



INSTITUTE FOR DOCTORAL STUDIES IN THE VISUAL ARTS

2025 Qualifying Exams & Dissertation Handbook

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Mission & Statement of Purpose

IDSVA was founded for the purpose of providing doctoral studies in philosophy and art theory to visual artists, creative scholars, and arts professionals. With the passage of Maine State Legislature Bill L.D. 462, signed into law by the Governor of Maine on March 1, 2007, the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts was granted legal authority to confer the PhD degree. IDSVA is a Not-for-Profit 501(c)(3) institution.

MISSION

The mission of the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts is to operate a school of graduate studies providing education in philosophy, aesthetics, art theory, and similar disciplines related to the visual arts. The mission includes the provision of doctoral studies to holders of the MFA or the master's degree in a related field, the conferring of PhD degrees, and otherwise providing education and training related to the arts.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Traditionally the MFA has served as the terminal degree for studio artists. This degree has trained studio artists in the skills necessary for successful art practice and has prepared artists for teaching in college and university studio art programs. However, there is a strong sense among today's artists and educators that training beyond the MFA and similar degrees would benefit many artists, architects, curators, and creative scholars, especially those who grapple with issues surrounding contemporary media and culture. IDSVA's pioneering curriculum---fusing distance learning with intensive residencies---allows working art professionals to pursue rigorous advanced scholarship without having to interrupt or abandon their teaching careers, art practice, or other professional responsibilities.

LEARNING GOALS

Insofar as the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts offers to creative practitioners a PhD in philosophy, aesthetics, and art theory, it addresses an important opportunity for contemporary art and culture. The measure of this opportunity can be summed up in terms of IDSVA's primary learning goals. These include the nourishment and cultivation of:

The ability to speak and write critically and philosophically about the relationship between the history of ideas and art in general;

The ability to teach university level courses on subjects dealing with the relation of philosophy and art---such as courses in aesthetics, art theory, and critical theory;

The capacity to situate oneself in the history of ideas and culture in terms of one's creative practice and/or field of inquiry;

And lastly, IDSVA's overarching learning goal is to nourish and cultivate an ethos of inquiry that encourages creative thinkers to conceive new systems of knowledge.

1. Conduct of the Written and Oral Qualifying Examinations

The Qualifying Examination incorporates two components, a Written and an Oral. The Written Exam, and all 60 credits for the course of study, must be completed prior to sitting for the Oral Examination.

1.1. Written Examination

Candidates successfully completing the Written Qualifying Examination shall:

- a) Submit a 6,000 – 8,000 words paper for examination no later than six weeks prior to the oral exam. This paper shall:
 - i) Emerge from work done in the third-year seminar;
 - ii) Consist primarily of an introduction to the Dissertation;
 - iii) Consist of the candidate's own writing, based on their investigations;
 - iv) Initiate a project that will form a distinct **contribution** to the knowledge of the subject, namely:
 - afford evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical power;
 - give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, and in so doing, demonstrate objectivity, a deep and synoptic understanding of the field of study, the capacity to hermeneutically contextualize and interpret, and for independent judgment in complex situations.
 - v) Be written in English and commensurate with the highest standards of scholarly writing in the Humanities;
 - vi) Be of a standard to merit publication in whole or in part or in a revised form (for example as an article in an academic journal);
 - vii) Be formatted as follows:
 - Times New Roman or a similar easy-to-read serif font
 - 12-point
 - Double-spaced
 - All margins 1"
 - Pages numbered in the upper right corner
 - Written according to MLA style.
- b) The exam shall also include:
 - A final list of 12-15 titles central to the student's research project (a.k.a. "Student Texts"), annotated;
 - A one-page, double-spaced, thesis statement;

- Outline;
- Table of Contents (simplified from the outline to reflect only chapter headings and approximate word counts).

1.2. Oral Examination

In addition to the written exam, and the attendant documents listed in section (1.1.b) above, each student will submit a list of the readings that comprise their particular Course of Study at IDSVA (**Course of Study Reading List**). Specifically, that list will include all of the texts read in all of the seminars, listed in the order in which they were read (NOT in alphabetic order).

Because syllabi change from year to year, and because some students take leaves of absence which put them “out of sync” with their original cohort, it is essential that each student submit this list so that examiners ask questions that are appropriate to that particular student’s program of study. To this list should be added **twelve to fifteen Student Texts** as chosen by the candidate (Note: it is expected that this list will include a number of texts from the Course of Study). As indicated above, these texts comprise the titles most central to the written exam and projected thesis. The document as a whole is to be delivered to the Qualifying Exams course in Canvas, along with the Written Qualifying Exam (see **Appendix A**, Qualifying Exams checklist).

Candidates successfully completing the Oral Qualifying Examination shall:

- a) Demonstrate a thorough familiarity with:
 - i) All completed seminars and directed readings;
 - ii) All Student Texts as chosen by the candidate.
 - b) Demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the candidate’s Dissertation topic and the key texts related to the topic;
 - c) Demonstrate an integrated comprehension of the key theoretical positions relative to the candidate’s Dissertation topic and explain the position to be represented by the Dissertation.
- 1.1.1. Examiners will be appointed for each candidate in accordance with IDSVA’s policy for the appointment of examiners for the degree of PhD. At least one examiner for each candidate must have experience as an examiner for a research degree awarded by a U.S. higher education institution. At least one examiner will be a member of the IDSVA faculty.
 - 1.1.2. All matters relating to the Oral Qualifying Examination must be treated as confidential. Examiners are not permitted to divulge the content of the examination to anyone other than the candidate or faculty and administrators of IDSVA.
 - 1.1.3. After the Oral Qualifying Examination, a joint final report shall be prepared by the examiners for submission to IDSVA. The joint final report will be released to candidates for their personal information.

- 1.1.4. Each joint final report of the examiners shall indicate whether the candidate has successfully met the requirements for completion of the Oral Qualifying Examination and shall include a statement of the examiners' judgment of the candidate's performance.
- 1.1.5. All examinations will be conducted by videoconference, on selected dates during the month of July. In exceptional circumstances, Qualifying Examinations may be held at other times.

1.3. Qualifying Examinations Outcomes

Examiners have four options in determining the result of the Written Qualifying Examination, and an additional four options in determining the result of the Oral Qualifying Examination, as follows:

1.3.1. The Written Qualifying Examination:

- a) If the Written Qualifying Examination fulfills the criteria (set out in Points 1.1 above), and the examiners are fully satisfied with the quality of the written work, the examiners may pass the Written Qualifying Examination without amendment.
- b) If the Written Preliminary Examination otherwise fulfills the criteria but the Examination requires minor amendments, the examiners may require the candidate to make amendments within 2 months. The amended examination shall be submitted to the Chair of the committee (who will consult the committee members) for confirmation that the amendments are satisfactory.
- c) If the Written Preliminary Examination, though inadequate, shall seem of sufficient merit to justify such action, the examiners may determine that the candidate be permitted to re-present the Written Preliminary Examination in a revised form within 6 months. Examiners shall not, however, make such a decision without submitting the candidate to an Oral Preliminary Examination. The examiners may at their discretion exempt the candidate from a further oral examination, on re-presentation of the Preliminary Written Examination. The amended examination shall be submitted to the Chair of the committee (who will consult the committee members) for confirmation that the amendments are satisfactory.
- d) If the examiners determine that a candidate has not reached the standard required for the re-submission of the Written Qualifying Examination in a revised form, the examiners may determine that the candidate has not passed the Written Qualifying Examination.

Note: If a student is required to revise the Written Qualifying Exam, they may elect to work with an IDSVA Post-Doc for one or two semesters for a fee of \$1000 per semester. If the resubmitted Written Qualifying Examination still fails to satisfy the examiners, the student will be given a one-year leave during which they can prepare to resubmit the Written Exam. During this additional year, the student will not receive any formal supervision from IDSVA faculty.

The student must re-submit the examination within a year. If, on the third try, the student still fails to satisfy the committee, they will be asked to withdraw from the program and will be granted the MPhil. Additionally, if a student is unable to satisfactorily complete a revision of the Written Examination within two years of initial exam, their participation in the program will be terminated, and they will be granted the MPhil.

If a student needs an additional extension on the due date for the rewrite of the written exam, they will have to request it to the Director of the School prior to the due date, for a period not exceeding three additional months.

Once the revision is approved, the student will be given permission to proceed to the dissertation in the next available semester (either fall or spring).

1.3.2. The Oral Qualifying Examination:

- a) If the Oral Qualifying Examination fulfills the criteria (set out in 1.2 above), and the examiners are fully satisfied with the student's performance in the Examination, the examiners may determine that the candidate has fully passed the Oral Qualifying Examination.
- b) If the Oral Qualifying Examination otherwise fulfills the criteria but the candidate's performance is deemed less than fully satisfactory, the examiners may require the candidate to re-sit the Oral Qualifying Examination within six months.
- c) If the Oral Qualifying Examination, though inadequate, shall seem of sufficient merit to justify such action, the examiners may determine that the candidate be permitted to re-sit the Oral Qualifying Examination within 12 months. Examiners shall not, however, make such a decision without submitting the candidate to a Written Qualifying Examination. The examiners may at their discretion exempt the candidate from making amendments to the Written Qualifying Examination.
- d) If the examiners determine that a candidate has not reached the standard required for re-sitting the Oral Qualifying Examination, the examiners may determine that the candidate has not passed the Oral Qualifying Examination.

Note: If a student is asked to re-sit an Oral Qualifying Examination, but still fails to satisfy the examiners, the student will be given a one-year leave during which they can prepare to re-sit the Oral Exam. During this year, the student will not receive supervision from IDSVA faculty. Additionally, if a student is unable to satisfactorily pass the Oral Examination within two years of initial exam, their participation in the program will be terminated, and they will be granted the MPhil.

1.3.3. Examiners have the right to make comments in confidence to IDSVA in a separate report. Such comments should not normally be concerned with the performance of the candidate but may cover, for example, matters to which they wish to draw the attention of IDSVA.

1.3.4. The examiners may, at their discretion, consult the Director of the School before completing their report, particularly if they have doubts relating to the appropriate decision to be made.

2. Oral Examinations Study Tips

- 2.1. Review the Course of Study that your cohort followed (i.e. all of the seminars). Read all of the course descriptions that introduce the course reading lists, so as to re-familiarize yourself with the larger philosophical/theoretical context within which the reading list was introduced to you.
- 2.2. Compile and review the Course of Study Reading List. This you can do by cutting and pasting the reading list from each of the syllabi in the order in which you took the courses. Be sure that you review the syllabi for the courses that you actually took. This document comprises the course headings plus the reading list and will allow you to quickly ascertain the Course of Study's historical trajectory.
- 2.3. Now review your archived seminars (Past Enrollments) in Canvas. Review in order all of the material from your Cohort's Discussions. Along with the Course of Study and the Course of Study Reading List, the Discussions will begin to bring into focus the narrative implicit to the curriculum.
- 2.4. Re-read all of the exam papers you wrote for the seminars. The exam questions and your essay responses link the texts together in terms of the inter-textual narrative referred to above.
- 2.5. Repeat steps 1-4. Begin noting where links in your particular narrative chain are missing. Go back and review the texts you need to review.
- 2.6. Once you have put together your own list of 15 texts, you should add it on to the list you've created based on the seminar readings. Think about how your particular list "slants the story" in a direction that is unique to your critical standpoint.
- 2.7. And be sure that you are not working in isolation. Create a study group with others who are taking the exam at the same time. Those who work in groups to prepare for the orals tend to excel, while those who try to go it alone tend to struggle or fail.

3. Dissertation for the PhD degree

The scope of the Dissertation shall be what might reasonably be expected after the completion of the coursework curriculum and two, or at most three, years of full-time study following the completion of coursework.

After satisfying the requirements of the Qualifying Exams, the candidate will be given permission to proceed to the dissertation (see Appendix B), and will be assigned to a Dissertation Director, in the next available semester. The Dissertation Director's role is to supervise the student's Dissertation research, to read drafts, and to offer feedback and advice. The candidate and director should schedule telephone/video chat meetings at least once a month. In addition, the Dissertation Director becomes the student's Advisor for the remainder of their time at IDSVA. In that capacity, the Dissertation Director is expected to be able to provide letters of recommendation for the student for professional positions and opportunities,

and to guide the student through the job application process. The Chair of Dissertation Directors will speak with both the candidate and director at least twice per semester.

In addition to the supervising and advising role, the Dissertation Director is also responsible to chair the Dissertation Defense, and to supervise and approve revisions in case these are asked by the Dissertation Committee following the Dissertation defense.

Dissertation Preparation is offered during the regular Fall and Spring semesters (September to December, and January to April, respectively, for a total of 15 weeks per semester. Students will receive 1 dissertation credit for each semester of dissertation preparation. Candidates are expected to enroll in dissertation preparation until the dissertation is completed and approved by their Dissertation Director. Dissertation Directors are not expected to meet their students or read their work during the Summer semester. However, in some cases and especially during the final stages of writing (if the Director agrees), there might be an option for enrolling for the Summer semester.

Candidates are considered to be enrolled half-time while enrolled in Dissertation Preparation. Candidates receiving federal financial aid are not eligible to receive federal loans for more than 6 semesters of dissertation preparation.

At the beginning of the semester, the candidate and director agree on a work plan for the semester, covering both reading and writing goals. A syllabus is provided at the start of each semester with guidelines and meeting protocols. The course is graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis in light of the semester's work plan.

Grading Scale for Dissertation Preparation

S	Satisfactory
U	Unsatisfactory
W	Withdrawn

Dissertation Preparation grades will be given by the Dissertation Director. In cases where the student has a problem with the grade received, they should bring their concern to the Director of the School. In cases where the Director of the School is also the Dissertation Direction, the student should bring their concern to the President.

If a student receives a grade of "U" (Unsatisfactory) for any dissertation preparation credits, they will be placed on probation for the following term. A conference will be held between the Director of the School and the student. Conditions of probation will be detailed in a letter from the Director of the School. The probation letter will also explain what the student must do to return to satisfactory academic progress. Failure to redress cause of probation will constitute condition for dismissal.

A student on probation for one semester will continue to be eligible for federal student loans. A student on probation for more than one semester will be denied future federal student loans. For more detailed information, see the current IDSVF Financial Aid Handbook > Satisfactory Academic Progress (available for download on the IDSVF website [Policies and Procedures](#) page).

If a candidate's dissertation director withdraws due to a loss of interest in or confidence in the project, the candidate will be assigned to another director, but that will be the final

chance to work with a director.

The candidate cannot ask to be assigned to another director, with the exception of extreme circumstances: lack of time/engagement in the project, methodological incompatibility, etc. As the first step, the candidate shall discuss the matter with the Chair of Dissertation Committees in these cases (in case the Chair of Dissertation is the Dissertation Director, this shall be reported to the Director of the School). If no solution can be found, the candidate will be assigned to another director, but that will be the final chance to work with a director.

3.1 Dissertation Guidelines

The Dissertation shall be original (adding a perspective or knowledge to the subject); hermeneutical (listening, questioning and interpreting different approaches); critical (building on this one main question, thesis and argument); systematic (clear structure, justified and consistent use of methodology); be driven by a clear question, thesis and argument, intertwining arts and philosophy. Specifically, it shall:

- a) Consist of the candidate's own account of their investigations, and must indicate how they appear to advance the study of the subject;
- b) Form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical power, give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, and in so doing, demonstrate a deep and synoptic understanding of the field of study, objectivity, and the capacity for independent judgment in complex situations and autonomous work in that field;
- c) Be an integrated whole and present a coherent **argument**; [A series of papers, whether published or otherwise, is not acceptable for submission as a Dissertation. Students may publish papers that contain parts of the dissertation prior to the completion of the dissertation itself, however papers written and published prior to enrolling in the program, either by the candidate alone or jointly with others, may not be included as part of the Dissertation.]
- d) Be written in English and the literary presentation shall be commensurate with the highest standards of scholarly writing in the Humanities;
- e) Be of a standard to merit publication in whole or in part or in a revised form (for example as a monograph or as a number of articles in academic journals);
- f) Include a full bibliography and references;
- g) Comprise a word count of 80,000 - 100,000 words:
Include in the wordcount: Endnotes
Exclude from the wordcount: Title Pages, Bibliography, and Appendices
Appendices should only include material that examiners are not required to read in order to examine the Dissertation, but to which they may refer if they

wish.

In the Word document, carefully select the text of the dissertation proper. Open the Word Count dialogue box and check the option to include endnotes.

[Note: *Any dissertation that does not fall within this word count needs the approval of the Director of the School. Exceptions are considered on a case-by-case basis, but under no circumstances shall any dissertation be accepted that is less than 70K words.*]

- h) Be presented in MLA style. See the Appendix D Style Guide for additional guidance.

3.2. Resources for the use of images in dissertations

The IDSVA Library lists a few guidelines for the use of images under copyright law. See links below: <https://idsva.libguides.com/c.php?g=780964&p=5598492>)

<https://www.arl.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/code-of-best-practices-fair-use.pdf>

This guide, also linked on our library site, gives more attention to dissertations, see pages 11-13 in particular:

http://vraweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/VRA_FairUse_Statement_Pages_Links.pdf

3.3. Key Points of Dissertation Writing

- 3.3.1. Make the argument the major organizer of the text. Writing an argument involves taking a position on a particular issue, event, or question, and justifying that position. An argument attempts to persuade the reader to a particular point of view and to the veracity and worth of that point of view. In its simplest form an argument consists of:

- A statement of position (a **thesis**),
- A series of points arranged in logical order, supported by evidence and examples, linked together by connections that emphasize their cumulative nature, and
- A summary in which the thesis is reaffirmed and restated. There may also be recommendations or counter points of view (to strengthen the case being made) at this stage.

There are generally sub-arguments contained within the larger overarching case being made (use them to organize your chapters).

Two reasons to make the argument the organizing principle of your dissertation:

- a) You should be concerned with a problem, justify the importance of attending to that problem, and persuade a reader that the evidence you have accumulated on the topic sheds new light on the issue. The essence of doctoral dissertation is not recount or summary. It is very extended argument – that's why it is called a 'thesis'. A dissertation that contains little argument will struggle to achieve the stated goal of making a scholarly contribution.

- b) Scholarly work at the doctoral level is also meant to be about the unique contribution to knowledge production made by the student/researcher. Even if the topic has been subject to countless other studies, doctoral researches must place their particular stamp on their work. While critical summary may rely on framing and locating the works of others, factual recounts do little more than say what happened, not why, nor why this is important. It is argument that provides the opportunity for you to make your mark, to state your case, to stake a claim.
- 3.3.2. Identify the CONTEXT*: the discourse communities, field of knowledges you are entering into. Reflect on the process of entering into them. Understand writing as a social practice (not as a set of skills). Understand the importance of critical evaluation of the ‘literatures’ – the scholarship in the field of knowledge production you are entering into, and the importance of taking a stance, evaluating other scholars and philosopher’s works/positions:
- a. Sketch out the nature of the field or fields relevant to the inquiry, possibly indicating something of their historical development and
 - b. Identify major debates and define contentious terms, in order to
 - c. Establish which studies, ideas and /or methods are most pertinent to the study and
 - d. Locate gaps in the field, in order to
 - e. Create the warrant for the study in question, and
 - f. Identify the contribution the study will make.
- *CONTEXT/FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION*
- FIELD: Body of scholarship with natural boundaries and affinities (but these boundaries can be blurred or in process; new fields can be created by bringing together disparate fields).*
- KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION: emphasizes the constructive capacity of this intellectual work.*
- Note: What is in the field is more than just articles, papers, books: it also includes other forms of knowledge production, such as artworks, industries, policies, in sum, a range of sources that are not exclusively academic. The ‘gaps’ that your research aims to fill may come from an intersection of various fields and modes of production that reveal what is missing from the discussion.*
- 3.3.3. Negotiate text work and identity work simultaneously (process of building the scholar; becoming critical).
 - 3.3.4. Use the metaphor of the dinner table for imagining a conversation with your key thinkers and secondary scholars where *you* drive the conversation (situate your voice in there).
 - 3.3.5. Mapping the field: “Mapping ideas is about setting out, on paper, the geography of research and thinking that has been done on a topic. At one level, it is about identifying what has been done, when it was done, what methods were used and who did what. At

another level, it is about identifying links between what has been done, to show the thinking that has influenced what has been produced.” (Hart, 1998: 144)

4. Requirements applicable to Dissertations submitted for the degree of PhD

- 4.1. The work submitted in a Dissertation must have been done after the initial registration for a degree.
- 4.2. A candidate will not be permitted to submit as their Dissertation one which has been submitted for a degree or comparable award of this or any other University or institution.
- 4.3. A candidate must have the complete Dissertation (including title) approved by the candidate’s Dissertation Director before submitting it to the Chair of Dissertation Committees (Dr Elina Staikou [estaikou(at)idsva.edu]). The candidate must be enrolled in a Dissertation Prep semester at the time of submitting the final version to the Dissertation Director for approval.
- 4.4. The Dissertation Director must be confident in the viability of the dissertation for the dissertation defense before allowing the dissertation to be submitted to the Chair of Dissertation Committees (i.e. the Dissertation Director will verify that the dissertation fulfills all the points listed in 3.1 before signing off for approval).

5. Entry to examination and submission of Dissertation

- 5.1. IDSVA shall require the submission of a completed dissertation registration form for each of its candidates. (See Appendix C. This form is available for download from the Canvas home page.)
- 5.2. The dissertation registration form must be submitted to the Chair of Dissertation Committees (Dr. Elina Staikou [estaikou(at)idsva.edu]) at least one month before submitting the dissertation. A candidate is required to submit with the entry form an abstract (approximately 300 words) of the content of the Dissertation to assist in the appointment of suitable examiners. While the choice of examiners is made in consultation with the candidate and the director, the final appointment of the Defense Committee is made by the Chair of Dissertation Committees in consultation with the Director of the School. Potential examiners should not be directly approached as to their willingness or invited by students or directors to act as members of the Defense Committee at any point.
- 5.3. Once the dissertation has been approved by the Dissertation Director, the candidate does not need to enroll in the subsequent Dissertation Preparation semester which includes the defense date.
- 5.4. Defenses are usually scheduled either in the fall semester (early September – mid-December) or in the spring semester (late January–early April).

- 5.5. *At least eight weeks prior to the requested defense date*, a copy of the Dissertation must be submitted to the Chair of Dissertation Committees as a Word document, who will confirm that the dissertation conforms to the word count and the mechanical requirements for the document (carefully follow Appendix D – Style Guide and Appendix E – Title Pages). For Spring 2026 defenses, dissertations should be submitted by January 26, 2026. For Fall defenses, dissertations should be submitted by September 8, 2026.
- 5.6. The Chair of Dissertation Committees will review the document and may request formatting edits. After being approved by the Chair of Dissertation Committees, the student should convert the Word doc into a PDF, no larger than 25MB. Printing is not required unless requested by a committee member. Candidates will bear printing and shipping costs as requested.
- 5.7. The dissertation director will serve as the chair of the dissertation defense committee. In consultation with the Director of the School and the dissertation director, the Chair of Dissertation Committees will choose two additional committee members and will inform the student once those appointments have been made. The student should email the PDF copy to each committee member, at least six weeks prior to the defense date. The Chair of Dissertation Committees will inform the committee members that if they would like to have a printed copy of the dissertation, they should request it directly from the student. If a printed copy is requested, it should be printed in black & white, single-sided, and simply bound (a coil binding is good). If the manuscript is too large for one volume, it may be split into two volumes.
- 5.8. Every candidate is required to present a short abstract of the Dissertation of not more than 300 words with each copy of the Dissertation submitted to IDSVA, included in the Title Pages. Keywords for web searches should be listed at the end of the abstract.
- 5.9. If the candidate has not submitted their Dissertation for examination within 18 months from the submission of the form of entry for the examination, the entry will be cancelled unless for special reasons the candidate's supervisor requests otherwise.
- 5.10. The candidate may make travel plans for the Commencement before the defense is conducted, if desired. If the dissertation requires minor revisions (i.e. option 'b' in the possible outcomes, p. 14) which are not submitted and approved before the Commencement ceremony, the candidate may still participate in the ceremony and receive a blank diploma. The diploma will be mailed once the revisions are accepted.

6. Conduct of the Dissertation Defense

- 6.1. The examiners, after reading the Dissertation, shall examine the candidate orally on the subject of the Dissertation and, if they see fit, on subjects relevant thereto.
- 6.2. The standard format for Dissertation Defenses will be via videoconference.
- 6.3. There are five options open to examiners in determining the result of the examination, as follows:
 - a) If the Dissertation fulfills the criteria (set out in 3.1 above) and the candidate satisfies the examiners in all other parts of the examination, the examiners will report that the candidate

has satisfied them in the examination for the PhD degree.

- b) If the Dissertation otherwise fulfills the criteria but requires minor amendments and if the candidate satisfies the examiners in all other parts of the examination, the examiners may require the candidate to make amendments specified by them, doing so within three (3) months. The amended Dissertation shall be submitted to the examiners or one of their number nominated by them for confirmation that the amendments are satisfactory.
 - c) If the Dissertation otherwise fulfills the criteria but requires substantive amendments and if the candidate satisfies the examiners in all other parts of the examination, the examiners may require the candidate to make amendments specified by them, doing so within nine (9) months. The amended Dissertation shall be submitted to the examiners or one of their number nominated by them for confirmation that the amendments are satisfactory.
 - d) If the Dissertation, though inadequate, shall seem of sufficient merit to justify such action, the examiners may determine that the candidate be permitted to re-present the Dissertation in a revised form within eighteen (18) months. Examiners shall not, however, make such a decision without submitting the candidate to a Dissertation Defense. The examiners may at their discretion exempt from a further oral examination, on representation of the Dissertation, a candidate who under this regulation has been permitted to re-present in revised form.
 - e) If, after completion of the examination including the Dissertation Defense for the PhD degree, the examiners determine that a candidate has not reached the standard required for the award of the degree nor for the re-presentation of the Dissertation in a revised form for that degree, the examiners may determine that the candidate has not satisfied them in the examination.
- 6.4. If the examiners are unable to reach agreement, their reports shall be referred to the IDSVA Director, who shall determine the action to be taken.
- 6.5. A candidate who fails to satisfy the examiners (point 7.3.e) may apply to register *de novo* (starting over) for a further period of study leading to a substantially new dissertation, which will have to be approved in accordance with paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4, above. In this case, the candidate may be assigned a new Dissertation Director, at the discretion of the Director of the School. If the candidate does not register *de novo*, he or she will be automatically granted the MPhil.

7. Notification of results of the Dissertation Defense

- 7.1. After the examiners have reached a decision, the candidate shall be notified by the IDSVA Director of the result of the Dissertation Defense.
- 7.2. After any requested revisions have been approved by the committee, the candidates should submit their final dissertations to the Chair of Dissertation Committees, Elina Staikou.
- 7.3. A diploma under the seal of IDSVA shall be subsequently delivered to each candidate who has been awarded a degree.

- 7.4. The diploma for the degree will bear the name which appears on the title page of the submitted dissertation.
- 7.5. Candidates who elect to participate in a graduation ceremony will receive their diplomas at that ceremony; otherwise, they will be mailed.

8. Availability of Dissertations

- 8.1. Dissertation abstracts are published on the IDSVA website (<http://www.idsva.edu/abstracts/>). The full dissertation is published as a pdf on the Maine State Library website.
- 8.2. In addition, IDSVA has the authority to supply a copy of the abstract of each student dissertation for inclusion in any appropriate published list of dissertations offered for higher degrees in United States universities or in any supplement thereto, or for consultation in any central file of abstracts of such dissertations.
- 8.3. In the spirit of the dissemination of new knowledge that is a hallmark of higher education, and in line with standard procedures in other PhD programs, dissertations will be subject to web searches and unrestricted downloads unless the student requests to opt out that system and have their dissertation unavailable for download outside of the IDSVA community. A request to restrict download access to a dissertation has an initial two-year window from the time the degree is conferred. Guidelines associated with restricted dissertation access are:
 - a) The full text version of the dissertation will be available for download only to members of the IDSVA community.
 - b) Web searches including the citation and abstract of restricted dissertations will continue to be available to the general public.
 - c) After two years the restriction will elapse.
 - d) Restrictions on full text download may be renewed for another two-year period following the date of filing after which time it will be released to the IDSVA Library and the Maine State Library catalog and made available to the public electronically. Note: Requests for additional restrictions should be made in writing to the Director of the School, and the dissertation chair's signature is required for embargos longer than the initial two years.
 - e) The Dissertation Restriction Form is available from the Director of the School upon request.

9. MPhil Degree

- 9.1. IDSVA grants the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) to students who complete a minimum of 40 credits and do not go on to receive the PhD. This degree will be made available to students who enrolled in the PhD program, and who successfully

completed the first two years of coursework (40 credits) with an average of B or better.

- 9.2. The MPhil is typically awarded to those who fail to pass the Qualifying Exams and to those who either do not complete the dissertation, or who do not pass the dissertation defense. Other circumstances, such as health and life changes, may necessitate the granting of the MPhil. The Director of the School, in consultation with academic advisors and core faculty members, will determine which students should be advised to consider the MPhil instead of proceeding to the PhD.

10. Graduation

- 10.1. Graduation requires both academic and financial clearance. The Director of the School and the Registrar will certify that all academic degree requirements have been fulfilled. The Bursar will audit financial accounts. If academic and/or financial clearance is not granted, a hold will be placed on the graduation process until the academic deficiency and/or the financial obligation is cleared.
- 10.2. The degree is granted from the moment the candidate passes the defense, and any revisions to the dissertation that may be required have been completed and approved.
- 10.3. The Commencement ceremony usually takes place in New York City in late April. Attending the Commencement Ceremony is not mandatory to receive the PhD degree. Candidates may choose to postpone attending the ceremony for a year if they so wish.
- 10.4. Recipients of the MPhil degree are encouraged to participate in the Commencement.
- 10.5. There is no additional fee for graduation. IDSVA provides a hotel room for the graduate and a guest at the commencement location for the two nights surrounding the ceremony. The graduate must provide their own transportation to the location. Academic regalia is optional and may be either rented or purchased by the candidate. Please refer to the document “Academic Regalia” on the Canvas home page.

11. General Remarks

- 11.1. The work in the Dissertation submitted by the candidate must be **their own** and submission of a Dissertation for examination for the PhD degree will be regarded as a declaration of this fact.
- 11.2. All work submitted as part of the requirements for any examination of IDSVA must be expressed in the candidate’s own words and incorporate their own ideas and judgments. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person’s thoughts or words as though they were the candidate’s own and is an examination offense. Direct quotations from the published or unpublished work of another must always be clearly identified as such by being placed inside quotation marks, and a full reference to their source must be provided in the proper form. A series of short quotations from several different sources, if not clearly identified as such, constitutes plagiarism as

much as does a single unacknowledged long quotation from a single source. Equally, if another person's ideas or judgments are summarized, the candidate must refer to that person in their text and include the work to which reference is made in the bibliography.

- 11.3. Allegations of plagiarism will be reviewed according to the Academic Dishonesty Procedure as detailed in the Student Handbook, as will any other allegations of examination misconduct, including, but not limited to:
 - a) deliberate attempts to represent falsely or unfairly the ideas or work of others;
 - b) the invention or fabrication of data;
 - c) the submission of work commissioned from another person.
- 11.4. A dissertation director may recommend that a candidate work with an outside editor. Additionally, candidates may on their own initiative, avail themselves of the services of a copy editor for the final edit of the Dissertation. In either case, the candidate must seek prior approval from the Director of the School.

APPENDIX A. Qualifying Exams Checklist

Your Canvas submission shall include:

- ☐ Your Written Qualifying exam, including endnotes and Works Cited
- ☐ A final list of 12-15 titles central to the student's research project (referred also as "Student Texts"), a.k.a. the "Annotated Bibliography"
- ☐ A one-page, double-spaced, Abstract (including thesis statement)
- ☐ Detailed Outline
- ☐ Table of Contents (simplified from the outline to reflect only chapter headings and approximate word counts)
- ☐ Your Course of Study Reading List. This you can do by cutting and pasting the reading list from each of the syllabi **in the order in which you took the courses (i.e., not in alphabetic order)***. The reading list will allow you to quickly ascertain the Course of Study's historical trajectory (note: individual texts from *Art in Theory* should be included as well)

**Word doc. or docx. only please. No scanning of syllabi.*

APPENDIX B.

Permission to Proceed to the Dissertation

This memo serves as official confirmation that _____

has successfully completed both the Oral and Written Qualifying Exams as of

_____ and is permitted to begin the dissertation phase of doctoral studies at IDSVA.

_____ will be working with _____

as her/his Dissertation Director.

Appendix C. Dissertation Registration Form

A copy of this form as a pdf with form fields is available on the [IDSVA Canvas Homepage](#).

The dissertation registration form must be submitted to the chair of dissertations (Elina Staikou [estaikou(at)idsva.edu]) at least one month before submitting the dissertation, and at least three months prior to the requested date of defense. A candidate is required to submit with the entry form an abstract (approximately 300 words) of the content of the Dissertation to assist in the appointment of suitable examiners.

Date:

Candidate's Name:

Director of Dissertation:

Title of Dissertation:

Expected Date of Dissertation Submission (at least one month from the current date):

Requested Date (or range of dates) of Defense (at least three months from the current date):

Appendix D: IDSVA Dissertation Style Guide

IDSVA dissertations must follow MLA writing and formatting guidelines. Certain points of MLA style, the ones that tend to be common stumbling blocks for dissertation writers, are referenced in this guide. However, there are many more MLA guidelines that do apply and are not mentioned in this guide. All dissertation writers should refer to the most recent edition of the MLA Handbook. There are also many helpful online resources about MLA style published by university writing centers.

The registrar will review the formatting of the submitted dissertation to confirm that it follows MLA guidelines. The registrar may request formatting edits to the dissertation before it is accepted for distribution to the committee members.

1. Basic formatting:


- a. Times New Roman font
- b. 12-point
- c. Double-spaced
- d. Standard US 8.5 x 11-inch paper
- e. All margins 1"
- f. Headers may be centered, but all other text should be left flush
- g. Indent the first line of each paragraph one half-inch from the left margin. Do not enter additional line space between paragraphs
- h. Pages numbered in the upper right corner

2. Citations

- a. Use in-text parenthetical citations to refer readers to entries in the bibliography.
- b. Parenthetical citations for short quotes are placed *before* the final punctuation mark.
- c. Quotations longer than four lines should be set off as a block quote. The block quote should be double spaced and indented half an inch from the left margin. Do not indent the first line an extra amount or add quotation marks not present in the source.
- d. Parenthetical citations for block quotes are placed *after* the final punctuation of the quote, and no punctuation follows the citation.

3. Endnotes

- a. The notes should be in endnote form, notated by Arabic numerals.
 - b. The notes should be placed at the end of the dissertation proper, not at the end of each chapter.
 - c. Start the endnotes on a separate page with the title 'Notes' or Endnotes' centered at the top of the page.
 - d. The notes themselves should be double-spaced, with no additional line space between entries.
4. Bibliography (referred to as 'Works Cited' in the MLA Handbook)
 - a. The bibliography is placed after the endnotes. It should start on a separate page with the title 'Bibliography' or 'Works Cited' centered at the top of the page.
 - b. The entries should be aligned left flush and formatted in a hanging indent style (i.e., indent the second and subsequent lines of each citation by half an inch)
 - c. Double space all citations, but do not enter additional line space between paragraphs.
5. Illustrations
 - a. Illustrations or tables should be interpolated into the text proper unless compelling reasons not to exist. The images should be placed between paragraphs; the text should not wrap around the images.
 - b. Every illustration should have a caption below.
 - c. The caption may include numbering (Fig.--), and you may provide a List of Illustrations.
 - d. Illustrations should be sized appropriately for adequate reproduction quality (~150 dpi).
6. File Size
 - a. The dissertation will be initially submitted to the registrar as a Word doc. If the document is larger than the 25MB, it should be sent by Google Drive. The page numbering and other formatting may be disrupted when viewed in Google Drive. This is okay. The registrar will download the file for viewing, and the original formatting is preserved in the downloaded document.
 - b. Once approved by the registrar, you should save the complete dissertation document as a pdf file for electronic distribution. The size of the final pdf file should be 25 MB or less.

File Format: PDF 

☒ Best for electronic distribution and accessibility
(uses Microsoft online service)

☐ Best for printing

7. Title Pages

- a. A. The title pages should **match** the format that appears in Appendix E. It can be helpful to print out both your title pages and Appendix E and compare them side by side. Appendix E is available for download as a Word doc from the Canvas home page.
- b. Pay attention to the variations in single or double spacing, and variations in left flush, centered, or right flush elements.
- c. The page numbers for the Title Pages should be in lower case Roman, while the page numbers for the dissertation proper should be in Arabic numerals. To maintain the two different numbering formats in your Word doc, create a new section (Insert > Break > Section Break).
- d. The very first page of the Title Pages (the Cover Page) has no page number on it. Uncheck the box for 'show number on first page' in Format > Page Numbers. The next page will be numbered 'ii'.

APPENDIX E. Title page and other front materials formats

A copy of this form is available as a Word Document in the [IDSVA Canvas](#) Homepage.

Erase all text with the blue highlight, and replace all text with the yellow highlight.

TITLE IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS: CENTERED, DOUBLE-SPACED AND ALMOST
CERTAINLY TAKING TWO LINES

Your Name as you would like it to appear on the diploma

Submitted to the faculty of
The Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Month, Year

Accepted by the faculty of the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Name, Degree

Committee chair title (faculty rank) of Area (if applicable) or Department

Committee chair institution

Committee Member: Name, Degree

Committee member title (faculty rank) of Area (if applicable) or Department

Committee member institution

Committee Member: Name, Degree

Committee member title (faculty rank) of Area (if applicable) or Department

Committee member institution

(For the initial submission for defense, enter your dissertation director as the Committee chair and leave the other two committee member names blank. For the final submission for archiving, fill out the committee member names.)

(optional, but strongly recommended)

© year

Your Legal Name

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

(optional)

a quote (or two) that serve as an epigraph for the whole

(single-spaced and centered)

dedication

(single-spaced and right justified)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgements should be single-spaced, left flush, with no indent on the first line. You can, of course, thank anyone whom you'd like to thank. At minimum, thank your director and committee members and the folks who have been supportive of your time at IDSVA (e.g. partner, children, dear friends). Even if the paragraph(s) take only a few lines, the acknowledgements get a page of their own. For multiple paragraphs, put a one line space between each paragraph and do not indent the first line.

ABSTRACT

Your full name

TITLE IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS: CENTERED, DOUBLE-SPACED AND ALMOST
CERTAINLY TAKING TWO LINES.

What follows on this page, and perhaps spills over onto the next, is the ABSTRACT. It should be double-spaced, and should be NO MORE THAN 300 words. It should situate the project by indicating what the problem/question was that you set out to investigate, what your thesis is, and why that thesis seemed important as a contribution to scholarly inquiry. It should not include any material that needs to be footnoted or otherwise cited, as it should be able to stand alone as a coherent, albeit short, description of the long project. Note that it should be left-justified.

Keywords: At the end of the abstract, add five keywords here to be used in a Web search

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This formatting for the Table of Contents and Chapter Headings does not need to be strictly followed, and can be adapted to best suit the organization of your own dissertation.

All of the pages so far (except for the cover page), should be numbered in lower case Roman numerals. Uncheck the box for 'show number on first page' in Format > Page Numbers. The next page, which is the first of the Introduction to the dissertation proper, should be 1 (an Arabic numeral). To maintain the two different numbering formats in your Word doc, create a new section (Insert > Break > Section Break).

INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER ONE

Title for Chapter One

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