

MCAD × SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

MINNEAPOLIS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

The Master of Arts in Sustainable Design Program Handbook*
Updated Spring 2016

*For reference in conjunction with the [MCAD Student Handbook](#).

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The Master of Arts in Sustainable Design Program Handbook has been developed by the sustainable design program for use of graduate students enrolled in the Master of Arts in Sustainable Design (MA) degree program at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD).

The information found in this handbook is accurate to the best of our knowledge as of the revision date. The information and policies contained in this student handbook are presented as a matter of information only and are not intended to create, nor is the handbook to be construed to constitute, a contract between MCAD and any student. MCAD has the right to alter, amend, modify, deviate from, or otherwise terminate any privileges, provisions, or obligations contained in this handbook at any time if it so chooses with or without notice to a student. If you have any questions about the contents of this handbook, please contact the MA program at sustainable_design@mcad.edu.

This handbook is intended for use in conjunction with the MCAD Student Handbook available under the Student Affairs section on the [MCAD Intranet](#). The MCAD Student Handbook covers many policies, procedures, and services of the college not specifically mentioned here, including issues related to image use copyrights and plagiarism. Please consult the MCAD Student Handbook for more information on these and other important and relevant MCAD policies.

NOTE: Email is the primary form of communication for the MA program. **All students are required to check their mcad.edu email at least once every twenty-four hours (when classes are in session) and respond immediately to all official requests.**

MCAD's Master of Arts in Sustainable Design is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

Section 1: MASTER OF ARTS IN SUSTAINABLE DESIGN PROGRAM

MCAD's [Master of Arts in Sustainable Design](#) degree program is a 30-credit, course-based degree of advanced study offered completely online that culminates with a thesis project, presentation, and review. The MA was designed exclusively for busy working professionals and an online platform.

MCAD's MA program blends theory, practice, and leadership courses into a holistic, hands-on training experience. Throughout this 5-semester program, students will gain in-depth and actionable knowledge and experience. Students will have opportunities to put sustainable design theories into practice, develop fundamental problem solving skills, explore collaborative innovation techniques and processes, and gain entrepreneurial training, creative leadership, and environmental stewardship experience.

- Intake occurs twice per year (fall and spring semester).
- Courses are offered during the fall and spring semesters (no summer semester).
- Semesters have 15 weeks.
- The degree was designed to be completed within 5-semesters and at the pace of two courses per semester. Students are required to take two courses (6 credits) each fall and spring semester. Exceptions to any program requirements must be approved by the director of the MA program.
- Of the 30-credits, 24 credits are required.
- Elective courses are integrated into the fall and spring semesters. **Students take 2 elective courses during their MA tenure.**
- In online courses, 1 hour of credit requires approximately 3 hours of work per week for all activities (i.e. reading, viewing, making, scanning, responding to discussion threads, collaborating, etc.). Therefore, a 3-credit online course requires approximately 9 hours per week to complete the necessary activities.
- **Each 3-credit course is designed to be completed in 135 hours. Students should expect to spend 9 hours per week *per course* for 15-week semesters.** (Note: more hours may be required per week if a student's first language is not English, if a student has a learning disability, and/or during the culminating thesis project and paper, etc.)
- Students move through the program by taking building-block courses that culminate in the Graduate Sustainability Thesis Project course (6 credits total), where students direct an independent, sustainability-focused project in the field that pertains to their specific personal and professional aspirations with the support of their thesis advisor and thesis committee.
- Theses may be the development of a sustainability-focused product, material, system, service, comprehensive research paper, or detailed business plan. Other options may also be considered with approval of the director of the MA program.

Master of Arts in Sustainable Design Framework

Students must **successfully pass a total of 30 credits (10 courses) to complete the MA degree**, with specific requirements as follows:

Students must take **3 core courses** listed below (total of 12 credits):

- Fundamentals of Sustainable Design (SD-6500) – 3 credits
- Systems Thinking (SD-6510) – 3 credits
- Graduate Sustainability Thesis Project (SD-7020) – 6 credits

Students must take **4 out of the following 5 specialization courses** (total of 4 courses = 12 credits):

- Creative Leadership (SD-6750)
- Graduate Sustainability Practicum (SD-7010)
- Making the Business Case for Sustainability (SD-7530)
- The Practice of Sustainable Design (SD-7620)
- Collaborative Product Design (SD-7630)

Students take additional **2 elective courses** (total of 2 courses = 6 credits). Any 2 courses of the following classes may be taken. Students are permitted to use the 5th specialization course (see above) as an elective course. Also, options from other MCAD departments may be acceptable with the approval of the MA program director.

Upcoming electives*:

- Packaging Sustainability (SD-6810)
- Biomimetic Design (SD-6610)
- Innovation Tools and Techniques (SD-6600)
- Visual Communications for Sustainability (SD-6700)
- Nature's Design Rules for Sustainability (SD-6540)

**Note: elective courses are subject to change.*

Students must also successfully pass the following two **reviews** to complete the MA degree:

- Mid-program review
- Final thesis review

Section 2: ACADEMIC POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Registration and Advising

Each fall and spring semester, students are **required** to schedule an advising appointment via online video chat (e.g. Skype, Google Hangout, etc.) or phone with the MA academic advisor (who also currently serves as the director of the MA program) during the designated advising period determined and announced via email by the MA program director. (Note: advising period for fall courses occurs during the spring semester prior. Advising period for spring courses occurs in the fall semester prior.)

After meeting with the academic advisor to discuss course selection and progression in the program, students will be registered for their chosen courses by the MA academic advisor who submits an approved course registration form to MCAD's records office. **Students must ensure that their course schedules are correct each semester by reviewing it on their [MyMCAD](#) page.**

Practicums

Students may find practicums (supervised practical work experiences akin to internships) as a useful part of their graduate study, although it is not a requirement of the program. Three practicum credits may be earned toward a student's *specialization course* credits. Before beginning a practicum or engaging in work that will count toward their practicum credits, students must register for the 3-credit class Graduate Sustainability Practicum (SD-7010).

Many students find (virtual or in-person) practicum placements through personal contacts, the director of the MA program, or MCAD's career services office. The career services office provides comprehensive assistance with practicum proposal submissions and the review process (see Section 14: Support Services). For preliminary approval of the practicum placement and project, students must schedule an appointment with the director of the MA program before beginning the practicum and craft a ~400 word practicum proposal that overviews the student's goal and objectives for the 120-hour practicum. Once the proposal is approved by the MA director the student works with career services to launch the practicum.

Part-Time Students

Students have a **maximum of four years** to complete the MA program.

However:

- The MA was designed to be completed within two years and alteration of MA timeline may lead to complications with course availability, etc.
- In order to make changes to approved course registrations (drop/add/withdraw), students must receive approval from the director of the MA program, as well as the instructor of the specific course.
- The official **Drop/Add period ends on the last day of the first week of classes** each semester. Approval to drop or add a course must be obtained by the director of the MA program as well as the instructor of the specific course. Contact the director of the MA program to process the appropriate paperwork.
- **In order to register for less than 6 credits per semester, students must receive approval from the director of the MA program.** To begin this process, students must schedule an appointment with the director of the MA program. **Registering for less than 6 credits per semester will change a student's eligibility for financial aid.**
- Students should check with the MCAD Financial Aid Office for specifics related to their situation (refer to Section 14: Support Services).

Citations

The MA program requires the usage of the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) for all works cited in courses, assignments, and thesis work. All images, claims, quotes, and/or data not originally generated by the student must be properly cited using the CMS style guide.

Class Attendance

Registration for an online course presupposes that the student will attend and fully participate in all online activities as detailed in individual courses. **Each student is responsible for meeting all course requirements.** Individual course instructors will detail their specific policies and/or the penalties related to late work submission in their respective syllabi. Note that many course instructors will not accept late work (with the exception of family or medical emergencies). Each student is required to carefully review course syllabi at the beginning of each course and contact individual course instructors with questions.

Percentage Grading Scale

A+	100-98	A	97-93	A-	92-90
B+	89-88	B	87-83	B-	82-80
C+	79-78	C	77-73	C-	72-70
D+	69-68	D	67-63	D-	62-60
F	59-0				

Note: A letter grade of C- is the minimum for course credits to count toward MA degree.

Grading Criteria

A+	4.00
A Excellent	4.00
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B Very Good	3.00
C+	2.33
C Average	2.00
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D Poor	1.00
D-	0.67
F Failing	0.00

Note: A letter grade of C- is the minimum for course credits to count toward MA degree.

Graduation Requirements

Successful completion with a **grade of C- or above is required for all courses applied toward the MA**, and all coursework must be taken for credit. Failure to meet course requirements of a C- grade minimum will be recorded with the representative letter grade,

credit hours will not be accumulated, and the student will be placed on academic probation (see below). “Incomplete” and “Withdrew” will be recorded in appropriate instances. **Note: “Pass/Fail” courses such as Graduate Sustainability Thesis Project and Practicum do NOT count toward GPA as no letter grade is assigned.**

Students must successfully complete the following to graduate from the MA program:

- Complete of all credit requirements.
- Earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0.
- Earn a minimum final semester GPA 2.0.
- Complete all missing or incomplete grades.
- File of Intent to Graduate form (available from [records office](#)).
- Pass Final Thesis Review.
- Submit final thesis paper to library for archival purposes.
- Meet all financial obligations.
- Participate in exit interview with the Financial Aid Office for all loan recipients.
- Complete the online Exit Survey.

Academic Probation

According to college policy, a semester **GPA of 2.0** (this is equivalent to the letter grade “C”) or lower places an MA student on academic probation for the subsequent semester.

Being on academic probation will change a student’s eligibility for financial aid. Students should check with the MCAD Financial Aid Office for specifics related to their situation. **If the student’s overall GPA does not become satisfactory (GPA over 2.0) the semester following academic probation, dismissal from the program is automatic.**

Note: students must achieve a semester GPA of 2.0 in their final semester in order to graduate.

Incompletes

Reasons for requesting an incomplete grade from MCAD’s records office include personal or family medical emergencies or other extreme events outside of the student’s control. In the event that an incomplete is recorded, the incomplete **must be resolved by the fifth week of the succeeding semester or a permanent standing grade of F will be recorded for the semester.** Approval to request an Incomplete from the records office must be attained by the director of the MA program as well as the instructor of the specific course. Contact the director of the MA program to process the appropriate paperwork.

Withdraw from Class

Students may officially withdraw from a course and receive a “W” notation on their transcript that does not contribute to their semester GPA. Last day to withdraw from classes is typically three weeks before the end of the semester. Instructor approval and signature is required to withdraw from a course.

Withdrawal from Program

Students who wish to “drop” more than 50% of their course load after the Drop/Add period has passed, must officially withdraw from the college. The withdraw period may last for the duration of the current semester or for up to five years. In order to make a request to withdraw from the program, students are required to schedule an appointment with the director of the MA program and must receive approval to withdraw from both the director of the MA program and MCAD’s student affairs office, as well as complete a notification of student withdrawal form. (Note: the withdraw form is available under the Student Affairs section of MCAD’s Intranet. See Section 14: Support Services for more information.) An official letter grade or “W” (for “withdrew”) will appear on each student’s transcript for all credits attempted but not completed. Contact the director of the MA program to discuss options and process the appropriate paperwork.

Readmission

Readmission following dismissal may be granted upon recommendation of the director of the MA program after a period of at least one semester. A meeting between the student and the director of the MA program begins the process of consideration of readmission.

Progress to Degree

In addition to evaluations within individual courses, and other important academic milestones (see Section 12), there are two required reviews for students that assess and determine a student’s status in progress toward the MA degree:

- Mid-program review (see Section 5) and
- Final thesis review (see Section 10)

Receiving Diploma

Graduate diplomas are not automatically mailed to MA graduates, but will be mailed to a graduate’s physical address upon written request in the form of an email to MCAD’s Record’s Office.

After all MA requirements have been completed and commencement period has passed, any MA graduates (that are unable to pick up their diploma in person from the Records office) who have emailed a current mailing address to records@mcad.edu, will be sent their diploma (in the absence of any holds or missing grades).

Section 3: THESIS PROJECT OVERVIEW

The thesis project and corresponding thesis project presentation (see Section 9) are the capstones to the MA program and an indication of the MA candidate’s development as a sustainability leader as a result of the graduate experience. In order to best prepare MA students for their thesis work, students will begin their thesis project work as early in the program as possible, from the earliest idea stage (thesis project brief; see Section 4) to the final stages (thesis project presentation and final thesis review; see Sections 9 and 10, respectively). Refer to Section 12 for important academic milestones and Section 13 for general assessment guidelines.

Definitions

The **Thesis Project** is the “what” of the student’s thesis work. All MA graduate sustainability thesis projects will result in either 1) original sustainability research [format of an article, journal publication, series of blog posts, business plan, etc.] or 2) the design of an innovative [new or improved] product, system, or service with a sustainability focus. The thesis project is an evaluated component of the final thesis review. **Thesis projects are managed and monitored through the development of the thesis project presentation.**

The **Thesis Project Presentation** is the vehicle by which the MA student communicates their thesis project work. The thesis project presentation (see Section 9) cannot be created without conducting a thesis project. The thesis project presentation is the means for evaluating the thesis project work during the final thesis review (refer to presentation rubric for evaluation criteria; see Appendix).

Purpose of the Thesis Project

The purpose of the thesis project is for the MA student to demonstrate that they are capable of leading an independent piece of work with a sustainability focus with clear parameters, goals, objectives, process, and oversight from concept to completion, under the guidance of their advisor and committee members (see Section 7).

The required course Graduate Sustainability Thesis Project (6 credits) is designed to foster independent research, writing, and discussion of ideas toward the development of the thesis project and thesis project presentation, which are the final outcomes of the course.

Process of the Thesis Project

The thesis advisor and committee oversee the creation and approval of the thesis project work. It is the thesis advisor’s responsibility to help set the conceptual and formal structure for the thesis project in conjunction with the MA student.

Thesis projects vary widely with each MA student and will pertain specifically to the project goals, objectives, parameters, etc. determined by the MA student and their advisor.

The thesis project is worked on simultaneously with preparation of the thesis project presentation. Thesis projects are managed and monitored through the development of the thesis project presentation.

Section 4: THESIS PROJECT BRIEF

Definition

The **Thesis Project Brief** is a document (**one page maximum**) that presents the student’s early ideas for their potential thesis project.

The **Sustainable Design Academic Committee** serves as a team to review thesis project briefs and to perform MA mid-program reviews. The committee is formed by the director of the MA program and comprises the director of the MA program, one or more MA faculty member(s), and/or one other MCAD academic program director (or equivalent).

Purpose of Thesis Project Brief

The purpose of the thesis project brief is to demonstrate the student's early ideas and intentions regarding their thesis work. The review of thesis project brief provides the opportunity for the Sustainable Design Academic Committee to assist individual students with the development of their early ideas, to provide feedback on the ideas and scope of the project, and to suggest potential thesis committee members.

Process of Thesis Project Brief

Students who have completed 6 credits or more toward their MA degree are required to develop and submit specific items (detailed under "Requirements of Thesis Project Brief") to the director of the MA program, by the end of the second semester, for review by the Sustainable Design Academic Committee. The director of the MA program sets the thesis project brief deadline date for each semester. After reviewing and assessing the thesis project brief, the committee provides feedback on the thesis project brief to the student.

Requirements of Thesis Project Brief

The development of the Thesis Project Brief includes the following **five aspects** in brief:

- **SUSTAINABLE DESIGN PROBLEM:** what is the meaningful sustainability issue that the thesis project will help solve or provide insight?
- **IDEA:** what is the idea for an innovative or original sustainability-focused solution?
- **STRATEGY:** why will the thesis project be an improvement on the existing model?
- **OBJECTIVE:** how will the thesis project lead to a more sustainable world?
- **PROFESSIONAL GOALS:** how will the thesis project contribute to growth as a sustainability leader and help to attain goals as a sustainability professional?

Section 5: MID-PROGRAM REVIEW

Definitions

The **Mid-Program Review** is the process of assessment of a student's mid-program review package, conducted by the Sustainable Design Academic Committee. The mid-program review occurs after the MA student has completed 15 credits.

The **Mid-Program Review Package** is the compilation of 1) portfolio work, 2) portfolio work overviews, and 3) thesis project proposal.

Thesis Project Proposal (see Section 6 for definition and further details)

Purpose of Mid-Program Review

The purpose of the mid-program review is to demonstrate the student's progress in the MA program, their potential career path, and indicate a student's potential to produce solid thesis work in a timely and professional manner. The mid-program review provides the opportunity for the Sustainable Design Academic Committee to evaluate individual student progress and degree candidacy status.

Process of Mid-Program Review

Students who have completed 15 credits or more toward their MA degree are required to compile and submit specific items (detailed under "Requirements of Mid-Program Review") to the director of the MA program for review by the Sustainable Design Academic Committee. The director of the MA program sets dates each year for mid-program reviews. After reviewing and assessing student work, the committee provides a critique of the mid-program review package and a pass/no pass grade.

Requirements of Mid-Program Review

The creation of a mid-program review package includes the following items:

- **Portfolio Work:** A portfolio that contains ONLY **one 'portfolio piece' for every course** during student's tenure in the MA. (A piece could be one image, a series of images, or an entire student project.) These course-based portfolio pieces are often the results of final project work, but are not limited to final projects. **It is up to the student to select pieces of work that best represent their growth as a sustainability professional. Pieces should be easily viewed and read by the reviewer.** (Be sure text size and image quality are appropriate.) Only courses that students have completed and received a final grade for are required to have representative work. Refer to Section 8: Web-based Portfolio to learn more about the purpose of this collection of work.
- **Portfolio Work Overviews:** A brief overview for *each portfolio piece* of work (3 sentences or less for each) that includes the:
 - Sustainability focus of the piece
 - Objective of the piece
 - Year, semester, and course title the work was developed within
- **Thesis Project Proposal (see Section 6 for specific details)**

Detailed Mid-Program Review Process

By **5:00 p.m. CT** of the due date of the mid-program review (set by director):

1. The mid-program review package will be submitted as a **single PDF file** via email with the subject line "STUDENT NAME: Mid-Program Review Package" to sustainable_design@mcad.edu.
2. The Sustainable Design Academic Committee meets to review individual mid-program review packages.
3. The student **may** be contacted for a meeting to clarify any information about their mid-program review package and/or about their progress in the program.

4. The committee 1) assesses the package, 2) provides a critique of the package, and 3) provides either of the two following grading options (note: transcripts may also be reviewed during this time to aid in decision-making):
 - 1) Pass on to thesis proposal stage, or
 - 2) No pass
5. The recommendation of the committee is presented to the student in writing via email from the director of the MA program. The written statement indicates the decision of the committee and the critique of the package for future use as part of the student's web-based portfolio (see Section 8).
6. The director completes the mid-program review process by submitting the committee recommendation (pass/no pass) to the registrar for filing as part of the student's academic file.
7. **Students who pass the mid-program review will advance to the thesis committee stage (see Section 7) and are considered MA candidates.**
8. Students who do not pass their first mid-program review will be scheduled for a re-review during the same semester and continue course work as scheduled.
9. Students who do not pass their second mid-program review will be asked to leave the program. These students may petition to the director of the MA program to be reinstated to the program after a period of one semester.

Section 6: THESIS PROJECT PROPOSAL

The MA candidate's thesis project proposal will stem directly from the ideas the MA student put forth in the thesis project brief and the feedback the student received from the Sustainable Design Academic Committee. The thesis project proposal is intended to prepare the MA candidate for the next step in their MA tenure, that is, to begin working on their thesis project and presentation in a directed and concerted manner and to advance to the MA candidacy stage.

Definitions

The ***Thesis Project Proposal*** is a **five-page (maximum)** presentation (slide deck) that includes references. It clearly and concisely articulates the thesis project ideas, and includes credible, supporting references for the need for this sustainability work. **The thesis project proposal is submitted as part of the mid-program review package (see Section 5).**

Purpose of the Thesis Project Proposal

The purpose of the MA candidate's thesis project proposal is to critically demonstrate the MA candidate's ability to create a cohesive, provocative final thesis project and presentation for their final thesis review (see Section 3 for more information about the thesis project, Section 9 for more information about the thesis project presentation, and Section 10 for more about the final thesis review). MA candidates' thesis work will drive toward a more sustainable solution or concept to an existing need. Exploratory work and research-focused work are acceptable if the proposed sustainability solution/design:

- Can be demonstrated to be a more sustainable solution in its specific context than what already exists, or
- Includes full details on what work is required to compare the final design against existing products or services.

Process of the Thesis Project Proposal

The thesis project proposal is conceptualized, developed, and written by the MA student after completing 15 credits, and it is submitted as part of the mid-program review package.

The MA thesis project proposal must meet the following requirements:

- Articulate how the MA candidate's thesis project will result in original research, prototype, product, system, service, or plan (see Section 9 for more details about the thesis project presentation).
- Identify the resources and schedule required to complete the proposed thesis project and thesis project presentation in time for their final thesis review.
- Highlight the significance of the project in the context of sustainability.
- List the proposed thesis advisor and two thesis committee members.
- Be five pages or less (including primary references).
- Be produced in a text editing program (e.g., Microsoft Word®) and delivered as a PDF.
- Be submitted to the MA director for review and feedback by the Sustainable Design Academic Committee.

The MA student completes the thesis project proposal stage by submitting their five-page proposal to the director of the MA program. The thesis project proposal is submitted by the MA director to MCAD's records office and becomes a part of the MA candidate's academic file.

Once the thesis project proposal has been submitted as part of the mid-program review package it will be reviewed by the Sustainable Design Academic Committee. **Students who pass the mid-program review will advance to the thesis committee stage, and are considered MA candidates.** (Review details about the Mid-Program Review process in Section 5.)

Section 7: THESIS ADVISOR AND COMMITTEE ROLES

After the student has passed the mid-program review stage (must be completed *before* the 5th semester), the MA candidate will immediately begin to prepare for their thesis project presentation by accomplishing the concurrent tasks listed below.

Tasks:

1. Secure a thesis advisor.
2. Revise thesis project proposal (using Sustainable Design Academic Committee feedback).
3. Complete, sign, and return the Advisor-Student Learning Contract (see Appendix), to MA director.

4. Secure two thesis committee members.
5. Submit revised thesis project proposal (see Section 6) that has been **reviewed, approved and signed by thesis advisor** to the MA director for filing with the records office.

Definitions

A **Thesis Advisor** is a sustainability professional who is (typically) an instructor in MCAD's MA program who will extensively help the MA candidate to design and execute a final thesis project, paper, and prepare for their final thesis review. The thesis advisor is a **voting** member of the student's graduate thesis committee.

Thesis Committee Members are professionals who lend their expertise to help the MA candidate to refine their thesis project and presentation. They may or may not be MCAD faculty members. Each MA candidate is required to have **two** thesis committee members. Thesis committee members are **voting** members of the MA candidate's graduate thesis committee.

The **Graduate Sustainability Thesis Project Instructor** is a faculty member in MCAD's MA program who leads the Graduate Sustainability Thesis Project (SD-7020) course and who guides the MA candidate through the development of the various stages of their thesis project work including: thesis project development, thesis presentation, web-based portfolio creation, and final review preparation. The instructor typically does not attend the final thesis review, thus **does not have a vote** in the final thesis review process.

The **Thesis Committee Chair** is typically the director of the MA program and is the person who facilitates the final thesis review process. The thesis committee chair is a **non-voting** member of the MA candidate's graduate thesis committee. In some cases, the thesis committee chair and the Graduate Sustainability Thesis Project instructor are the same person; in either case, these are non-voting members of the MA candidate's graduate thesis committee.

The **Advisor-Student Learning Contract** is crafted by the MA candidate, in collaboration with the thesis advisor, to outline the expectations for the working relationship between them and returned to the director of the MA program for filing (see Appendix).

Finding a Thesis Advisor

The purpose of the MA candidate's thesis work is to demonstrate that they are capable of leading an independent project with a sustainability focus with clear parameters, process, and oversight from concept to completion, under the guidance of their advisor and committee members. Finding an advisor and, subsequently, two additional committee members that are the best fit for the MA candidate and their proposed work is a critical part of a successful MA experience.

In consultation with and approval of the director of the MA program, the MA candidate will approach a prospective advisor(s) who is an MA instructor. **This will typically take place**

during the MA candidate's fourth semester. Advisors must hold at least a master's degree (or equivalent professional experience according to MCAD's Professional Equivalency Rubric), have relevant professional experience to guide their final thesis project work, and have the time to dedicate to provide critical oversight to the MA candidate's thesis project, presentation, and final thesis review.

Advisor Role

The roles and responsibilities of the thesis advisor are to:

- Work as an advisor to assist the MA candidate to design and execute a final thesis project that will result in the candidate's development as sustainability leader and that relates to the future career goals of the candidate, and that these goals meet the standards of the MA program (see Section 13: General Assessment Guidelines and Appendix: Thesis Project Presentation Rubric).
- Sign and return a Graduate Thesis Advisor Contract.
- Commit to spending up to 1 hour per week with the MA candidate.
- Consult, review, approve, and sign the MA candidate's thesis project proposal and Advisor-Student Learning Contract (see Appendix).
- Oversee the selection process of the remainder of the MA candidate's thesis committee (see Committee Member Role below).
- Provide feedback and critique during the advising period.
- Help the MA candidate find relevant and/or critical references.
- Provide feedback, critique, and eventually approve the MA candidate's thesis proposal and draft versions of their final thesis paper.
- Critique MA candidate's web-based portfolio.
- Read, review, evaluate, and approve the MA candidate's thesis project presentation before it is submitted to the entire thesis committee.
- Participate in the MA candidate's final thesis review. Advocate for the MA candidate, if and when appropriate, to the thesis committee.

Working with an Advisor

Advisors are sustainability professionals who are active in their area of expertise and preferably are, or have been, an instructor in the MA program. Advisors have a clear vision of their role as a sustainability leader.

Expectations for the advisor and MA candidate relationship are negotiated between the MA candidate and the advisor and will vary depending on work styles, personalities, and scheduling preferences (i.e. time of day/week for meetings, how to meet [phone, video chat, etc.], how much turn around time between revisions, etc.). **Clearly articulated and understood expectations and a strategy for working together make for a successful working experience.** Expectations for the relationship structure are documented in the Advisor-Student Learning Contract that is crafted by the MA candidate and initially approved by the advisor (see Appendix). Subsequently, the contract is sent to the director of the MA program for final approval and in turn submitted to the MCAD Records Office as part of the MA candidate's academic file.

Committee Member Role

The committee meets online with the MA candidate a minimum of three times to review the MA candidate's thesis project proposal as well as during the development of the thesis project presentation, and for the preparation for the final thesis review (see Section 12 for a timetable of academic milestones).

Once the outside member(s) of the thesis committee has been secured, MA candidates may be asked to provide the director of the MA program with information for this member(s), including but not limited to:

- Curriculum vitae
- Statement about their role as a sustainability leader
- Examples of their work as a practicing sustainability professional
- Approach to mentoring

Thesis Committee

Each MA candidate works with their thesis advisor to select a two-member thesis committee, in consultation with and the approval of the director of the MA program.

This committee includes:

- A practicing sustainability professional from outside the MCAD community to serve as the outside committee member (if appropriate and possible)
- Either a member of MCAD's MA faculty OR a practicing sustainability professional from outside the MCAD community to serve as the secondary committee member

Working with Committee Members

Thesis committee members work with MA candidates in a less time-intensive manner than the advisor. However, the specifics of the relationship (i.e. meeting times, expectations for deliverables, etc.) are to be established by the individual committee members and the MA candidate through candid conversation. Committee member involvement in the MA candidate's final thesis project and paper will vary greatly depending on the needs of the MA candidate and the relationship forged.

In summary, **MCAD expects MA candidates to be practicing sustainability professionals and to have a clear idea of what they want to achieve from their studies.** The advisor and committee members serve as guides and sources of thoughtful and critical response throughout this process. MA candidates and advisors/committee members will determine their meeting schedule based on what best advances the MA candidate's progress from the thesis project proposal stage (see Section 6) to their final thesis review (see Section 10). **It is the MA candidate's responsibility to maintain these relationships and make regular connections with their committee members and advisor.**

Section 8: WEB-BASED PORTFOLIO

Definition

The **Web-Based Portfolio** serves to create a public presence for the candidate's MA work and as a direct expression of the MA candidate's individual point of view, opinions, activities, etc., for the candidate's sustainability-focused work created during their tenure within the MA program.

The web-based portfolio is a website (platform, style, format, etc.) that is created and curated by the MA candidate that highlights **one example of their work from each MA course taken** at MCAD. In some cases, teamwork will need to be presented as a portfolio piece; *ensure that all team members are identified and that the student's role in the project is clearly detailed.* Other sustainability work that the MA candidate has conducted (professional or personal practice) may also be included in the portfolio but all work must be clearly identified as student or non-student work.

Purpose of Web-Based Portfolio

The purpose of the web-based portfolio is to promote reflection on the coherence of a student's academic career. Because MCAD's MA is a fully online program, the portfolio serves as a means for MA candidates to make a public presentation or exhibition of their work as is a requirement for traditional master's programs at institutions of art and design. (Note: students may make their portfolios password protected if they do not want to share their work outside of the program and/or their thesis committees.)

Portfolios will support an MA candidate with:

- Preparation and building confidence for their final thesis review
- Providing a means to reflect on and analyze their academic experiences
- Preparing a foundation for the development of materials to support and recognize their growth as a sustainability professional
- Demonstrating a competency-based body of sustainability-focused work

The web-based portfolio **must** include the following:

- Introduction or About page
- Short biography (ten sentences or less)
- Sustainability statement/philosophy (ten sentences or less)
- Resume
- Contact information (virtual business card)
- Portfolio: showcased work with **one** piece of work from every MA course taken, with an accompanying **portfolio work overview** (three sentences or less per each) that describes the assignment and how/why the student approached the problem or design solution (see Section 5: Mid-Program Review for more details about portfolio pieces and overviews). **All pieces in the portfolio must be easily viewed and read by reviewers.**

The web-based portfolio **may** include the following, if relevant, to showcase the MA candidate's sustainability work:

- Blog (to showcase essay-style work)
- Professional sustainability-focused work
- Other ideas approved by the MA director

MA candidates' web-based portfolios will be created, maintained, and curated by the MA candidate as part of their professional sustainability practice.

In the course Graduate Sustainability Thesis Project (SD-7020) the MA candidate will select the final website platform to develop the web-based portfolio that best meets the professional needs of the project and matches the MA candidate's ability to build, update, and maintain. It is critical that the following factors are considered in the platform selection process:

- MA candidate is comfortable using the platform
- Platform meets the professional needs of the MA candidate and/or project
- Platform is globally accessible
- Platform has a professional reputation

MA candidates may design their own sites, add a sustainability page to an existing professional site that they have already deployed, work with a professional web developer, or make use of free website platforms. Some examples of currently available, user-friendly, free website platforms that MA candidates may select from are (but are not limited to): WordPress, Tumblr, Blogger, Wix, and Weebly; industrial design portfolio sites such as Cloroflot; and graphic design portfolio sites such as Behance.

Section 9: THESIS PROJECT PRESENTATION

The thesis project presentation is the capstone to the MA program and an indication of the MA candidate's development as a sustainability leader as a result of the graduate experience. The MA candidate works closely with their thesis advisor and committee to plan and implement the thesis project presentation that ultimately leads to the final thesis review. **(NOTE: students who wish to prepare a thesis project paper in lieu of a presentation may do so with permission of the MA director.)**

The MA candidate will work independently with the guidance and support of their thesis advisor and the instructor of the Graduate Sustainability Thesis Project course to accomplish the following and complete the requirements of the degree:

- Earn a passing grade for 6 Graduate Sustainability Thesis Project (SD-7020) credits (this is a pass/fail course)
- Prepare a thesis project presentation (see Section 9)
- Make a public presentation of their thesis project and experiences in the MA program through their web-based portfolio (see Section 8)
- Earn a passing grade for the final thesis review (see Section 10)

- Submit a final electronic copy of their thesis presentation to the library through an online submission portal (see Section 11)

Definition

The ***Final Thesis Project Presentation*** captures and communicates the MA candidate's sustainability-focused thesis project work. The presentation explains the relevance and importance of the thesis project in the greater context of sustainability (the “why”) as well as the step-by-step process that the MA candidate follows to develop and complete the thesis project (the “how”). It also captures the outcome or developed design of the project (the “what”).

Purpose of the Thesis Project Presentation

The ultimate purpose of the thesis project presentation is to provide a narrative, in the format of a professional presentation (e.g., PDF of slide deck), to the MA candidate's independent sustainability-focused thesis project. In a sense, it is the story of the thesis project that provides the reader with an in-depth understanding of the background, context, current research, process, and outcome of the thesis project. The thesis project presentation will clearly articulate the current thinking around the subject matter of the thesis project as well as incorporate a summary of relevant and related research on the subject.

Process of the Thesis Project Presentation

MA candidates are encouraged to employ a writing style and format appropriate to the content and concerns of the thesis project. The written text included in the thesis project presentation will be written in the **third person**. Thesis project presentations will **have a minimum of fifteen pages/slides and maximum of 40 pages/slides, excluding references or appendices**.

Structure of the Thesis Project Presentation

MA candidates are encouraged to employ a professional presentation writing style: concise, compelling, and well supported. MA candidates are also encouraged to communicate in as visual a way as possible, including imagery, charts, graphics, infographics, sketches, visuals of designs and prototypes, video, etc. Candidates are encouraged to use whatever creative means best communicates their project in a professional manner.

The thesis project presentation will follow a **professional presentation structure** that will include the following major sections in this order:

1) The Project Introduction (6 pages maximum)

- Summary (1 page)
- Table of contents (1 page)
- Introduction that includes (4 pages):
 - Problem statement, sustainability challenge, support for the idea, strategic approach to the solution and potential sustainability impact that highlight any relevant supporting data, insights, or research

- Scope of project
- Professional goal(s)

2) The Project Execution (10 pages maximum)

- Project objectives (1 page)
- Proposed and actual process (1-3 pages)
- Visual and written demonstrations project work, including elements such as initial explorations and sketches, insights, and discoveries made throughout the project process, challenges encountered and overcome, design choices, and sustainability frameworks employed, etc. (1-5 pages)

3) The Project Outcome (20 pages maximum)

- Visual and written demonstration of final project outcome, the final solution or result of thesis exploration (i.e., research results and conclusions for a research project, a business plan for the launch of an idea, or a final original design)
- Description of solution functionality and the application of sustainability frameworks are included
- Project conclusion describes how the project did or did not support the problem statement, conclusions drawn, and next steps that could be taken

5) References/Works Cited 1-10 pages (as needed)

- References or Works Cited (using most recent Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) citation style guidelines produced by MCAD's Learning Center; see MCAD O.W.L.L. under 'Resources' tab on the MCAD Intranet page). Bibliographies are not acceptable.
 - References must include all relevant and key literature from a literature search and research will be summarized in the body of the paper.

6) Appendices 1-10 pages (as needed; maximum of 10 pages)

- Includes supporting research, additional details, etc.

Thesis project presentations must be clearly written, well organized, visually appealing, and professionally presented. **MA candidates are responsible for proofing their work for spelling and grammatical errors before final drafts are submitted to the thesis review committee.** MA candidates will complete proofing during Graduate Sustainability Thesis Project. In some cases, the instructor of the course may suggest that candidates seek the services of a copyeditor. **MCAD's Learning Center does not provide copyediting services but, with ample time for assistance, the Learning Center will work with students to improve their writing.** Be preemptive! Seek help early and often. (See Section 14 for more information about support services.)

The thesis advisor and committee oversee the development of the thesis project and presentation, and approve the presentation during the final review. It is recommended that MA candidates ask for early feedback from committee members and incorporate changes into their drafts. **MA candidates must submit their final thesis project presentation to their advisor,**

committee members, and thesis committee chair *two or more weeks* before the final thesis review date.

Documentation

All thesis project presentations must cite references where appropriate. All images, claims, quotes, and/or data not originally generated by the student must be substantiated by credible sources. All papers must include references used or works cited in the thesis. **MA candidates are required to use the CMS citation style *but not the formatting*.**

Appearance

It is the **responsibility of the MA candidate** to ensure that the final copy of their thesis project presentation meets the required formatting detailed below.

Final thesis project presentations must meet the following standards for the final thesis review:

- Follows a **professional presentation structure** as described above
- Is written in **third person**
- Uses **EITHER Helvetica or Times font** (Not required but these are the best fonts for long-term preservation of thesis)
- Uses **either a portrait or landscape layout**
- Is **40 pages or less** (excluding references and appendices)
- Is **no more than 30MB** when saved as a PDF
- Includes a **title page/slide** that clearly states:
 - The title of the paper
 - “In support of MA Thesis Review”
 - Date of final thesis review
 - Full name of candidate
 - The names of the MA candidate’s thesis advisor, two committee members, and thesis committee chair
- **Follows CMS citation style** guidelines (not formatting).
- Until further notice, indentation, layout style, etc. are according to students’ personal preference but is subject to change
- Note: hard copies are NOT required

Section 10: FINAL THESIS REVIEW

Definitions

The ***Final Thesis Review*** is an approximately two-hour long online video and/or audio conference call between the MA candidate and their thesis committee including the thesis chair who facilitates the meeting. The review provides an opportunity for the committee members to make comments, critique, ask questions, and discuss ideas with the MA candidate based on their thesis work including the thesis project, presentation, and web-based portfolio.

Purpose of the Final Thesis Review

The purpose of the final thesis review is to ensure that the MA candidate is prepared to leave the program as an active sustainability practitioner who has demonstrated their capabilities to lead an independent sustainability project and prepare an in-depth project presentation in a professional manner.

Process of the Final Thesis Review

Once an MA candidate's thesis project is complete and a thesis project presentation is prepared, the thesis committee meets online with the MA candidate for a formal review facilitated by the thesis committee chair (typically the director of the MA program). The review will last approximately two hours and addresses all aspects of the thesis project and corresponding thesis project presentation.

In addition to the thesis project presentation, the MA candidate will make a short video of their thesis presentation and their background as an introduction to the review (**five minutes or less; a pre-recorded video is recommended but not required**), and present a web-based portfolio (see Section 5) of their work developed while in the MA program.

Each committee member will have an opportunity to respond to and ask questions about the thesis project, presentation, video, and portfolio. After each committee member has done this, the review opens to a discussion format. During this time, the candidate may request clarifications and specifics from the committee members, as needed. At the conclusion of the meeting, the MA candidate will be asked to leave the meeting while the committee discusses their recommendation and casts their votes for their individual recommendations.

The committee will recommend one of the three following options to the MA faculty that the degree of Master of Arts in Sustainable Design:

- be awarded (pass),
- be conditionally awarded (pass with contingencies), or
- not be awarded (no pass).

Note: conditional recommendations must include specific conditions under which the committee will reconsider or approve the MA candidate's thesis project presentation and pass the review.

The committee's decision will then be reported to the MA candidate in writing via email from the director of the MA program. Upon the recommendation of the committee, the MA faculty, through the director of the MA program, will recommend to the president and the board of trustees that an MA degree be awarded.

Should the committee recommend the MA not be awarded, the MA candidate may appeal the decision to the director of the MA program.

*** MA CANDIDATES WILL NOT RECEIVE DIPLOMAS UNTIL ALL REQUIRED THESIS DOCUMENTATION AND COURSE WORK IS SUBMITTED (See Section 2)***

Section 11: THESIS PROJECT PRESENTATION SUBMISSION TO LIBRARY

See Section 9 for details regarding the required structure and appearance guidelines for the final thesis project presentation.

Follow the **REQUIRED Final Thesis Project Presentation PDF Standards for MCAD Library Submission** outlined below:

- File Name Requirements
 - **first initial last name_thesis_year of graduation.pdf**
 - Example: cgilbert_thesis_2017.pdf
- Format Requirements
 - **Save as PDF/A 1-b** (this is the best format for long-term preservation of theses)
 - Save your file in above format using Adobe Acrobat.
 - No encryption of the file is allowed. [Note: in cases where confidentiality is an issue (i.e. with Intellectual Property issues), theses may be submitted directly to the director of the MA program with prior approval and arrangement. Students may contact the MA program director about Non-Disclosure Agreements, if relevant to student work.]

Submission Process

- An electronic copy (**PDF/A 1-b**) will be submitted to the MCAD library using an online submission portal by **5:00 p.m. CT the second-to-last day of classes**.
- All of the following information will be required to submit through the online portal:
 - MA candidate's full name
 - Semester and year of final thesis review (e.g. Spring 2017)
 - Names of advisor, committee members, and thesis chair
 - Title of thesis project
 - Project summary
 - Seven or fewer keywords to be used in a search engine to find your thesis paper (keywords may be one ["biomimicry"] or two ["systems thinking"] words)
 - Link to MA candidate's web-based portfolio (see Section 4 for more details)
 - PDF/A 1-b version of the thesis project presentation (no more than 30MB)

Section 12: ACADEMIC MILESTONES

The following academic milestones are part of the MA candidate's official files in MCAD's records office and determine progress toward the MA degree.

All associated forms must be submitted to the director of the MA program for review and approval. All forms are available from the director of the MA program. Please send an email to sustainable_design@mcad.edu to request forms.

General Timetable of Academic Milestones

Academic Milestone	Responsible party	Who reviews/ approves	Deadline
Course registration(s)	Student in conjunction with MA academic advisor (director of MA program)	Director of MA program and records office	During designated academic advising period; required each fall and spring semester.
Thesis Project Brief	Student	Sustainable Design Academic Committee	After 6 credits have been successfully completed.
Mid-program review (includes portfolio work, overview, and 5-page thesis project proposal)	Student	Sustainable Design Academic Committee	After 15 credits have been successfully completed.
Thesis advisor secured	Student, instructor, and director of MA	Director of MA	Fifth semester (during GSTP) or earlier
Thesis advisor contract (issued by MCAD)	Thesis advisor and director of MA	Director of MA	Fifth semester (during GSTP) or earlier
Thesis committee formed	Student, thesis advisor, and director of MA	Director of MA	Fifth semester (during GSTP) or earlier
Thesis committee member contracts (issued by MCAD)	Committee members and director of MA	Director of MA	Fifth semester (during GSTP) or earlier
Revised Thesis proposal	MA candidate	Thesis advisor	Fifth semester (during GSTP) or earlier
Advisor-Student Learning Contract (see Appendix)	MA candidate	Thesis advisor and director of MA	Fifth semester (during GSTP) or earlier
Intent to Graduate Form	MA candidate	Director of MA, records office, MCAD Online Learning	By the third week of semester of final thesis review (during GSTP); submit to director of MA, records office, and online

			learning
Draft version of thesis project presentation	MA candidate	Advisor and committee	Four weeks before final paper due (during GSTP or earlier)
Feedback from committee	Thesis committee	MA candidate	Two weeks before final paper due (during GSTP or earlier)
Final thesis project presentation	MA candidate	Advisor, committee, and chair	Two weeks before final review date (during GSTP or earlier)
Web-based portfolio	MA candidate	Advisor, committee, and chair	Two weeks before final review date (during GSTP or earlier)
Introductory video (five minutes or less)	MA candidate	Advisor, committee, and chair	One week before final thesis review date (OPTIONAL; students may present during review)
Final thesis review	MA candidate	Advisor, committee, and chair	At least two weeks before last day of classes (during GSTP or earlier)
Library copy of final thesis project presentation due	MA candidate	Library director and director of MA program	Second-to-last day of classes (during GSTP or earlier); use online submission portal

*** MA CANDIDATES WILL NOT RECEIVE DIPLOMAS UNTIL ALL REQUIRED THESIS DOCUMENTATION AND COURSE WORK IS SUBMITTED (See Section 2)***

Section 13: GENERAL ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

During the final thesis review, in addition to the assessment of the thesis project presentation using the Thesis Project Presentation Rubric (see Appendix), MA candidates will be assessed on their development as a sustainability professional as it relates to their career development.

Because sustainability-focused work across all disciplines is expanding rapidly, the intention of MCAD's MA is to fully prepare students to leave the program with the ability to accelerate their existing careers or to help them to forge novel career paths, possibly even to create job opportunities that do not exist today but will become commonplace for sustainability-minded

professionals in the future. To this end, the MA strives to prepare students for their role in a cutting-edge field by ensuring that they each meet the following **four criteria**:

Collaborative problem solvers: Because no global challenge can be solved in isolation by one person or one discipline, MCAD MA students will engage in cohesive and high-quality paired and group learning experiences. These opportunities will be grounded in creative leadership training, collaborative design processes, and dynamic problem solving skills.

Conscious social professionals: Students will experience student-driven projects in the form of new and/or improved sustainability-focused products, processes, systems, or services. MA candidates will create novel, accessible, affordable, and sustainability-focused solutions that will address current, global human social and/or economic needs and/or environmental issues.

Inventors, innovators, and entrepreneurs: Students will nurture professional development experiences through real-life business interactions, peer-to-peer and teacher-student mentorships, entrepreneurship training, and strategic business planning experience.

Global community members: Through various modes of learning and training, students will develop the skills to maintain a forum for interactions and global networking opportunities with their cohort, MA faculty members, industry partners, and MCAD alumni.

Section 14: SUPPORT SERVICES

Career Services

The [MCAD Career Services Office](#) helps students develop meaningful, satisfying, and sustainable careers using the skills learned through the classroom.

- One-on-one career counseling and assistance is available from career services via email, over the phone, in person, or via online video chat (e.g. Skype). Please arrange an appointment by emailing careers@mcad.edu. Career counseling includes networking and job hunting strategy development, resume, and cover letter reviews, and mock interviews and preparation.
- Students have access to the Jobs and Opportunity Postings website at mcadcareerservices.com. An account will be set up during the first week of classes. Students will receive an email with access instructions and other information.

Practicums

MA students may elect to do a Graduate Sustainability Practicum as either a required or elective course.

- All practicums are registered through the MCAD Career Services Office. This can be done online at mcadcareerservices.com. A description of the program, suggestions for finding internships, and registration instructions can be found in the Library section of this site.

- Individual assistance for researching and finding internships is available from the director of career services (careers@mcad.edu).

Disability Accommodation

Students who have a learning disability, even those who do not plan to seek accommodations, are strongly encouraged to register with the director of MCAD's Learning Center (see Learning Center below for more information). This will ensure that students have access to all of the services and accommodations that are available. Learn more about [disability accommodation](#).

All accommodations are determined on an individual, case-by-case basis by the learning center director, and in consultation with faculty and administrative staff. For more information about these services, please contact the learning center director at 612.874.3633.

Financial Aid

Students who are U.S. Citizens may be eligible for financial aid. Students are encouraged to apply for financial aid with the help of the [MCAD Financial Aid Office](#). The total amount of financial aid a student may receive is based on the family's financial situation and the cost of attendance. While the amount of financial aid a student may receive is dependent upon financial need, the student must also be making satisfactory academic progress to be eligible for federal funds. **Students must be taking at least six credits during any semester to receive any financial aid.** Types of financial aid students may qualify for include the Federal Unsubsidized Stafford Loan, Federal Graduate Plus Loan, and/or an alternative education loan through a lender.

MCAD Intranet

The MCAD [Intranet](#) is a clearinghouse of important information for all MCAD students, staff, and faculty. It is highly recommended that MA students use the MCAD Intranet as their first stop to get the information they need. All of the offices, services, and access points listed below (and more) are available on MCAD's Intranet. Important ones to note for MA students are MCAD's:

- Business Office (for tuition bill questions)
- Career Services (look into practicums)
- Financial Aid Office (any questions related to student loans)
- Learning Center (for tutoring help and time management assistance)
- MCAD O.W.L.L. (Online Writing and Learning Lab assistance and resources)
- Library (for resources)
- Online Learning (for Blackboard help)
- Records Office (to request a transcript, etc.)
- Student Affairs (download a copy of the MCAD Student Handbook)
- General resources:
 - Access to mcad.edu Gmail account
 - Access to Blackboard
 - Computer Support Help Desk (for trouble logging into student accounts)
 - Academic calendar (semester start and end dates; holidays; deadlines)

- Lynda.com Online training library (learn how to do nearly everything here!)
- Knowledgebase (concise help with common issues on Blackboard and beyond)

Learning Center

MCAD's [Learning Center](#) is an academic support center and enrichment resource for all students. The learning center offers assistance with: writing (every level and style), limited software support, time management and study skills, and professional development. **Be preemptive! Seek help early and often.** Students may contact the learning center to arrange an appointment via email at learning_center@mcad.edu.

Library Services

The MCAD [Library](#) is dedicated to supporting MA student research needs during their tenure in the MA program. The library provides research assistance to students ranging from preliminary topic development to in-depth research consultation to citation verification. Online resources include article and image databases, e-books, interlibrary loan articles requests, and instructions for making the most of your local resources. All resources are available from the MCAD Intranet. Many resources will require your MCAD login as authorization.

For questions, students should check the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section available in the [Knowledgebase](#). Please contact the library director with questions at library@mcad.edu or 612.874.3791. Messages will be answered Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. CDT. Every effort will be made to reply to messages within forty-eight hours.

MCAD O.W.L.L.

The [MCAD O.W.L.L.](#) (Online Writing and Learning Lab) provides students with 24-hour access to resources that complement MCAD's Learning Center's tutoring services and offer students a suite of information and tutorials to improve their writing.

MCAD.EDU Account

When students are actively enrolled in the MA program, they will have continuous access to an official MCAD Google email (Gmail) account that ends in "@mcad.edu." Email is the primary form of communications for the MA program. **All students are required to check their mcad.edu email at least once every twenty-four hours during semester sessions and respond immediately to all official requests.** All MCAD-related notices and messages will be sent to students' mcad.edu accounts including but not limited to: Blackboard classroom announcements, instructor messages, important information from records, online learning, business office, financial aid, and the director of the MA program. Students may access their Gmail accounts from MCAD's [Intranet](#).

Online Learning

All MA classes are asynchronous, meaning that there is no specific all-class online meeting time, though there are shared weekly deadlines. It is recommended that students set aside ample time each week to work on their online course(s). **In general, students should expect about 9 hours of course work every week of the semester for each course (for a 15-week**

semester). Usually, the most successful students login nearly every day to work and interact with their classmates. It is expected that students log in at the start of each week to plan their time appropriately to meet all due dates, particularly courses with greater levels of student interaction and collaboration.

Check MCAD's website for up-to-date information about upcoming online courses at MCAD: online.mcad.edu.

If students encounter technical problems with their online course(s) or are feeling "stuck" they are encouraged to review the online orientation materials or the MCAD [Knowledgebase](#), send an email to online@mcad.edu with their question, or post a message to the discussion board in their course.

Students may email (online@mcad.edu) or call (1.800.874.MCAD Ext. 4 or [612.874.3618](tel:612.874.3618)) the MCAD Online Learning Office if they have any questions about their online courses or Blackboard.

Service Bureau

Students will not have access to the MCAD Service Bureau. This is the on-campus office for printing services and is unavailable to online students.

Social Media Outreach

The MA program has an active social media outreach program. Join the conversation!

[MCAD Sustainable Design Program Website:](http://mcad.edu/sustainable)
mcad.edu/sustainable

[Sustainable Design Blog:](http://SustainableDesignBlog.com)
MCADsustainabledesign.com

[MA LinkedIn Group:](http://MALinkedInGroup.com)
linkedin.com/groups?gid=1945418&trk=hb_side_g

[MA Facebook Page:](http://MAFacebookPage.com)
facebook.com/MCAD.SustainableDesign

[MA Facebook Group \(open only to MA students and MA Alumni\):](http://MAFacebookGroup.com)
facebook.com/groups/691137634235790/?bookmark_t=group

[MA Twitter Feed:](http://MATwitterFeed.com)
twitter.com/#!/MCADSustainDsgn

Student Identification Cards

Students will be provided with physical student ID cards upon request. Students may email (online@mcad.edu) or call (1.800.874.MCAD Ext. 4 or [612.874.3618](tel:612.874.3618)) the MCAD Online Learning Office if they have any questions about getting a student ID card.

Student Account Information

Students are required to activate their online student account by entering their official MCAD username and password at mybill.mcad.edu.

Technology Support Help Desk

MCAD's Technology Support Help Desk provides support to the entire college community, seven days a week. Many questions are answered in our extensive [Knowledge Base](#). Or fill out a [help request form](#) to open a ticket with a help desk specialist. Contact them at computer_support@mcad.edu or 612.874.3666.

APPENDIX

Thesis Project Presentation Rubric

MA Advisor–Student Learning Contract Document – COPY

Thesis Project Presentation Rubric

Evaluation Criteria	Overview	Top Ranking	Grade Weighting
<i>Project Introduction</i>			<i>Total = 20%</i>
Problem Statement	What is the sustainability-focused issue/challenge of the project?	The problem statement is articulated clearly and concisely. Establishes focus for the presentation.	2%
Sustainability Challenge	Is it a meaningful sustainability challenge?	Excellent and comprehensive understanding of underlying sustainability issues. Work has potential to succeed in addressing environmental, social and/or cultural concerns.	3%
Idea	What is the innovative or original idea for a sustainability-focused outcome?	The idea is clearly and concisely defined. The idea has merit as an original or innovative idea or is an improvement on an existing sustainability solution. There is clear and solid support for the idea.	3%
Strategy	How will the strategy have a significant impact on the problem defined?	The strategy is outlined clearly and concisely. Establishes a framework for the presentation. The approach would have significant impact on the problem defined.	3%
Impact	Does the proposed solution have a sustainability impact?	The sustainability impact has been quantified and qualified. The thesis project work will have a positive impact to addressing environmental, social, and/or cultural concerns.	3%
Scope	Is the scope of the project realistic and manageable?	The scope is outlined clearly and concisely. The project scope is narrow, refined, and manageable. Broad generalizations are not used.	3%
Sustainability Professional	Does the project contribute to growth as a sustainability leader?	Professional goals are outlined. Presentation demonstrates growth as a sustainability leader and achievement of professional goals.	3%

Project Execution			Total = 35%
Objectives	Are there project objectives?	Project objectives are clearly articulated. Qualitative and/or quantitative metrics are defined to assess when objective is reached.	5%
Research	Was quality and extensive research conducted and documented?	Research is documented using CMS citation style. Background research is thorough and from credible references in the field. Ideas were explored and supported.	15%
Process	What learning took place (pivoting, new ideas, new outcomes)?	Concise yet thorough documentation of proposed and actual project process presented. Key learning moments are described and documented using appropriate means (narrative, sketches, video, etc.).	15%
Project Outcome			Total = 30%
Functionality	How functional is the solution for this type of work?	The functionality of the project outcome is clear. Quality and relevant craftsmanship, technical skills, etc., are demonstrated.	5%
Application of Sustainability Frameworks	Were sustainability frameworks featured and/or integrated throughout the project (i.e., systems thinking, biomimicry, LCA, natural step, C2C, etc.)?	Knowledge and applicability of appropriate sustainability frameworks is demonstrated. Relevant sustainability frameworks are integrated into presentation.	10%
Project Outcome/Solution	Did the student arrive at the proposed outcome/solution? If not, what learning took place?	The outcome(s) is outlined clearly and concisely. Understanding of project outcomes and impact is demonstrated and well documented.	15%

<i>Project Presentation</i>			<i>Total = 15%</i>
Presentation and Organization	How was the thesis project presented and organized?	Final presentation/paper is organized and professional.	5%
Use of Visuals	Were visuals used to support the narrative?	Visual materials provide a compelling and highly creative piece to the presentation.	5%
Documentation	Was the project well documented?	Key and credible documentation provide excellent support for thesis work.	5%



Minneapolis College of Art and Design
Master of Arts in Sustainable Design

Advisor – Student Learning Contract

MA Candidate: _____

Thesis Advisor: _____

Anticipated Completion Date - Semester: _____ Year: _____

In cooperation with your advisor, please detail your expectations and goals of your relationship with your advisor throughout the tenure of your thesis project. Attach additional pages as necessary.

Signatures of approval:

Student: _____

Date:

Advisor: _____

Date:

SDO Program Chair: _____

Date:

This document must be completed, signed by all parties, and returned to: MASDPaperwork@mcad.edu