

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

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

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

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

## Admission

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

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

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

## Standards of graphic design

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

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

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

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

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

## Learning outcomes

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

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

## Special requirements

Once accepted, students must maintain a minimum 2.5 GPA in GDES courses to continue in the program. Student GDES course work GPA is monitored at the end of fall and spring semesters. A student with GDES course work GPA that falls below 2.5 by the end of any semester is placed on departmental probation for the next semester. Students placed on GDES GPA probation must bring their GDES course work GPA to a minimum of 2.5 by the end of the following semester. Students failing to bring their GDES course work GPA to a minimum of 2.5 by the end of that semester are no longer permitted to continue in the program.

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

Course	Title	Hours
<b>General education</b> ( <a href="http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-study/general-education-curriculum/">http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-study/general-education-curriculum/</a> )		
Select 30 credits of general education courses in consultation with an adviser.		30

**Major requirements**

• Major core requirements		
GDES 220	Design Practices	4
GDES 221	Core Studio I	4
GDES 222	Core Studio II	4
GDES 231	Theory Inquiry	3
GDES 321	Core Studio III	4
GDES 322	Core Studio IV	4
GDES 331	Precedents Inquiry	3
GDES 380	Multi Studio I (taken twice)	8
GDES 398	Dialogues (taken six semesters)	6
GDES 431	Critical Inquiry	4
GDES 440	Synthesis	6
GDES 480	Multi Studio II	2

**Ancillary requirements**

Art Foundation Program		
ARTF 131	Drawing Studio	3
ARTF 132	Surface Research	3
ARTF 133	Space Research	3
ARTF 134	Time Studio	3
ARTF 139	Project Studio	2
or ARTF 138	Project Seminar	
ARTH 103 & ARTH 104	Survey of Art I and Survey of Art II	6
Additional requirements		
GDES electives (300 to 500 level)		8

**Open electives**

Select any course.	12
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**Total Hours** 122

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

**Electives**

Course	Title	Hours
GDES 301	Letterpress	4
GDES 302	Book Arts	4
GDES 308	Web Design	4
GDES 356	Studio Management	4
GDES 391	Lecture Topics in Design	1-4
GDES 392	Research/Individual Study	1-4
GDES 401	Experimental Letterpress	4
GDES 403	Design Activism	4
GDES 404	Typeface Design	4
GDES 412	Typographic Systems	4
GDES 414	Exhibition and Environmental Graphic Design	4
GDES 418	Design Center	3-9
GDES 481	Practicum	4
GDES 491	Studio Topics in Design	1-6

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

**Freshman year**

Fall semester		Hours
ARTF 131	Drawing Studio	3
ARTF 132	Surface Research	3
ARTF 139	Project Studio	1
or	or Project Seminar	
ARTF 138		
ARTH 103	Survey of Art I	3
UNIV 111	Focused Inquiry I (satisfies general education UNIV foundations)	3
Play course	video for Focused Inquiry I	
General education course		3
<b>Term Hours:</b>		<b>16</b>

**Spring semester**

ARTF 133	Space Research	3
ARTF 134	Time Studio	3
ARTF 139	Project Studio	1
or	or Project Seminar	
ARTF 138		
ARTH 104	Survey of Art II	3
UNIV 112	Focused Inquiry II (satisfies general education UNIV foundations)	3
Play course	video for Focused Inquiry II	
General education course		3
<b>Term Hours:</b>		<b>16</b>

**Sophomore year**

Fall semester		Hours
GDES 220	Design Practices	4
GDES 221	Core Studio I	4
GDES 231	Theory Inquiry	3
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
UNIV 200	Advanced Focused Inquiry: Literacies, Research and Communication (satisfies general education UNIV foundations)	3
<b>Term Hours:</b>		<b>15</b>

**Spring semester**

GDES 222	Core Studio II	4
GDES 380	Multi Studio I	4
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
General education course		3
Open elective		3
<b>Term Hours:</b>		<b>15</b>

**Junior year**

Fall semester		Hours
GDES 321	Core Studio III	4
GDES 331	Precedents Inquiry	3
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
GDES elective		4
General education course		3
<b>Term Hours:</b>		<b>15</b>

**Spring semester**

GDES 322	Core Studio IV	4
GDES 380	Multi Studio I	4
GDES 398	Dialogues	1
General education course		3
Open elective		3

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**Term Hours: 15**

**Senior year****Fall semester**

GDES 398	Dialogues	1
GDES 431	Critical Inquiry	4
GDES elective		4
General education course		3
Open elective		3

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**Term Hours: 15**

**Spring semester**

GDES 398	Dialogues	1
GDES 440	Synthesis	6
GDES 480	Multi Studio II	2
General education course		3
Open elective		3

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**Term Hours: 15**

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**Total Hours: 122**

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

**GDES 220. Design Practices. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. This studio is an introduction to research, analysis and the interpretation of content, emphasizing how hierarchical and syntactic structures participate in the making of meaning. Students are oriented as shapers and interpreters within culture.

**GDES 221. Core Studio I. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. This studio is an introduction to the generation and control of form. This involves the exploration of methods, materials and language. Students are oriented to fundamental modes of design practices.

**GDES 222. Core Studio II. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 221. This studio reinforces methods, materials and language used in generating and organizing form. Students examine the potential and implications of design processes and their outcomes.

**GDES 231. Theory Inquiry. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online or face-to-face). 3 credits. This inquiry course is an overview of theory and philosophy influencing graphic design as a situated practice. Students are exposed to design criticism and theoretical perspectives from a variety of disciplines.

**GDES 301. Letterpress. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. A letterpress printing studio course designed for students interested in being introduced to and developing their visual vocabulary in letterpress and relief printing. Students will undertake critical analysis of the letterpress medium and utilize techniques to develop and produce finished editions of each assigned task.

**GDES 302. Book Arts. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. An introduction to the tools, materials and craft of contemporary bookmaking. Investigation of bookbinding, handcraft and related techniques.

**GDES 308. Web Design. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours (delivered online or face-to-face). 4 credits. A course developing the design of websites. Emphasis is placed on the visual design, navigation, development, communication and authoring of websites.

**GDES 321. Core Studio III. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 222. This studio examines systems and structures as frameworks for design methods, processes and outcomes. Students broaden their practice relative to scale, context, conditions and effect.

**GDES 322. Core Studio IV. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 321. This studio expands critical discourse to investigate design's impact through distribution and engagement. Students consider how their personal voice and point of view function in a larger context.

**GDES 330. The Business of Design. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course introduces basic global economics and general design business concepts such as the free enterprise system, legal forms of business and financial considerations. It also surveys business and management practices such as planning, decision-making, communication, global ethics, marketing, human resources, finance and entrepreneurial skills needed to open a design business. Crosslisted as: IDES 330/FASH 330.

**GDES 331. Precedents Inquiry. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online or face-to-face). 3 credits. This inquiry course is a pluralistic survey of precedents and historical examples of design with an emphasis on multiple perspectives and power structures. Students will encounter design histories through a source-based approach.

**GDES 356. Studio Management. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 4 lecture hours. 4 credits. A study of business and management factors that relate to creative design. Topics include marketing, structure and organization; financial factors; ethical and legal aspects; and management of design, illustration and photography studios.

**GDES 370. Design History: 20th and 21st Centuries. 3 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: ARTF 105-106. Study of the major theories and styles on communication arts, fashion and interior environments of the 20th and 21st centuries. Contemporary analysis of cultural conditions and the manner in which designers respond to those conditions. Crosslisted as: FASH 370/IDES 370.

**GDES 380. Multi Studio I. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. May be repeated for a maximum total of 8 credits. This studio emphasizes critical engagement, research and speculation. Students engage in collaboration, peer learning and interdependent discovery.

**GDES 391. Lecture Topics in Design. 1-4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1-4 lecture hours. 1-4 credits. May be taken for a maximum of four credits per semester and repeated for a maximum of 12 credits. Topical lectures focused on evolving and emergent issues that affect contemporary design practice. Upper-level students outside of the graphic design major may take this course with an override.

**GDES 392. Research/Individual Study. 1-4 Hours.**

Semester course; 2-8 studio hours. 1-4 credits. May be repeated for a total of eight credits. Enrollment is restricted to students with permission of the instructor, approval of faculty adviser and department chair. The structuring, research, execution and presentation of an independent project in visual communications under the direction of a faculty adviser. The student will be encouraged to become a self-generating problem-seeker and -solver with the ability to carry out self-stated goals.

**GDES 398. Dialogues. 1 Hour.**

Semester course; 1 seminar hour (delivered online or face-to-face). 1 credit. May be repeated for a maximum total of six credits. This course engages students in peer-to-peer reflection, dialogue and debate in order to further develop an understanding of the diversity and scope of design practices. Graded as pass/fail.

**GDES 401. Experimental Letterpress. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. May be repeated for a maximum of eight credits. An advanced print studio course designed for students interested in exploring their visual vocabulary in digital and letterpress relief printing. Students will undertake critical analysis of the combined media of digital and letterpress and utilize techniques inherent within each technology to develop and produce finished editions.

**GDES 403. Design Activism. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. This course explores relationships between design, activism, advocacy and organizing. Students will critically examine the politics of design practice and the artifacts and systems design practice activates. Working with internal and external collaborators, students will interpret the relevance of social and political topics, pose critical questions and provoke new relationships within the spaces they occupy.

**GDES 404. Typeface Design. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. Glyph construction is explored through historical and methodological analysis as well as the creation of typographic systems. Formal mechanics of typefaces are emphasized in discussion of their function as vehicles for communication. Both the functional and expressive nature of typefaces are examined through hands-on exercises.

**GDES 412. Typographic Systems. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. Advanced approaches to typographic design with focus on typography as a primary interface to information.

**GDES 414. Exhibition and Environmental Graphic Design. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 1 lecture and 6 studio hours. 4 credits. Study of the presentation of information in large-scale, multi-dimensional formats. Exploration of exhibition and environmental design, including understanding the use of "wayfinding" and "wayshowing" (identification, interpretation and orientation), sensitivity to and awareness of human factors, and developing visual and experiential navigation solutions.

**GDES 418. Design Center. 3-9 Hours.**

Semester course; 2-6 lecture and 3-9 studio hours. 3-9 credits. May be repeated for a total of 12 credits. Enrollment requires portfolio review by faculty. A professional studio to give students practicum experience working with faculty on self-initiated and client-initiated, real-world design projects.

**GDES 431. Critical Inquiry. 4 Hours.**

Semester course; 3 lecture and 2 studio hours (delivered online or face-to-face). 4 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 322. This inquiry course is focused on research, critical analysis and discussion. Students assess and reflect on their emerging practice and its relation to the field.

**GDES 440. Synthesis. 6 Hours.**

Semester course; 12 studio hours. 6 credits. Prerequisite: GDES 431. This studio provides students the opportunity to synthesize knowledge, skill and experiences accumulated over their progression through the program. Students are required to define and execute a capstone project that demonstrates their readiness and capacity to engage responsibly and creatively in the field. The class culminates in a public exhibition.

**GDES 480. Multi Studio II. 2 Hours.**

Semester course; 4 studio hours. 2 credits. Prerequisites: GDES 380 and GDES 431. Utilizing principles and skills gained in the prerequisite course, students facilitate discourse, framing and articulation of creative partnerships.

**GDES 481. Practicum. 2-4 Hours.**

Semester course; 2-4 field experience hours. 2-4 credits. Students must be actively engaged in work for a minimum of 30 hours per credit. This course engages students in practical experiences related to the contemporary and future practice of design and research through hands-on learning under the supervision of qualified practitioners. Graded as pass/fail.

**GDES 491. Studio Topics in Design. 1-6 Hours.**

Semester course; 2-12 studio hours (delivered online or face-to-face). 1-6 credits. May be repeated for a maximum of 16 credits. Studio focusing on evolving and emergent topics that affect contemporary design practice. See the Schedule of Classes for specific topics to be offered.