# School of Illustration

# Final Review Guidelines (Master of Fine Arts)

All Master of Fine Arts students are required to conduct a Final Review as of part of the Master's program to present their Final Thesis.   All final reviews must be completed in the term which the student completes the program units for their Master's degree. If thesis conditions are not met within two semesters of unit completion, students will be asked apply for reinstatement into the graduate program.

## Important Contact Information

**Illustration Department:**
1-415-618-3680

**Final Review Coordinator:**
(415) 618-6297
Finalreview@academyart.edu

## Eligibility

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

## Scheduling

Please review the Midpoint and Final Review Handbook

## Deliverables

### Portfolio

Your portfolio of finished work consisting of the culmination of your projects completed in the MFA program that demonstrates the highest quality required for graduated level work.

More details and guidance can be found in the Portfolio PDF Checklist
Online Students: Please review the Online Technical Requirements page for requirements relating to your submissions for upload

### Thesis Book

Your written presentation will be different depending on your emphasis. In your professionally bound written presentation, you must include the following sections, in this order and with a separate heading for each: Cover Page, Table of Contents, Autobiography, Resume, Portfolio.

More details and guidance can be found in the Portfolio PDF Checklist

### Oral Presentation

Introduce yourself, show your portfolio work, and go through your PowerPoint/PDF and your thesis proposal.

You may present using a slide application if you prefer but have your pdf ready as a backup in the case of incompatibility (no new software will be downloaded onto AAU machines for your presentation). Save your pdf to cloud storage or a USB drive in addition to uploading your pdf in the LMS.

Begin practicing your oral presentation well in advance to ensure your level of professionalism.

<span style="color:red">Due Date for Deliverables</span>

Your thesis and portfolio must be uploaded to the LMS review portal at least three days before the date of your presentation, and the combined file size must not exceed 50 MB.

## Structure

Final Reviews are one hour in duration. Your presentation should be 10 minutes long.

The Final Review meeting will follow this structure:

| Final Review Presentation | 10 minutes |
|---|---|
| Committee Question & Answer Session | 30 minutes |
| Committee Discussion – closed door/offline | 15 minutes |
| Committee Decision & Feedback | 5 minutes |

# Final Review Preparation Timeline

| | |
|---|---|
| Semester Prior to Presentation: | Watch the Final Review Orientation<br>Review department specific guidelines<br>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 |
| 2 to 3 months prior | Check graduate website for Final Review sign-up schedule<br>Solidify your Thesis Project Concept |
| 6 Weeks Prior | Prepare your thesis book<br>Work with an editor or contact ARC to make sure your thesis book is grammatically correct and typo-free. |
| 1 month prior | Create your PowerPoint/PDF slide show<br>Organize and create notes for your oral presentation<br>Work with a friend, colleague or ARC on your oral presentation |
| 3 weeks prior | Practice your oral presentation out loud and with a timer<br>Review the online-specific requirements and test all of your equipment |
| 2 weeks prior | On-campus students verify your equipment works prior to your actual presentation date |
| 1 week prior | Plan your attire, dress professionally<br>Practice your presentation in front of a live audience |
| 3 days before | [Upload PDF of your thesis and portfolio to your review page](#) |
| Tips for the day of | Get plenty of rest the night before<br>Arrive early to prepare physically and vocally for the group performance<br>If you will be using a cellphone, make sure the battery is charged |
| Following your review | View your Final Review results [here](#) |

# Portfolio, Thesis Book & Presentation Checklists

## Portfolio Contents

Children's Book/Editorial/Advertising

- Advertising/Editorial:
  - o 15 professional, portfolio quality, full color sample illustrations directed towards editorial and/or advertising illustration markets.

    **OR**
  - o 10 full color, full bleed illustrations in traditional medium(s), digital or interactive, of 10 different products or services directed towards print or web advertising. Can include labels. Plus, five examples of preliminary art: 5 tight comps, or 5 storyboards with a minimum of 5 frames each, or a combo of comps and storyboards equaling 5 total.
- Children's Books:
  - o Five full color illustrations from the story you have written, along with penciled "Flat Plan." This must be indicative of the entire story.
  - o Ten illustrations from another 2 stories that are in public domain. (A minimum of five from each story). Each story should be directed toward a different demographic – age/gender/subject matter.

    **OR**
  - o At least 15 total illustrations for stories that you did not write with a minimum of 5 per story.

    **OR**
  - o 10 illustrations from 2 separate stories and 5 pages of professional level examples for consumer products or licensing concepts

Comic Book

- 15 professional, portfolio quality, inked pages from the most interesting narrative and visually exciting section of your story line. Continuity of character is required.

  **OR**
- 10 professional, portfolio quality, inked pages from the most interesting narrative and visually exciting section of your story line. Continuity of character is required.
- 5 examples of preliminary art: 5 tight comps, or 5 storyboards with a minimum of 5 frames each, or a combo of comps and storyboards equaling 5 examples total.

## Thesis Book Checklist

Your Final Thesis Project thesis book must provide a synopsis of the research and creative processes involved in the completion of the work. It must also include images of your work and details (see the checklist below for more information and layout). This document must also include your Growth Portfolio.

- GRAMMAR/SPELLING: Be sure the proposal is grammatically correct and free of spelling errors and typos.
  - o The Academy Resource Center (ARC) offers support for both your written and oral presentation.
- EVOLUTION: Your thesis book 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.

In your thesis book, you must include the following sections with separate headings:

- Cover Page
  - The cover of your thesis book must include the following:
    - Project title
    - Your Name
    - Student ID Number
    - Academy of Art University, Graduate School of Illustration
    - Final Thesis Project
    - 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 its corresponding page number in the TOC
    - Select an appropriate font. Font size should be no smaller than 10 pt. and easily readable
- Autobiography
  - For your autobiography, write in a concise and engaging manner. Briefly address the following in no more than one page in length:
    - Introduce yourself
    - Explain how you developed an interest in Illustration
    - Discuss what led you to enroll at the Academy of Art University
    - You may also include other information that seems appropriate or relevant
- Resume
  - You will need to include a formal resume in your proposal. This is a one-page professional document that lists your current contact information, work experiences, skills and education.
    - Name
    - Address
    - Phone number
    - E-mail
    - Website (optional)
    - Additional contact information
    - Educational background
    - Recent or pertinent employment history
      - Dates should be listed chronologically, most recent at the top of the list.
    - Other relevant interest/vocational information
- Timeline
  - The timeline must include the following:
    - List by semester all of the courses that you have taken to date that apply to your degree completion, including course number, title, and instructor of each course
    - Be sure your total units add up to 63 Growth Portfolio
- Thesis Summary
  - The Thesis Summary is a short but detailed summary of your Final Thesis Project. By reading this summary, the committee should have a solid sense of what you have created without having to read the full book. It should be approximately 150 words.
    - Area of emphasis

- - Genre
    - Subject matter
    - Reason for choosing the subject matter
    - Reason for creating the project
- Thesis Project
    - The Thesis Project Final Report is the focal point of the written presentation. In this section of the document, you will relay the details of your completed project to the Panel.
    - You will want to address the following in an articulate and well thought-out manner:
        - Define your Thesis Project in detail (what, why, how)
        - Describe your personal interest and involvement with the project
        - Describe background information on your topic and how you came to choose this project
        - Describe any challenges you encountered with the project and how these challenges were overcome
        - Describe how the project evolved from the Midpoint Review
        - Describe what you feel you have learned from the project & your methods of working
    - The Thesis Project Final Report is the most involved portion of your thesis book, and must describe all of the information that you feel the Review Panel should know about the development and completion of your Thesis Project. There is no specified length for the Thesis Project Final Report.
    - Though it is always a good idea to be concise in your wording, this section should be as long as it needs to be to clearly and thoroughly articulate your ideas. Avoid being redundant and do not cut and paste sentences from your abstract.
- Thesis Illustrations
    - Include all art presented. All images must be:
        - In .JPG format
        - Optimized so the final PDF document will be 50MB or smaller
- Statement of Future Plans
    - The Statement of Future Plans should identify the following:
        - Identify the next steps you will be taking with your Thesis Project. Will you be continuing with the project?
        - Identify your professional goals, including what steps you have taken toward meeting these goals.
        - Demonstrated an understanding of current trends and visual industry standards by describing how your work will address a specific market

## Oral Presentation Checklist

The oral presentation is a summation of the research process and conceptual solution of the Final Thesis Project. Original work must be shown but must be accompanied by slides or other visual materials.

- POWER POINT/PDF: A PowerPoint or PDF presentation accompanying your oral proposal is required.
- Q&A: Plan to answer questions and defend your work at the end of your presentation.
- PRACTICE: Practice your oral presentation in advance of your review to insure your comfort level during the presentation. Such practice is essential to your preparedness for your Review.

This is a formal presentation to the committee of a student's body of work - the Final Thesis Project as proposed by the student at Midpoint Review. 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 Review.
- All 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

IMPORTANT: DO NOT READ your presentation off the slideshow and do not read directly from your notes. Use bullet points and fill in the information. How you present your work will affect the overall decision. The committee is looking for how well you speak about your work; address your ideas and overall approach.

**FINAL REVIEW PDF CHECKLIST**

Your PowerPoint/PDF should include the following slides:

- Introduction Slide
  - The introduction/title slide must include the following items:
    - Your name
    - Department Name
    - Category: Children's Book, Graphic Novel, etc
    - Project Title
    - Date of the presentation
- Background Slide
  - The choice of what to include in your background slides is individual and personal, that said here are some general rules:
    - Only include background that is relevant to describing how you have arrived at your current work
    - Make sure the background information is a minor section of your presentation
- Thesis Project Slides
  - Include your full illustrated project in the PowerPoint Presentation using bullet point formatting when applicable.
- Closing Slide
  - This slide should clearly indicate that you are finished with your presentation.
  - You may choose to include the following:
    - Your Name
    - Your Project Title
    - A Thank you

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: How many pages should the thesis book be?**

A: 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.

**Q: If I'm an online student, do I need to send in physical samples of my class work?**

A: No.

**Q: Can we include work we've done outside of the Academy?**

A: Work not executed at the Academy of Art University should not constitute more than 10% of your portfolio presentation.

**Q: Can I use fancy text, borders and custom backgrounds for my PDF presentation?**

A: We would recommend against it. Simple, easy to read and easy to see content is best.