



Foundations in **Art: Theory and Education**

GUIDELINES FOR FOUNDATIONS

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GUIDELINES FOR FOUNDATIONS

Definitions

1. Foundations is a coordinated set of courses for students who are seeking degrees in an art or design discipline. These courses focus on basic conceptual, craft, critical-thinking, research, and working skills that will aid student success in their chosen discipline. Foundation study varies from independent departments to a coordinated group of courses that complement each other. The terms foundations, core, and first year are common identifiers for this type of study. The term "foundations" often refers to courses taken during the first year of study. However, these courses can extend into all levels of the college art and design experience.

Introduction

1. Foundations in Art: Theory and Education (FATE) is a national association of college-level art educators that is specially focused on issues related to first year programs. As part of our mission, we support excellence in foundation teaching and learning in the structures that support first-year art and design. These issues have been highlighted in this document in support of that endeavor.

2. The issues outlined in this document provide a set of guidelines for foundations that have received general consensus by members of the organization. FATE is not an accrediting body, these issues are intended to be used as guidelines to help foundation faculty and administration as they strengthen, reorganize, seek administrative support, or as a guide for the development of fledgling foundation programs. They are, in essence, an opinion that has emerged from of our collective knowledge of foundations.

3. Foundations courses are an integral part of the undergraduate experience, and should emphasize the importance of developing concepts, craft and critical thinking skills.

Facilitation Issues

A. Faculty

1. Because foundations students are usually new to the college environment and, consequently, may be a more vulnerable portion of the student population, studio instruction in the core foundations area should be provided by faculty with continuity and expertise, qualified through training and experience, with a dedicated commitment to teaching, scholarship, personal creative research and service to the community. To provide quality of instruction at this level, faculty with a terminal degree are preferred. Instructors should be articulate and able to convey their knowledge and understanding effectively to the students. Quality of instruction can be measured and maintained by following the standards put forth by NASAD and various regional accrediting agencies. At no time should a teaching assistant who has not achieved a substantial level of graduate study or professional experience or proper training in course content, materials and methods, program goals, department procedures and guidance from the foundations advisor be assigned to a foundations course other than as a supervised assistant.

2. Consideration should be given to having a higher ratio of permanent faculty in relation to other types of instructional staff teaching foundations.

3. In order to provide individual attention and an atmosphere conducive to focused instruction, it may be advisable to have class sizes, especially at the foundations level, with a lower student to teacher ratio than other art and design courses. In skill-based courses it is good practice to more carefully evaluate appropriate class size. If the course involves power machinery, the class size should be reduced further to facilitate safe and focused instruction.

4. Teaching loads should be set so that faculty are able to effectively carry out their responsibilities. It is recommended that faculty are provided ample time for artistic, scholarly, and professional activity so that they may grow and maintain a high level of excellence in their area of expertise. It is good practice to not exceed a teaching load of more than three studio/lab courses per academic term. Faculty members who have administrative responsibilities are often given reductions in their teaching loads.

5. It is advantageous to provide administrative, research, and professional development support to faculty teaching in the foundations area. Consider having studio or other working space available for professional research activity. Such support is generally regarded as "good practice" that has a beneficial effect for the future of the institution.

B. Advising

1. Students admitted to BFA, BS or BA programs in art and design, through open enrollment or by portfolio review, should have access to an advising system that lends structure and understanding to the required foundation course sequence. FATE advocates continuity of advising, preferably by individuals who are permanent members of the institution who work with each advisee one-on-one. Advising duties should not be assigned to teaching assistants. This interpersonal communication should be structured to help students identify individual strengths and weaknesses in order to devise a program of study suited to his/her unique needs and goals and identify required courses to reach their degree objectives.

2. Institutions should provide clear and honest advising. A dedicated foundations or department advisor, an assigned faculty advisor, or any other organized arrangement should exist to facilitate a student's ability to identify future goals, review course selections, and evaluate his/her progress in developing competence in course criteria.

3. It is recommended that institutions provide an organized freshman orientation to provide an overview of foundations and emphasize the importance of consultation with their advisor or faculty members appropriate to their intended course of study.

C. Administration

The following are advisable attributes for foundations administration that constitute good practice.

1. A dedicated permanent faculty member that teaches within foundations should take an advisory role. Depending on the size and structure of the institution these individuals may carry the

title of Coordinator, Director, Chair of Foundations, or other similar titles.

2. It is advisable to institute an advisory committee that includes faculty members from the concentration areas beyond foundations that is charged with maintaining a liaison between foundations and other levels of study.

3. A foundations advisor should encourage and participate with his/her foundation faculty in the proposal, discussion, and study of curriculum, standards, and assessment.

4. A foundations advisor should be included when decisions regarding hiring and evaluating faculty, scheduling, facilities maintenance, budget administration, curriculum development, portfolio review, transfer credit evaluation etc., are made.

5. Consider providing the foundations advisor with an office, administrative support, staff, and course release time commensurate with the size of the program and the scope of the duties.

6. A foundations advisor should provide support, mentoring and guidance to adjunct or teaching assistants in the area.

D. Facilities and Resources

1. It is advisable that foundations studio and classroom facilities be adequately equipped to foster learning and provide a safe environment.

2. It is advisable that foundations classroom facilities be equipped with adequate digital and traditional technologies and adequate technical support.

3. It is advisable that access to adequate visual resources through an image bank and library holdings including electronic access to materials beyond the specific holdings of the institution be provided to both faculty and students. It is advisable to provide access to services that enhance writing skills.

4. It is advisable to provide support, through space and resources, for the preparation of course materials.

5. It is advisable that an adequate budget and resources are provided to foundations in order to deliver high quality instruction.

6. It is advisable to have technical and facilities support staff to install, clean, repair and prepare studios and equipment.

7. It is advisable to provide lectures, visiting artists, and exhibitions in support of foundations.

8. Consider enhancing faculty motivation by creating cross-fertilization through shared projects and ideas and the exhibition of student work. "Enlightened self-interest" (seeing ones' own interests in relation to the whole) can be a strong motivator for faculty to commit to a common experience.

Programmatic Issues

Introduction

This section deals with programmatic issues like content and assessment. It also refers to the role that foundations may play in support of other courses and programs.

E. Content Essentials

This section represents a range of developmental content, including the skills, knowledge and experiences that students need to become artists, media artists, and designers. It is considered good practice to teach students:

1. An ability to develop and solve visual problems using multiple strategies for idea generation, such as convergent thinking, divergent thinking, collaboration, and metaphorical thinking.
2. An ability to express ideas in two, three and four-dimensions.
3. An ability to assess quality and effect of final products.
4. A capacity to think critically, and write and speak clearly about the visual arts.
5. An ability to develop a greater capacity to link critical thinking and visual analysis in the generation, development, and framing of an idea.
6. An understanding of the wide range of contemporary and historical perspectives in art, media arts, and design, to recognize, examine, and articulate the instrumental function of art and artists in these diverse societies.
7. A work ethic that reflects integrity, teamwork, dedication to professional growth, social responsibility and the confidence to take risks.
8. To access direct experiences in the visual arts and design through exhibitions, lectures, and publications (it is advisable that some experiences in the visual arts and design be provided by the institution).

F. Some Goals of Foundation Content

1. Give a greater understanding of the dynamic interplay of the artist, the "work", the audience, and content and context in the creation of meaning. Context influences how others experience a work of art or design.
2. Introduce and explore an expanded definition of the artist/designer within an historical and contemporary multicultural context; e.g. facilitator, organizer, community activist, collaborator, cultural producer.
3. Encompass "visual art and design" with both the more traditional forms of drawing, painting, design, and the broader forms of hybrids including site work, performance, internet-based work, information arts, sound, video, and the various forms of public practice.
4. Use writing as an artist's and designer's tool for observation, reflection, expression, and analysis. For example, writing is an essential skill for critique and describing project proposals and

may often impact future endeavors relating to internships, scholarships, and grant applications.

G. Content Support

1. Foundations programming should be designed to compliment and reinforce various components by providing a conceptual framework that can move across studio disciplines in the application of foundational principles, concepts, and skills.
2. All sections of the same course should cover the same basic material with agreed upon minimum requirements (which may include NASAD competencies).
3. Since visual organization is both perceptually and culturally driven, and foundation courses are ever changing, flexibility should be at the heart of foundations.
4. Foundations content should present a balance between formal skill development and conceptual development. It should give a working knowledge of the inter-dependent relationship between content/context(s), various media, basic technical processes and skills, and the structural and material aspects of art making or design production.
5. It is advisable that an inclusive, participatory, and fair mechanism for content change be established and shared among faculty and administration. Consider starting within an existing structure, make arguments for change in language that can be easily understood, while demonstrating the value of foundations content change.

Assessment Issues

H. Resources

1. Consider having the faculty and the foundations advisor regularly evaluate institutional support of foundations.

I. Content

1. It is advisable that assessment should be done after agreed upon content is established.
2. It is advisable that self-assessment should be at the heart of assessment, and should be done for the purpose of improving content.

J. Faculty

1. Consider creating a faculty assessment structure that is an inclusive and fair method for improvement. This structure should be a result of mechanisms that draw from student, peer, advisory, and administrative evaluations.

K. Students

1. When assessing student performance positive reinforcement is encouraged. Regular student assessment can positively impact retention, academic and artistic growth.
2. It is advisable to use a set of common expectations that is shared by faculty in foundations. This can be achieved by referring to the "Content Essentials" contained in this document.