



Master of Fine Arts, Acting Final Review Handbook

This handbook contains the Acting Final Review requirements, planning guides, and resources. Please read through all of this information carefully before preparing your materials for Final Review. If you have any questions or need clarification on any aspect of your upcoming Final Review, you will find information about who to contact on page 17 of this handbook.

It is your responsibility to use the latest version of the Final Review Handbook. If you are uncertain if this is the latest version, please refer to the Acting page on the Graduate Showcase:

<http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/>

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1. ELIGIBILITY FOR FINAL REVIEW

A. Eligibility

All Final Reviews must be held at the end of the semester in which you complete your regular program units.

You must declare your graduation term before a tentative date can be set. The process has three steps:

1. **DECLARATION:** In the semester prior to your Final Review, you can either contact your advisor to declare your graduation term or go through your self-service page. Additional graduation declaration and commencement information is found online

here: <http://www.academyart.edu/content/aau/en/students/my-academy/academic-resources/graduation-commencement.html>

2. **REGISTRATION:** Register for your final semester of coursework with your advisor or online through your [Online Student Registration Profile](#).
3. **REVIEW SIGN-UP:** Once you have declared your graduation term and registered for courses, at the start of the semester you are presenting, you will need to review the Final Review online orientation and complete the online sign-up form available here: <http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/>. Refer to the Graduate School Calendar for the available online sign-up dates here: <http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/academic-resources/graduate-student-academic-resources>. See further details for scheduling a final review below.

NOTE: If Final Thesis Project conditions have not been met within two semesters, you will need to reapply to the Graduate School to graduate.

Plan ahead and prepare as much of your project as possible by the beginning of the semester. Strive to have only your final touches remaining to be completed *during* your last semester of coursework.

2. SCHEDULING YOUR FINAL REVIEW

A. Review Date

Final Reviews are conducted in the spring, summer and fall semesters. Presentations typically start in the eleventh or twelfth week of the fall or spring semester and in the sixth week of the summer semester. You can find the sign-up dates in the Graduate School Calendar:

<http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/academic-resources/graduate-student-academic-resources>



No Final Reviews are permitted during the intersession. A finalized date will be set during the semester the Final Review is to be conducted, based on director availability. This date can be changed only in case of personal emergency, and must be approved by both the Graduate School and the department director to be official.

NOTE: Please communicate with your Graduate Advisor about when would be the most appropriate term to schedule your Final Review. It is important to know the final cut-off date for scheduling your review. You should receive an email from the Final Review Coordinator approximately one week prior to the start of the semester you will be presenting your Final Review with details on how to sign-up. The email will direct you to the Graduate Midpoint and Final Review Showcase <http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/>.

B. Review Orientation

You are required to watch the online Final Review Orientation prior to completing the Final Review sign-up form online. You will be sent confirmation of your review date shortly after the close of the review sign-up period. Please [contact](#) the Final Review Coordinator if you have any questions on scheduling your review.

C. Attendance & Cancellations

Final Review attendance is mandatory. All Final Reviews must be held at the end of the semester in which you complete your regular program units. If you do not attend the Final Review will be considered a “No Show” and will be noted as “Not Approved”.

Cancellations or postponements may be approved as a rare exception, all requests must be organized through the Final Review Coordinator at least 5 working days prior to the scheduled review date. Late cancellations or postponements will be considered “No Show” and will be noted as “Not Approved” for the Final Review.

Students are asked **not** to invite non-committee members, friends or family to their Final Review. Please do not provide food at the Final Review.

3. DELIVERABLE DETAILS & DUE DATES

Your Final Review will consist of the following four components: portfolio, thesis book, oral presentation, and Directed Study Journals. [Link to tutorial on uploading work to LMS.](#)

IMPORTANT: If your Thesis Book and Portfolio are not received in time, your Final Review will be cancelled, and you will need to present the following semester.

Portfolio: Demo Reel 3-5 minutes summarizing strongest and most diverse student work, complete scenes comprising the demo reel, along with any additional footage which will help the committee assess the student's work.

[Link to more detailed portfolio checklist](#)

Upload/Deliver To:	Upload to the Portfolio Icon in LMS
Due Date:	One (1) week prior to review date
Format:	Digital upload to LMS, and Two (2) DVDs to be included with Thesis Book: 1 - Demo Reel DVD, 1 - scenes and additional work DVD

Thesis Book: The thesis book is an opportunity for the graduate acting students to describe in detail the process and technique they have developed during their training at AAU, as well as a self-analysis of strengths and weaknesses, and a personal account of rehearsal and performance experiences. It is also a vehicle for establishing a concrete marketing plan post-graduation.

Professional Editing: The proposal must be professionally executed, grammatically correct and free of spelling errors and typos.

[Link to more detailed thesis book checklist](#)

Upload/Deliver To:	Upload to the Thesis Book Icon in LMS
Due Date:	One (1) week prior to review date
Format:	PDF and bound hard copy



Oral Presentation: The oral presentation serves two purposes for the student. One is an opportunity for the committee to meet each individual on a personal level. The second is to present two (2) contrasting monologues not to exceed 5 minutes total in length.

[Link to more detailed oral presentation checklist](#)

Upload/Deliver To:	At the Final Review
Due Date:	At the scheduled day/time of your review
Format:	Live Monologues
Practice and Prepare:	Practice your oral presentation in advance of your review to ensure your comfort level during the presentation. Be prepared to answer questions when you are finished.

Directed Study Journals: Your Directed Study Journal must be made available to the review team. The standard formatting requirements for Directed Study Journals are outlined in the Direct Study Guidelines:

http://www.academyart.edu/content/dam/assets/pdf/gradstudents/directed_study_guidelines.pdf

4. FINAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Review Expectations and Structure

Final Reviews are one and a half hours in duration. Your presentation should be approximately 40 minutes long. The Final Review meeting will follow this structure:

Final Review Panel/Student Introduction	5 minutes
Monologue Presentation	5 minutes
Final Review Presentation (personal statement and demo reel presentation)	30 minutes
Committee Question & Answer Session	20 minutes
Committee Discussion – closed door	15 minutes
Committee Decision & Feedback	10 minutes

Review Committee: The Final Review Committee is comprised of faculty and/or industry professionals approved by the Graduate School and the Department Directors.

Committee Question & Answer Session: After your presentation, questions will be asked by the Committee for clarification on your project.

Committee Discussion, Decision, & Feedback: After the question and answer session, the committee will recess in private to discuss the merits of your proposal.

B. Results

Upon reconvening, the committee will present you with one of the following outcomes:

Approved: You have passed the review portion of your degree requirements and may be granted your degree upon completing all degree requirements. [See awarding the Master's Degree below.](#)

Not Approved: You have NOT passed, and will NOT be granted your degree until one of the following has been completed and the Final Review materials are approved by the Final Review Committee:

Resubmit: Following specific Final Review Committee requirements your project requires small changes that must be corrected and re-submitted within 3 weeks. If the re-submission meets the requirements, then the Final Review materials are approved and you may be granted your degree.

OR

Represent: Following specific Final Review Committee requirements you must complete additional studio work, and/or rethink your Final Project, to present at a new Final Review next semester. You must sign-up for a new review date at the start of the next semester.



Please follow directions outlined in the link below to view your results and written feedback after your Final Review.

http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/content/dam/Grad%20Showcase/home_page/pdf/ReviewResults.pdf

C. Evaluation Questions

The work you submit will be assessed using the Graduate School of Acting program learning outcomes. At the Final Review the review committee is evaluating your success in meeting the stated outcomes.

<http://www.academyart.edu/academics/acting/graduate-degrees>

D. Awarding the Master's Degree

Your degree will be awarded and diploma issued after you have completed ALL of the following:

- All curriculum requirements are fulfilled: all units and minimum grade requirements completed.
- Presentation and approval of your Final Review before Committee
- Submission of all Final Project materials.
- No outstanding financial obligations.
- Completed the Online Graduate Survey at <http://apply.academyart.edu/careersvsgradtrack/>.

NOTE: If Final Project conditions have not been met within two semesters, you will need to reapply to the Graduate School to graduate.

5. CHECKLISTS

FINAL PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

Portfolio Contents:	<p>The Final Review portfolio consists of an acting demo reel comprising scenes from the actor's most impressive and diverse work to date. The scenes should be edited professionally and reflect current industry standards. Link to Showcase examples.</p> <p>Total run time must not exceed 5 minutes in length and must also have an opening and end title with the actor's name and contact information. This is the actor's calling card and will aid greatly in seeking work within the entertainment industry.</p> <p>On a separate DVD please also include the full scenes from the demo reel and any additional on camera material you feel would better assist the committee in assessing your professional readiness. Both the demo reel and the full scenes should be on separate DVDs to include with the Thesis Book and also be uploaded to LMS.</p> <p>Demo Reel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> 3-5 minute total run time<input type="checkbox"/> Opening and End Titles with Actor's name, union affiliations (if any) and contact information<input type="checkbox"/> Uploaded to LMS<input type="checkbox"/> DVD included with Thesis Book <p>Additional Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Menu with Full scenes of all material showcased on the demo reel<input type="checkbox"/> Any additional on camera material that showcases the actor's stronger work<input type="checkbox"/> Uploaded to LMS<input type="checkbox"/> DVD included with Thesis Book
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THESIS BOOK CHECKLIST

Your Final Thesis Book must provide a synopsis of the research and creative processes involved in the completion of the work.

For the Thesis Book:

- CONTENT:** Review the Thesis Book Checklist below.
- GRAMMAR/SPELLING:** Be sure the proposal is grammatically correct and free of spelling errors and typos. The Academy Resource Center (ARC) offers support for both your thesis book and oral presentation.
- EVOLUTION:** Your written Presentation must significantly reflect the evolution of your project since your Midpoint Review. DO NOT simply recap what you wrote in your Thesis Project Proposal at your Midpoint Review.

Thesis Book Contents: In your thesis book, you must include the following sections with a separate heading for each:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cover Page | <input type="checkbox"/> Self Analysis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Table of Contents | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing Plan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Statement of Intent | <input type="checkbox"/> Rehearsal/Performance Journal |

Cover Page: The cover of your thesis book must include the following:

- Your Name
- Student ID Number
- Academy of Art University, School of Acting, Master of Fine Arts in Acting
- Date of Presentation
- Time of Presentation

Table of Contents: All Final Reviews must have a table of contents (TOC)

- Number each page of the book
- List each topic section and it's corresponding page number in the TOC
- Select an appropriate font
- Font size should be no small than 10 pt. and easily readable

Statement of Intent: The Statement of intent is intended to illustrate the journey you have taken as an actor in pursuit of your MFA degree. (3-5 pages)

- Biographical information pertinent to your pursuit of an MFA degree in acting.
- What achieving and advanced degree in acting means to you and your career.
- Describe in detail how your training has prepared you for the professional world.

Self Analysis: This section is intended to reflect on your individual growth and process as an actor (5-10 pages)

- How would you best describe your own personal approach or process when preparing a character? How does that change if at all from stage to film?
- What format, stage or screen, best suits your skill set as an actor? Please explain in detail.
- Discuss how collaboration with both fellow actors and a director has informed you process in preparing and executing a role. How do you process and implement a

director's notes? How does working with an acting partner(s) inform your development of character?

- Describe your strengths and weaknesses as an actor from the time you entered the program until now as you prepare to receive your Master's degree.
- How has your training in both stage and on camera prepared you for the professional world?

Marketing Plan: Although you are just embarking upon your career as a professional actor, what are the first steps you will take in the pursuit of gaining employment?

- Provide a link to your complete and professional digital profile on a major casting site (i.e. S.F. Casting, L.A. Casting, NY Casting, Actor's Access).
- Provide two of your head shots with contrasting looks, commercial and theatrical.
- Acting Resume
- Provide a business card which contains your name and contact information. You may also include a small sample of your headshot on the card.
 - Compose a letter to a professional agent, agency or manager within your intended destination market.

Rehearsal / Performance Journal: Provide a comprehensive journal for two selected projects you completed during your training at AAU. If possible, please include one from a stage production and one from a film production. One sample script from each project should also be included in the book.

- Describe in detail your rehearsal process and the resulting performance. From day to day, describe your preparation and rehearsal details.
- What problems did you encounter and how did you overcome them?
- What director notes were you given and how did you incorporate said notes into your rehearsals and performances?
- Describe your execution and final performance of the project.
- Was there growth from show to show or scene to scene?
- In hindsight, where did you succeed with the project and where did you fall short?
- What adjustments would you make if you were to repeat the process for the same project?

ORAL PRESENTATION CHECKLIST

General Oral Presentation Guidelines: The oral presentation serves two purposes for the student. One is an opportunity for the committee to meet each individual on a personal level. The second is to present two (2) contrasting monologues not to exceed 5 minutes in total length.

DVDs required: Bring DVD of your Demo Reel and DVD of Additional Materials to your presentation.

Duration: Final Reviews are one and a half hours in duration. Your presentation should be approximately forty (40) minutes long.

Timing: Timing should generally follow this:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Monologues	5 Minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal Statement	5 Minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Demo Reel	3-5 Minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussion of Work Examples	15-20 Minutes

Content: This is a formal presentation to the committee of a student's body of work. Recap your thesis book as your presentation. Do not include heavy details from your thesis book.

- You must present the fully developed content as proposed at your Midpoint.
- All your work presented for the Final Review should be created after successfully passing the Midpoint Review.
- The project presentation must exemplify your highest level of technical proficiency.
- 2 Monologues** (5 minutes total): Pieces should include one contemporary (post 1945) and one contrasting classical (in verse, 14-30 lines is recommended but not required). Please introduce both monologues prior to beginning and include character names and authors.
- Personal Statement** (5 minutes): A brief introduction of yourself. Discuss your own personal journey with acting, what your academic experience has taught you and what your goals are for the immediate future.
- Demo Reel** (3-5 minutes): Present your demo reel DVD to the committee.
- Discussion of Work Examples** (15-20 minutes): Please have DVD available with full clips of all scenes utilized in the demo reel and any additional on camera material you feel would better assist the committee in assessing your professional readiness. Be prepared to discuss these examples with the committee.

Question and Answer: Please be prepared with a pen and notebook or recording device to allow all committee feedback to be notated and recorded. The committee's aim is to provide each candidate with specific and constructive feedback to better prepare them for a successful career in acting. Staying open and listening is pivotal during this portion of the review process.

Preparation: Treat the review as a professional interview. Dress appropriately, bring water and any necessary tools (pen and paper or recording device). Please arrive at least 20 minutes prior to your scheduled time.



Original Work: All work must be original.

Crediting: Collaborative projects must clearly indicate which area the student is responsible and accountable for.

6. PREPARATION TIMELINE

3 to 4 months before your review	Read Acting specific Final Review Handbook Watch the Final Review Orientation Review your Midpoint Thesis Book and review committee comments. Identify whether you have made changes to the project that may require approval from the Department Director prior to your Final Review Contact Wes Sneeringer in editing room by 1st week of presentation semester for editing support on demo reel.
2 to 3 months before your review	Check graduate website for Final Review sign-up schedule Select monologues Select Demo Reel Materials
6 weeks before your review	Prepare your thesis book Contact Wes Sneeringer to set up appointment to begin editing of Demo Reel. Work with an editor or contact ARC to make sure your thesis book is grammatically correct and typo-free.
1 month before your review	Final edits of Demo Reel with Wes Assemble material for Additional Materials DVD Organize and rehearse your oral presentation Work with a friend, colleague or ARC on your oral presentation
3 weeks before your review	Print your thesis book and have it professionally bound Practice your oral presentation out loud and with a timer
2 weeks before your review	On-campus students verify your equipment works prior to your actual presentation date Create final Demo Reel and Additional Materials DVDs
1 week before your review	Upload your digital file of your portfolio and PDF of your thesis book to your home page Send to your department one (1) bound copies of your Final Review Thesis Book with accompanying DVDs Plan your attire, dress professionally Practice your presentation in front of a live audience

Tips for the day of your review	<p>Get plenty of rest the night before</p> <p>Have a glass of water available during your presentation</p> <p>Arrive at your Final Review on time and ready to go</p> <p>Greet your committee members prior to beginning your presentation</p> <p>Listen to the committee's advice and take notes</p> <p>Maintain professionalism during the entire review</p>
Following your review	View your Final Review results here

7. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When can I schedule my Final Review?	Once you have completed your eligibility requirements and have petitioned to graduate, contact the Final Review Coordinator via email at FinalReview@academyart.edu to be added to the presentation list. <i>You must be in contact with the Coordinator no later than the first few days of the semester you wish to present.</i>
How many pages should the thesis book be?	There is no specified length for the completed written proposal. There are some sections that have limitation of length, but the main part of your proposal does not have a limit. The written proposal should be thorough in describing all aspects of your project, but you also want to think about how you can be concise and avoid redundancy of information in the content.
Can we include work we've done outside of the Academy?	Work not executed at the Academy of Art University should not constitute more than 10% of your portfolio presentation.
Who do I contact for help with completing and editing my Demo Reel?	You must contact Wes Sneeringer in the editing room by email the first week of the semester in which you are applying for graduation (istalltime@hotmail.com). After advising him of your impending final review, you will then begin assembling and compiling all the footage that you may wish to use on your demo reel. Six weeks before your review date, you will then contact Wes again and set up an in-person appointment to begin the editing process with him.
Is feedback available for the demo reel content?	Yes. Please contact the School of Acting office and make an appointment with Diane Baker and/or Damon Sperber. You may also wish to ask a faculty member for guidance and assistance.
When should I begin my rehearsal journals?	At your midpoint, you were asked to keep a rehearsal journal for your ACT 639 midpoint performance. You should be maintaining a daily rehearsal journal for all projects from that point moving forward in the program. This will not only serve you in the building of your own process and self-analysis, but will also be transferable to your thesis book.

8. IMPORTANT LINKS

Graduate Student Homepage	http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/academic-resources/graduate-student-academic-resources
Academy Resource Center (ARC)	http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/academy-resource-center Your resource for proofreading, ESL assistance, Final Review, Writing Lab.
Accessing Your Review Results	http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/content/dam/Grad%20Showcase/home_page/pdf/ReviewResults.pdf
Online Chat Schedules & Recordings	Chat Schedule: http://online.academyart.edu/innovative-learning/chats.html Graduate Chats: http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/graduate-chats.html Twitter: @aauchats
Department Specific Websites	http://www.academyart.edu/academics/acting
Graduate School Calendar	http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/academic-resources/graduate-student-academic-resources
Graduate Review Showcase	http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/ Here you will find a link to the Final Review Orientation, and links to the Final Review Guidelines and Handbooks.
Acting Review Showcase Page	http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/schools/acting.html
Uploading Review Content	http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/content/dam/Grad%20Showcase/home_page/pdf/Uploading_Review_Content_WI15.pdf
Photographing & Submitting Artwork	http://media.academyart.edu/howto/index.html http://howto.academyart.edu/submitting-artwork



9. CONTACT INFORMATION

Final Review Coordinator: finalreview@academyart.edu
(415) 618-6390

Contact for Online Students: onlinegradreview@academyart.edu
(415) 618-3614

Department Contact(s):
Diana De Luna
School of Acting – Administrator
Tel: (415) 618-8647
Email: ddeluna@academyart.edu

Damon Sperber
Associate Director
Tel: (415)345-1565
Email: dsperber@academyart.edu

Send Materials To: Academy of Art University

School of Acting
Final Review

79 New Montgomery
San Francisco, CA 94105

NOTE: Please obtain a tracking number or return receipt of delivery for your shipments.