboratory, field, or library, and must be prepared under the guidance of a Dissertation Chair and Advisory Committee. The dissertation must be acceptable in both content and expression, and must be presented in a format consistent with the discipline.

Policies and Procedures

In the process of developing a dissertation, it is the responsibility of the graduate student to follow the guidelines below.

Dissertation Advisory Committee

The initial step in establishing an advisory committee is to select a dissertation chair. Next, with the advice of this person, a dissertation topic should be selected as soon as possible. Following completion of these two steps, the balance of the committee can be formed. The committee is to be composed of a chair and at least two other members.

Dissertation Proposal

Under the supervision of the dissertation chair, a graduate student prepares a dissertation proposal that is then submitted to the advisory committee for approval. After each committee member has signed the proposal approval form, the proposal and form are submitted to the academic unit head and academic dean for final approval. The proposal approval form, with the proposal attached, is then sent to the dean of Research and Graduate Studies. The proposal must be submitted the semester prior to the semester of intended graduation.

Any research proposal that uses human participants, laboratory animals, or hazardous materials must be accompanied by a memorandum of approval from the chair of the appropriate university committee. These committees are as follows: the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, the Institutional Biosafety Committee.

Registration for Dissertation

A graduate student preparing a dissertation enrolls first in the appropriate dissertation course.

Following the initial enrollment in dissertation and until the dissertation defense is held, a student must continue to register each full semester and summer term during which the resources of the university (faculty, library, laboratories, etc.) are utilized.

Supervision of Dissertation Research and Writing

The graduate student conducts the dissertation research and writes the dissertation under the supervision of the dissertation chair and the dissertation committee.

Dissertation Defense - Dissertation Draft

A dissertation draft may serve as the basis for the dissertation defense. The dissertation draft must be mechanically correct including correct format for figures, tables, high quality photographs, and approved for content by all members of the committee.

The graduate student must send a draft of the dissertation to be checked by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies before filing the application for the dissertation defense.

Dissertation Defense

The application for dissertation defense form can be submitted only after the draft is submitted to and approved by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. This form must be filed in the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at least one week before the defense and no later than four weeks before the day of commencement. (See [Important Dates](#).)

A copy of the final dissertation draft must be in the hands of each member of the dissertation examination committee and one electronic copy to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at least one week prior to the examination.

The dissertation defense is held at a time and place agreed upon by the graduate student and all members of the committee. If the committee requires changes or additions to the dissertation more extensive than just improvements in language, punctuation, format, or illustrations, approval of the dissertation may be delayed until each committee member has a chance to examine a new draft with incorporated changes.

Report of Dissertation Defense

Following the defense, the dissertation chair submits the report of dissertation defense to the dean of Research and Graduate Studies.

Final Corrections, Approval, and Signatures

Following the dissertation examination, all changes and corrections required by the dissertation committee and the Office of Research and Graduate Studies must be incorporated into the final draft. The graduate student or the dissertation chair then submits the revised dissertation to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies via email for approval. After receiving approval from the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, the student must submit an electronic copy of the dissertation to the Steen Library. The final product must also be uploaded into [ScholarWorks](#).

Binding and Shipping Fees

Prior to graduation the graduate student will need to:

- Determine the number of copies to be bound. Students must have one deposit (library) copy bound for archival purposes; additional bound copies are at the department's discretion or for personal use.

- Complete the dissertation worksheet, including contact information, at the library.
- Have copies made at a print shop on the correct bond paper as designated by the department.
- Bring the signature pages to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies for signature and seal.
- Deliver copies of the signature pages and copies of dissertation to the library to be bound in the correct page number order. Each of the dissertations should be placed in a separate envelope with a copy of the cover page taped to the front of the envelope. After binding, one copy will be retained by the library, and other copies will be sent as indicated by student.
- Fees should be paid at either the circulation desk or online through the [Steen Library website](#).

Checklist of Procedures

- Request dissertation director.
- Form dissertation advisory committee.
- Enroll in a dissertation course, and prepare and submit dissertation proposal.
- If appropriate, submit protocol for human or animal subjects review, biosafety, and/or environmental safety and health/radiation committee review.
- Enroll in dissertation course(s)/write dissertation.
- Submit dissertation to committee.
- Receive approval of dissertation draft from the Office of Research and Graduate Studies.
- Submit application for dissertation examination form.
- Complete dissertation examination.
- Make final dissertation changes and corrections.
- Obtain signatures, and make final dissertation changes and corrections.
- Submit signature page(s) to the dean of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies for signature and seal.
- Upload final dissertation in [SFA ScholarWorks](#).
- Pay fees for binding and shipping to the library.
- Submit final dissertation to the library.

Fine Arts Exhibitions

The final requirement of the Master of Fine Arts is the production and exhibition of a work or group of works of art. The creative, expressive, intellectual and formal significance of this exhibition is the basis for the faculty's certification of your competence as an artist.

The M.F.A. exhibition must be accompanied by a written statement that documents your purpose as well as the techniques employed in the works to achieve that purpose. The clarity, cogency and insight demonstrated by this statement is a major basis for the faculty's certification of you as a person of understanding worthy of receiving a terminal degree.

Because the exhibition documentation will be bound and permanently placed in the library for public scrutiny, it must be acceptable both in content and expression and in a format suitable for a library collection.

Policies and Procedures

Preparation for the M.F.A. exhibition begins during the semester in which you are completing the last required hours of studio work. At this time, you must obtain the consent of three graduate art faculty members to serve as an advisory committee who will review and guide your progress in producing the exhibition and its documentation. The steps to be taken in the preparation of the exhibition are:

Exhibition Advisory Committee

The Exhibition Advisory Committee is composed of a chair and at least three other regular, limited or affiliate members of the graduate faculty. Two are selected by the student in consultation with the committee chair and approved by the department chair. The third is from outside the department and appointed by the department chair. Exercise care in the selection of the advisory committee chair; you will be working closely with them in all phases of the project.

Exhibition Proposal

As soon as possible, and with the advice and approval of the exhibition committee chair, you must define the broad parameters of the exhibition. Submit an exhibition proposal to the advisory committee for approval. After obtaining each committee member's signature on the Exhibition Proposal Approval Form, submit the proposal to the dean of research and graduate studies for approval.

Exhibition Proposal Preparation

Your work must be judged by the faculty to be original, as well as technically expressive and formally significant. The exhibition proposal should address the following topics in the exact order as shown below. Exhibition guidelines should be used for margins, etc. The exhibition components are the title, description of the proposed work, and background.

Registration for the M.F.A. Exhibition Course, Art 591

After receiving the department chair's approval of the exhibition proposal, you may register for the M.F.A. exhibition course, Art 591. You must be enrolled in the course during the semester or summer session in which the documentation examination/defense is conducted. Enrollment in the course is not required for the semester or summer session in which you graduate unless it is the same one during which the exhibition is defended. Following the initial enrollment in Art 591, you must continue to register for the course each fall and spring semester and each summer session until the exhibition is successfully defended.

Preparation of the Exhibition

You may register for Art 591 and begin work on the exhibition after the advisory committee is established and the exhibition proposal is approved. Meet regularly with the advisory committee chair, and schedule periodic meetings with the advisory committee.

Preparation of the Written Documentation of Purpose and Technique

The documentation of purpose must provide information necessary for someone to grasp the intent of the work.

The documentation of technique must demonstrate a thorough awareness of the source,

inspiration and tradition relevant to the work, as well as the particular methods employed in the use of materials and principles that determined the form of the completed work.

In preparing the required documentation of purpose and technique, provide documentation that can be related directly to the art works. Inconsistency between your purpose and technique and the work may be grounds for rejection of the exhibition. Though it is common and acceptable for your purpose to deviate in the course of the creative process, the exhibition of the work establishes your purpose. The examination committee will make its recommendation to certify or not certify your ability to provide viable art works and to understand and articulate the intellectual, technical and creative processes involved based on the work as presented.

Questions to test the effectiveness of the M.F.A. exhibition written documentation include:

- Does the text address the following:
 - What principles govern the form of the work?
 - What methods were employed in the use of materials?
- Does the text provide sufficient information to lead a knowledgeable spectator to an understanding of what the work is intended to do or mean?
- Does the paper demonstrate a thorough awareness of the source, inspiration and tradition relevant to the work?
- Can the substance of the text be directly correlated to the artwork? Is what is written consistent with what can be observed in the work?
- Is the text well written? Does the text conform to Standard English usage and to the form required by this guide?

Exhibition Defense - Draft Manuscript

A final draft or final manuscript of the exhibit document will serve as a basis for the exhibition examination/defense. A final draft must meet the following requirements:

- Be complete in all aspects.
- Be clearly readable on inexpensive paper, such as used in copy machines.
- Be mechanically correct.
- Include photos or slides of the work.
- Have been approved for content by all members of the Exhibition Advisory Committee.

Exhibition Defense - Application

Application for the exhibition examination is filed in the Graduate Office at least four weeks prior to graduation. Application cannot be made until the Office of Research and Graduate Studies has received the draft. Copies of the final draft must be in the hands of the examining committee at least one week prior to the defense. Final draft copies, which are provided for external committee members, must include a photographic record of the work. The actual art work may not be publicly exhibited until after the work is successfully defended.

Exhibition Report

Following the defense, the chair of the Exhibition Advisory Committee submits a report of the examination to the dean of research and graduate studies.

Public Exhibition

Arrangement for the exhibition of the approved work must be made with the committee and the secretary of the School of Art.

Submit Exhibition Documentation to Graduate Office

Following the exhibition defense, and after incorporating the examining committee's changes and corrections and bearing their signatures, submit the final manuscript electronically to the graduate office for approval. The final manuscripts (the original plus four copies) must all be signed by each member of the Exhibition Advisory Committee. It must meet all specification of this guide before multiple copies are made.

Binding

After the final manuscript has been signed by the Exhibition Advisory Committee and approved by the Graduate Office, take a copy to the Technical Services Office of the Steen Library for payment of fees for binding and shipping, and obtain a receipt for payment of fees.

Submission of Final Copies of Written Document of Purpose and Technique

Take the original manuscript and all copies to the Steen Library. After binding, one copy will be retained by the library; one copy will be sent to the chair of the Exhibition Advisory Committee; one copy will be sent to the School of Art; and the original bound manuscript is sent to you.

Grade for Art 591

When the exhibition defense form has been signed by the Exhibition Advisory Committee and the department chair, it is the responsibility of the committee to report grades for Art 591 to the registrar.

Preparing the Written Document of Purpose and Technique

The final manuscript is the document signed by the Exhibition Advisory Committee and the dean of research and graduate studies, subsequently bound, and placed in the library. It must be of the highest possible quality with respect to content and presentation. You bear the primary responsibility for quality, but each member of the advisory committee also bears responsibility and is not obligated to sign the manuscript until satisfied as to quality. Before making copies of the manuscript, proofread all pages to make sure all the mechanical specifications have been met. Failure to meet one or more specifications could result in the manuscript being returned for correction. The mechanical specifications in the font type, pagination, spacing, margins, headings, tables and figures, and reference citations.

Parts of the Exhibition

The exhibition should be arranged with a flyleaf, title page, signature page, abstract, preface (optional), acknowledgements (optional), table of contents, list of figures, text, bibliography/references, appendix (optional), and vita.

Graduation

All masters' graduate coursework, including approved transfer credits, must be completed within six years of the starting time. Each doctoral program defines the doctoral graduate coursework time limit. The overall GPA must be 3.0 or better. If your program requires a thesis or

dissertation, check the deadlines and refer to the requirements for theses, dissertations and fine arts exhibitions.

Information regarding graduation, commencement and diplomas is available from the Office of the Registrar. <http://www.sfasu.edu/registrar/630.asp>

Graduate Research Conference

The Graduate Research Conference offers an opportunity for graduate students to practice presenting data, public speaking, and communicating with others about theory and innovative research strategies. <http://www.sfasu.edu/academics/orgs/graduate-students-faculty/graduate-research-conference>

10- to 12-minute paper presentations

Presenters can expect to develop their ideas from a class assignment, paper or research project into an interactive presentation. If desired, presenters may incorporate slides with graphs, pictures, text, etc., using tools like PowerPoint. Each presentation should last 10 to 12 minutes. There will be a question-and-answer period at the end of the paper presentation session.

Poster presentations

Poster presenters will be asked to display their ideas from a class assignment, paper or research project in a poster and explain their project to passersby. The poster session will last an hour and thirty minutes.

Apply to GRC

Graduate students are encouraged to submit any work that represents academic/scholarly activity that is appropriate for the graduate program from which they are submitting. Work does not have to be research-based or empirically based.

- Submissions will be open to papers or projects completed up to a year prior.
- Submissions can include completed works or projects currently underway with preliminary findings (e.g. a proposal for a community outreach program or pilot study data). Submissions can also include a selected portion of a thesis project, enabling the student to refine a chapter and/or prepare for thesis defense.

Student entries should be submitted using an [online submission form](#).

Any questions can be addressed to the Graduate Research Conference Committee [via email](mailto:grc@sfasu.edu).

It is hoped that your experience here will be productive and successful. Stephen F. Austin State University provides the amenities of a fairly large university with the clean air and water of a small town in a pleasant country setting. The metropolitan areas of Houston and Dallas are within reach; while so are the forests and lakes of East Texas. We believe that this unique learning environment will meet your expectations and enable you to achieve your graduate school goals. Best of luck!