The MFA program at The University of Texas at Austin is distinctive by design.

Each graduate cohort of four to six students works closely with Design Division faculty in small classes that offer individualized instruction. Rather than declaring a specialization, graduate students take up to 50% of their coursework outside of the design program, drawing on the extensive resources of a top-tier, comprehensive research university.

The program’s broadly conceived notion of design affords self-directed students the opportunity to tailor their coursework to pursue an area of academic concentration and to focus on graphics, objects, interactions, systems, and/or services. Graduate students in the MFA program also have the opportunity to work with the Design Institute for Health on projects at the intersection of design and healthcare delivery.

The MFA program cultivates expert designers who are also thoughtful, broadly educated critics and communicators prepared to work in many fields. Alumni of the program enjoy successful careers not only as designers, but also as inventors, writers, entrepreneurs, strategists, CEOs, and university faculty.

Visit us online
www.utexas.edu/finearts/aah/academic/design/graduate/overview
The 60-credit-hour MFA in design is customarily completed in two academic years plus the intervening summer. 30 of the 60 hours must be earned in Design Division courses (“the major”); six hours must be earned in a single external department/school (“the minor”). The remaining 24 credits may be earned in any unit at the university.

In addition to the required coursework, MFA candidates complete two graduate reviews, the first during the spring semester of the first year of study, and the second during the fall semester of the second year of study. The course of study culminates in the master’s exhibition and thesis report.

A sample course of study:

30.0 Hours Within the Design Major
DES 380 Core in Design 3.0
DES 381 Core Laboratory 1 3.0
DES 382 Critique Studio (3 courses) 9.0
DES 394 Advanced Issues in Design 3.0
DES 391 Core Laboratory 2 3.0
DES 392 Professional Communication of Research 3.0
DES 398R Master’s Report 3.0
DES 398S Master’s Exhibition 3.0
plus
30.0 Hours of electives selected with approval of Graduate Advisor; 6.0 must be from the same unit.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

DES 380. Core in Design: Introduction to design process, research, and methodologies.
DES 381. Core Laboratory I: Practice laboratory for a variety of design methodologies.
DES 382. Critique Studio: Context and structured dialogue regarding areas of, and the student’s own direction in, graduate research.
DES 391. Core Laboratory II: Designed to provide students with the opportunity to test and expand their design research through writing and various methods of dissemination.
DES 392. Professional Communication of Research: Seminar addressing strategies for communicating design research processes and results to a variety of audiences through vehicles such as exhibitions, scholarly reports, and video recordings.
DES 393. Issues in Design Theory & Research: Investigates current discourse within design studies.
DES 394. Advanced Issues in Design: Examination of design practice in all areas, and its relationship to research.
DES 395. Fieldwork in Design: Students conduct fieldwork as part of a collaborative research team and/or under the direction of a project supervisor.
DES 398R. Master’s Report: Written discussion of the work undertaken in the graduate program addressing concepts of and influences on the work and visual documentation of major works.
DES 398S. Master’s Exhibition/Lecture/Dissemination: The work presented for the Master’s Exhibition will be comprised of one or more projects developed for Design courses. The direction established for all phases of the Master’s Exhibition and its dissemination must be approved by the Design Graduate Advisor.

Brent Dixon (MFA 2015) currently leads the creation of an experimental think-and-do-tank housed in the United Nations Office of Information and Communication Technology. During his studies, he combined his passion for play, music, technology, and interaction by developing playful touch-sensitive interactive works such as the one shown above, featured in the 2015 design MFA exhibition. (Photo by Sandy Carson)
The Design Division of the Department of Art and Art History is housed in the Art Building (aka ART), alongside the Studio Art and Art Education programs. Design graduate students have 24-hour access to their shared studio space in the building. In addition, graduate students have access to many other departmental and university resources, including the following:

**The Computer Lab (ART 1.202)**
Design graduate students have 24-hour access to the computer laboratory in ART 1.202, which houses 20 Macintosh computers running Adobe Creative Cloud and other design software. Digital cameras and other equipment are available for checkout during business hours.

**The Design Lab (ART 2.212)**
The design lab’s facilities include digital cameras and projectors that are available for checkout; 3D fabrication equipment such as a programmable sewing machine, a vacuum former, a CNC router, and basic power and hand tools; a photo studio for shooting photographs and videos of two- and three-dimensional objects; and a fully-equipped darkroom.

The lab also serves as a publication studio, with resources including digital plate-making equipment, screenprinting and bookbinding equipment, multiple presses, an extensive collection of metal type, and the spectacular Rob Roy Kelly American Wood Type Collection, which comprises over 160 faces of various sizes and styles dating from between 1828 and 1900.

**The Digital Fabrication Lab (ART 2.402)**
The Digital Fabrication Lab (aka the FabLab) houses multiple 3D scanners and printers, a vinyl cutter, a laser cutter, and two CNC routers/milling machines. 3D modeling software such as Rhino 3D and Geomagic Studio is available for use in the lab.

**The Wood Shop (ART 2.314)**
The centrally located wood shop houses stationary woodworking, plastic-working, and metalworking machines, as well as an inventory of manual and power tools available for use and checkout. A supervisor is on hand during posted shop hours to provide instructional support and to ensure safe and proper use of equipment and machinery.

**The Visual Arts Center (ART 1.106)**
www.utvac.org
The gallery spaces of the Visual Arts Center (VAC) span two floors and 13,000 square feet. The VAC hosts rotating exhibitions as well as the design and studio art MFA exhibitions. MFA students may also submit proposals for exhibitions in the VAC at other times during their studies at the university.

**The Fine Arts Library (DFA 3.200)**
www.lib.utexas.edu/fal
The Fine Arts Library, just across the street from the Art building, provides easy access to over 350,000 books and scores, 12,000 DVDs, 400 current serial subscriptions, and more. The FAL also has equipment and devices available for checkout, including digital cameras and camcorders, drawing tablets, headphones, LCD projectors, digital voice recorders, LittleBits Synth Kits, Arduinos, Raspberry Pis, electronic sensors, Oculus Rifts, and more.

**Harry Ransom Center (HRC)**
www.hrc.utexas.edu
The HRC houses about a million books, thirty million manuscripts, five million photographs, and more than one hundred thousand works of art. It holds exceptional collections of incunabula, including over 900 volumes of Aldus Manutius imprints; a large collection of Eric Gill works and archives; a major collection of fine printing; and extensive collections of historic posters and periodicals.

**The Materials Lab (WMB 3.102)**
www.soa.utexas.edu/matlab
The School of Architecture’s Materials Lab supports architects and designers with a collection of over 27,000 material samples from the design and building industries. The collection has a particular focus on innovative and sustainable materials.
ADMISSION

The MFA program is a full-time, two-year, in-residence program suitable for self-motivated, creative people who wish to make use of the extensive resources of a research university. An undergraduate major in design is not required for admission; however, students with little previous background in design may be required to take or audit undergraduate courses in design in order to develop greater technical fluency.

The program accepts students for fall admission only. Admission to the MFA program is based on the strength of the applicant’s portfolio of work, written statement of purpose, academic qualifications, and letters of recommendation. The GRE is not required for admission.

The Design Graduate Studies faculty and the Graduate and International Admissions Center (GIAC) must both approve your admission. After reviewing all applications, the Design Graduate Studies Committee submits recommendations for admission or denial to the Office of Graduate Studies; the Dean of the Graduate School then offers or denies admission based both on the GSC’s recommendation and on the Graduate School’s own admissions requirements.

The University of Texas at Austin believes that a highly talented and diverse student body can significantly enhance the character and quality of the academic culture and community. To this end, the University is continuously engaged in an effort to increase the pool of graduate scholars from diverse backgrounds. As authorized by the Board of Regents and beginning with the academic year 2005-2006, The University of Texas at Austin has added race and ethnicity to the criteria considered for admission of freshmen, graduate students, and law students, and to the awarding of scholarships and fellowships in those cases when an individualized and full file review is conducted as part of the selection process.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Applying to the The University of Texas at Austin’s MFA program in design is a two-part process. The first step—required of applicants to all graduate programs at the university—includes submitting personal information, transcripts, names of references, and an application fee (US$65.00; US$90.00 for international applicants) through the ApplyTexas website. The second step involves submitting a portfolio, supporting materials, and $10 fee through the SlideRoom portal.

PART ONE: APPLYTEXAS

We strongly recommend that you submit the ApplyTexas portion of your application by December 15, 2015 in order to give the writers of your letters of recommendation ample time to upload their letters before the January 8, 2016 deadline for receipt of all application materials.

1. Fill out an ApplyTexas application for Admission to Graduate Studies (www.applytexas.org). The ApplyTexas portion of the application requires you to provide detailed information about your personal, academic, and work histories, and may take one to two hours to complete. You may wish to consult the guide “Preparing to Complete the Graduate Application” (available at www.utexas.edu/ogs/admissions/apply-texas-info.pdf) so you can have the requisite information on hand before you begin.

2. Letters of Recommendation: When you complete the References portion of your ApplyTexas application, you must provide names and e-mail addresses of three references who have agreed to write letters of recommendation for you. Letters of recommendation may come from individuals both directly and indirectly related to the field of design. Once you have submitted the ApplyTexas portion of your application and paid your fee, the system will generate secure e-mails to your three references. Deadline for receipt of letters of recommendation is January 8, 2016.

3. Statement of Purpose: Simply write one sentence: “My statement is being submitted through SlideRoom.”

FEATURED ALUMNI

Mariano Cano (MFA 2014) worked with a neighborhood in Chihuahua, Mexico to build pride and community identity through branding and social media. She is currently a designer at Pentagram in Austin, Texas.
4. Transcripts: Transcripts are required from all undergraduate and graduate institutions. (Exception: transcripts are not required from community or junior colleges that offer no coursework beyond the sophomore year.) The Graduate and International Admissions Center (GIAC) encourages electronic submission of transcripts. Institutions that are on the Texas Electronic Transcript Network or that use the national ANSI ASC X12 transcript format (SPEEDE) can provide electronic transcripts. Check with the registrar of your institution to find out if transcripts can be sent via the SPEEDE server; the university does not accept other forms of electronic transcripts at this time. If your institution cannot send transcripts via SPEEDE, you can upload a scanned PDF copy of your official transcript(s). (NOTE: If you upload a PDF of your official transcript during this process and are later offered admission, you will at that point be required to submit an official paper copy of your transcript.)

Scanned or electronically transmitted transcripts must be received by January 8, 2016. Please confirm transcript uploads at www.utexas.edu/ogs/admissions/status.html.

Applicants who have previously attended UT Austin will be billed an additional $10 separately through UT Direct “What I Owe” for transcripts. Please do not order transcripts directly from the UT registrar as this will slow processing considerably. More information regarding transcripts can be found at www.utexas.edu/ogs/admissions/howtous.html.

5. The University of Texas requires international students to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL; www.toefl.org) or the International English Language Testing System exam (IELTS; www.ielts.org). Exception: If you hold a bachelor’s degree from a U.S. institution or from an institution in another English-speaking country, you will receive a waiver of the TOEFL. A list of countries that meet the exception can be found at: www.utexas.edu/ogs/admissions/test_scores.html.

An IELTS overall band score of 6.5 or a TOEFL score of 550 (paper test), 213 (computer-based test) or 79 (internet-based test, iBT) is considered the minimum acceptable score for admission to The University of Texas at Austin. The Graduate Studies Committee strongly prefers, but does not require, that applicants score higher than 93 on the TOEFL iBT. Otherwise excellent applicants who score between 79 and 93 may be required as a condition of admission to take English language coursework in the summer prior to enrolling in the MFA program.

Please take the test by December 1, 2015 to ensure receipt of scores prior to the January 8, 2016 deadline. The Educational Testing Service code for the University of Texas at Austin (for requesting TOEFL score reports) is 6882.

6. Submit nothing else via ApplyTexas. You will submit your portfolio, statement of purpose, and all other materials via SlideRoom. Note that you must complete and submit the ApplyTexas portion of the application and pay your ApplyTexas application fee (US$65.00; US$90.00 for international applicants) before you can submit the second part of your application. Two days after you submit the ApplyTexas application and fee, you will receive an e-mail containing your University of Texas Electronic Identity (UT EID), which you must have in order to complete the SlideRoom portion of your application.
PART TWO: SLIDEROOM

Before beginning the second, program-specific portion of the application, you must have the UT EID that is e-mailed to you after submitting the online ApplyTexas application and fee.

You must use SlideRoom, a web-based portfolio and document submission system, to submit your portfolio and statement of purpose. (Any unsolicited materials submitted directly to the department will be securely destroyed.) Applicants are charged a small transaction fee of $10 to upload these materials. SlideRoom collects this fee via credit card or debit card only.

The portfolio, statement of purpose, and related materials enumerated below must be submitted by the January 8, 2016 deadline. NOTE: Due to high volume, the server may be slow on deadline day; we therefore recommend early submission to assure timely receipt of your application.

Go to https://utexasgrad.slideroom.com to enter or upload the following items:

Visual Portfolio: Prospective students who have earned a design degree or worked in the field of design should submit a portfolio of their visual work. Students whose background is in other fields should provide examples of work they have created, if applicable; writing samples; descriptions of research projects they have designed or conducted; and/or examples of clearly attributed works by other people that indicate the proposed direction of study. Up to ten projects should be gathered into a single, multiple-page PDF file, which includes:

- images of the projects;
- project titles, descriptions, and/or rationales; dates; clients (if relevant); and dimensions or duration;
- your role in/contribution to the projects, if collaborative

Video and Sound: SlideRoom currently does not allow time-based projects (video or sound) to be embedded in PDF files. Please mention in your PDF that a time-based work has been submitted as a separate file. These files should be clearly titled. Alternatively, you may provide a link in the PDF to a video hosted on YouTube or Vimeo.

Total time for all video/sound projects should not exceed nine minutes. Depending on the nature of the project, we suggest documentation for any one project should not exceed three minutes in length (you may include clips rather than the entire piece).

Your UT EID: Your UT EID was e-mailed to you after submitting your ApplyTexas application.

Previous and/or Current Degrees and Institutions: Please list the degrees you currently hold and/or will receive between now and the proposed semester of admission, noting when you received (or will receive) them (e.g. BFA, Main Street University, 2012; MLIS, Far Away Institute, 2012). Please do not list institutions from which you did not receive a degree (summer school, post-baccalaureate certificates, etc.).
List of References: Please list the names and titles of the same three references that you submitted to ApplyTexas (e.g. John Doe, Associate Professor at Main Street University; Jane Doe, CEO at Main Street Design Firm).

Website URL (optional): You may enter the URL of a portfolio website, though it is not required.

Statement of Purpose: Describe, in a separate PDF, your goals in undertaking graduate study. Your statement should explain your research interests within the field of design, and explain, if applicable, how the work in the portfolio relates to them.

Résumé or CV: Submit, as a separate PDF, a résumé or CV that includes your full mailing address, e-mail address, phone number(s), and Skype address.

When all items are correctly and completely entered or uploaded, please be sure to click the SUBMIT arrow at the top right of the SlideRoom page to finalize your submission.

APPLICATION STATUS
You can confirm receipt of your application materials and check on the status of your application by using My Status: https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/adm/mystatus. Please do not contact the department to confirm receipt of materials; it is your responsibility to ensure that all of your materials are uploaded by the deadline.

Letters of Recommendation: Only letters of recommendation submitted electronically show up in My Status. Use My Status to add additional references or re-send recommendation requests.

Transcripts: You may upload PDF documents of your transcripts using My Status. Transcript uploads should show up in My Status instantaneously.

Statement of Purpose: Disregard the notice that your electronic ApplyTexas Statement is “Needed.” The Graduate Studies Committee refers only to the SlideRoom version of your statements. Do not mail a hard copy of your statements to any university office.

SlideRoom Materials: When My Status displays the status “Received,” all required SlideRoom uploads (portfolio, statement of purpose, and résumé) have been received. However, be forewarned that there will be a three- to five-business-day lag time between the date when you submit your SlideRoom materials and the date when My Status displays “Received” for SlideRoom materials.

INTERVIEWS
After initial screening of application materials, the Graduate Studies Committee may extend an invitation to short-listed applicants to interview via video conference (e.g. Skype) or telephone between mid-January and mid-February. In the event that interviews are conducted, they constitute additional evidence on which to base admissions decisions.

In contrast, conversations or meetings taking place outside of these formal interviews are not weighed in admissions decisions. You are welcome to contact Graduate Coordinator ktshorb@austin.utexas.edu to schedule an informal meeting to answer questions, but official interviews with the Graduate Studies Committee are extended only to selected candidates.
TUITION, FEES, + FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Tuition and fees for the MFA in design program, at rates in effect on September 1, 2015, were approximately $13,000 per year for Texas residents and $26,000 per year for non-residents of Texas. However, the faculty strives to award non-resident tuition waivers to those students who are not Texas residents, so most graduate students pay only the resident (in-state) tuition of approximately $13,000 per year.

Students should file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA form and instructions are available at www.fafsa.ed.gov) as soon as they have submitted their application to the graduate school and have completed their federal tax return. Applicants are strongly urged not to wait for notification of admission before filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Graduate students from the U.S. (citizens or permanent residents) are automatically eligible for Federal Plus loans as independent students. However, you should fill out a FAFSA even if you do not intend to take out student loans, because doing so may qualify you for need-based funding. Applicants must file the FAFSA by the March 15 priority deadline to be considered for need-based grants and scholarships.

For additional information about financial assistance, please consult the University’s Office of Student Financial Services website (www.finaid.utexas.edu/process/applyingforaid.html). For questions go to: www.finaid.utexas.edu and click on “ASK DON.” Information about how to search for external sources of funding is available from the Graduate Outreach Program within the Office of Graduate Studies. For more details, go to www.utexas.edu/ogs/funding/index.html.

FELLOWSHIPS, SCHOLARSHIPS, TUITION WAIVERS, + TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

The Design Division automatically considers all students admitted to the MFA program for the following types of financial assistance: merit-based university fellowships, need- and merit-based departmental scholarships, non-resident tuition waivers (if applicable), and teaching assistantships.

Awards typically range from $1,000 to $13,000 in the first year; in the second year, departmental scholarships are allocated by merit and typically range from $1,000 to $5,000. These are often supplemented by a Teaching Assistantship.

Teaching Assistantships (TAs): TAs assist faculty in classrooms and/or monitor open-laboratory periods. In Fall 2015, TAs were paid $2,814 per semester for 10-hour appointments, and granted tuition assistance of $1,892 per semester. For 20-hour per week positions, the salary is $5,627 per semester and includes health insurance, resident tuition rates, and tuition assistance of $3,784 per semester.

Professional Development Scholarships: MFA students in the Design Division may apply for funds to offset the expenses of conducting and presenting their research and creative activity. Amounts of up to $800 per year are awarded competitively based on the merit and impact of the proposed activity and departmental availability of funds.
Natacha Poggio (MFA 2006) founded Design Global Change, a collaborative group of design students and emerging professionals who put their talents together to make a positive impact in the world.

www.designglobalchange.org

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

APPLICATION MATERIALS AND PROCESS

I studied something else for my undergraduate degree. Can I still apply?
Yes. The only prerequisite for applying to the program is that you have a Bachelor's degree from an accredited, four-year institution in hand by the time you plan to matriculate. However, we favor people with some experience in the field of design. This experience may have come from formal education or it may have been gained from the professional field and other “out-of-the-classroom” experiences.

How long should the statement be?
There is no page limit, but brevity is a virtue.

What do you mean by “research interests?”
This is the area (or areas) that you are interested in investigating through design or within design.

Can I include detail images in my portfolio?
Please do. You can include as many images as you feel is appropriate for any one project.

Who should my recommenders be?
They should be people familiar with your education, work, or design experience. Your recommenders can be designers or non-designers who come from either academe or industry.

What should be in my portfolio?
Your best, most recent work that shows both your previous accomplishments and your potential. Ideally, your portfolio will support your Statement of Purpose.

When will I find out if I am accepted?
Applicants will be notified of their status by mid-March.

Do I have to meet TOEFL/IELTS requirements?
All international students who did not attend U.S. or other Anglophone undergraduate institutions must meet language requirements. More information can be found here: www.utexas.edu/ogs/admissions/test_scores.html.

Do I have to take the GRE?
No.

How many people apply each year?
45-75 for four to six seats.

I applied before. Can I reapply?
Yes.

Can I schedule an interview?
You are welcome to contact Graduate Coordinator kt shorb (ktshorb@austin.utexas.edu) to schedule an informal meeting to answer questions. However, official interviews with the Graduate Studies Committee are extended only by invitation.

If accepted, can I defer?
No. You must attend in the semester for which you applied, or re-apply in the next admissions cycle.

Can I get a critique of my submitted materials?
No. We’d like to give more feedback, but constraints on faculty time do not permit it.
PROGRAM

Do you offer graphic design courses?
At the graduate level we do not offer courses specifically in graphic design. Graduate students may take undergraduate courses focusing on graphic design, but graduate courses are intended to allow students to create work in many media.

Can I do the program part-time or through distance learning?
No.

Why are there so many electives?
We believe The University of Texas at Austin is an amazing place, with experts in nearly every field of human endeavor. We want graduate students in design to take advantage of that expertise.

What do graduates in the program end up doing?
Almost anything you can think of. Some alumni work for large corporations and others for small boutique firms; some start their own studios or become inventors or entrepreneurs; some become university faculty.

Do you have double or dual programs with other graduate programs?
Not right now. However, in addition to simply taking a number of electives in a single field, there are opportunities to formally engage with other disciplines through graduate portfolio programs (for example: Museum Studies; Nonprofit Studies; Sustainability; Women’s and Gender Studies; and Communication, Information, and Cultural Policy). A list of many such programs can be found at www.utexas.edu/ogs/admissions/docport.

FINANCIAL

How do I fund my degree?
Fellowships, scholarships, tuition waivers, and assistantships are available. The stronger your application, the more likely you will qualify for these forms of aid. You must fill out the FAFSA in order to qualify for need-based financial aid, including federal loans and grants.

Do I have to submit a separate application to receive fellowships, grants, or teaching assistantships?
No, all candidates who are offered admission are automatically considered for funding. However, we strongly recommend all applicants fill out a FAFSA application prior to the priority deadline of March 15 in order to qualify for grants and other need-based forms of aid, regardless of whether or not they intend to take out student loans.

FEATURED ALUMNI

Jesse Kinbarovsky (MFA 2014) created communication tools for people with diabetes. This led him to found CueWell, a healthcare product startup. His focus on medical device interfaces is rooted in an empathy for individuals struggling with chronic physical difficulties, as well as a deep interest in the human-object relationship.