

Guidelines: Supervision, Project, Support Paper, and Oral Examination

I. MFA Supervision

First Year - First Semester: Advisor Assigned

Second Year

- The student will confirm a Project Supervisor (may be the first year advisor or not) and confer with the supervisor on the selection of a Secondary Supervisor: October 1-15.
- The Project Supervisor and Secondary Supervisor confirmed for final MFA Defense by November 1st. After this date, the Project Supervisor and Secondary Supervisor will only be changed in rare circumstances.

Procedure for Change of Project Supervisor and Second Advisor After Nov 1

Please request the Change Supervisor Form from the Graduate Program Assistant. Complete the form with the following:

- Brief explanation from the student for the change in supervisor.
- Approval will require signature of both the new Project Supervisor and the original Supervisor.
- The written request goes to the Graduate Program Director who will evaluate and sign to accept the request.
- Progress Reports should be signed by both previous and new supervisors.

2. Approval of MFA Project for Public Presentation

Once all coursework is completed, students must publicly present their MRPs.

The MRP is comprised of the (1) project, (2) support paper and (3) oral examination/critique. Approval to go to the defense stage rests with the Supervisor, who must approve the MRP at two stages:

- First, based on the December presentation and project paper draft, handed in during the December exam period (see fall semester progress report)
- Second, based on the progress of the project (see winter semester progress report). The supervisor must approve the project (indicated in writing on the winter semester progress report) and agree that it is ready for public presentation (screening or gallery).
- If the project is deemed satisfactory, it may be presented in the DOC NOW Festival.
- If the project is not deemed ready, the student will not be allowed to present work in the festival.
- The student may proceed with the final examination once the project has been publicly presented, providing the supervisor has approved the progress of the project paper.

2.1. MFA Project Exhibition/Screening Critique

The graduating students are required to show their work in a public context. This requirement will normally be satisfied by participation in the June invitational MFA exhibition, DOC NOW, or an installation or screening in a separate presentation. The exhibition must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Examining Committee, the candidate's capacity for independent, creative work. Scheduled in the days after the public opening reception, a critique will take place either in a gallery location (for exhibition works) or in a room on campus for cinematic work. The student should make an argument in their brief presentation for his/her ideas and artwork via research concerns that have contributed to the MRP. All members of the Project Examining Committee will be in attendance. The presentation should be a maximum of 20 minutes. In addition to the exam committee (Supervisor, Secondary Supervisor and GPD or designate), interested faculty and other graduate students may be invited. A schedule will be determined based on logistics (location of gallery, etc.), and availability of participating faculty and students.

2.2. MRP Acknowledgements

The Documentary Media program is to be acknowledged for all MRP works that are created in the program. Films should acknowledge the program on the last screen or the second last screen. Photographic or gallery based projects should acknowledge the program in or in proximity to the artist statement. Books should acknowledge the program on the last page of the book (or copyright page). Students remain sole copyright holders and owners of the works.

The acknowledgement should read as follows:

Produced in the Documentary Media Program (MFA), Ryerson University, 2021 [or correct year].

3. MFA Project Paper

The MFA Project Paper will be a well-researched, well-argued essay on a topic that relates to the student's documentary work and helps in contextualizing the project and its creative outcome.

3.1 Purpose of paper

A support paper that provides contextual analysis for the visual project.

3.2 Components of the Support Paper

MRP: description and critical reflection on:

- A) The subject matter of the visual project;
- B) The documentary relevance of the visual project;
- C) The methodology of the visual project.

It is a piece of writing that must be around 8,000-11,000 words, double-spaced, and will integrate critical research that focuses on a topic related to the student's artistic practice. Students must meet

with their Supervisor on a regular basis to discuss the Project Paper. A Supervisory Committee, chaired by the supervisor, reviews the paper, suggests editorial changes, evaluates readiness of the paper, and recommends a date for the Oral Examination to the student, who submits a request to schedule the exam with the Program Director. For specific regulations please refer to the *School of Graduate Studies Policies and Procedures Handbook*.

3.3. Paper Format

- 12 pt. type, double-spaced, double-sided.
- 8,000 – 11,000 words in length (not counting bibliography, appendices, and illustrations).
- Word count to be provided on the last page of the MRP.
- Preferred style guide: *The Chicago Manual of Style--Notes and bibliography to be used in all courses and the MRP*

NOTE: Support papers that are in excess of the word count may be subjected to the designation of “pass with revisions” at the conclusion of the defense. Revisions may stipulate a reduction of the length of the essay as recommended by the word count above.

3.4. Final Paper – Delivery to Exam Committee

- Delivered no later than two (2) weeks in advance of Oral Exam.

Students intending to defend their MRP in	Paper is due to the examination committee on:
June	May 30 (or earlier)
August	June 25 (or earlier)*

*due to faculty vacation period (July 1- Aug 15).

3.5 Final Review and Approval of Paper

The student should be working on the project paper with the supervisor in the year preceding the exam/critique.

February to March: Student should submit a revision of the first draft (handed in December) to the Supervisor. Supervisor should return the paper with comments in a timely fashion (two – three weeks).

March to April: Student should respond, with further development of ideas discussed with Supervisor evident in the paper.

April 1 – May 15: Determination of June or August date for exam: Full draft should be submitted to supervisor and discussion takes place to determine readiness of paper.

4. Oral Exam/ Critique

Once the Supervisor deems a paper satisfactory, the student and supervisor determine the final review and approval date together and the student communicates the date to the Graduate Program Director and graduate Program Administrator in writing, via an email message (copy both the Supervisor and Advisor in email). Oral exams/critiques take place either in gallery or on campus between mid- to end of June. If students are not ready for June, the oral exams/critiques will take place after August 15th (up to Aug. 31st). Notice should be sent to the Program Director and Program Administrator with a minimum of three weeks notice to set the exam date.

The Program Director works with the Program Administrator to book the room for the exam and to report back to the full exam committee and the student. **Once the exam is booked and confirmed, changes to the exam schedule will only be made in exceptional circumstances.**

4.1. Meeting to Approve Project Paper/Oral Exam

The Examining Committee (composed of the Supervisor, Secondary Supervisor, and the Program Director or designate) will meet to approve the paper. Where appropriate, the Examining Committee may include an External Examiner who is not involved in the student's project but who is a member of YSGS, and who may or may not be from within the program. The Program Director, or designate, shall serve as the non-voting Chair of the Examining Committee.

The Project Examining Committee will have participated in the critique of the Project Exhibition or Film Screenings in June. The final approval of the paper is an occasion for delivering a final statement about the research and creative work developed in the two years of the MFA program, culminating in the project exhibition or screening. It will be an occasion to review the paper and share final ideas concerning the content of the MFA Exhibition and Project Paper with the Examining Committee. Only members of the Project Examining Committee will be present during deliberations. The decisions shall be by vote and based on evaluation of the Project, Paper, and the candidate's ability to defend it. The following decisions are open to the Examining Committee:

- MRP Project (Screening or Exhibition) and Oral Examination: Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory
- Project Paper: Accept, Minor Revisions, Major Revisions, Fail.

4.2. Evaluation of MRP: Oral Exam

- The student will be asked to answer at least two questions from the Primary Supervisor and Secondary Supervisor on the project and paper.
- After the discussion, the student is asked to step out of the room while the committee drafts the exam report.
- The Exam Report will be read out loud to the student at the end of the oral exam.
- Students will not be given a copy of the exam report. They may make a request to meet with the Program Director and read the exam report without making a copy.

- Exemplary students will be nominated in camera by faculty to be considered for “Distinction.” A Faculty Committee will select students who are awarded with distinction. Students who receive the “Awarded with Distinction” designation will automatically be considered for the Ryerson Gold Medal. Note: “Awarded with Distinction” is not designated on the university transcript. However, it does signify exemplary work and a record of the award is maintained by the program, and may be listed on the graduate’s CV.
- Following the Exam: The student works with the supervisor to complete any revisions.

5. Final Submission of Paper and Project Documentation

A PDF of the paper, along with visual documentation of the project, is to be submitted within two weeks of the exam date as requested by the program (some exceptions apply). Technical requirements for the visual documentation of the project will be indicated on the submission form.