ART & DESIGN: INDUSTRIAL DESIGN, MFA

for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Art and Design, Industrial Design Concentration

The School of Art & Design and Industrial Design program are accepting applications for Fall 2025 admission to the MFA in Art & Design, Industrial Design concentration.

Overview

Industrial Design is a human-centered design activity that determines the nature of products, services, and experiences produced by industry. This approach to design reconciles the needs of the user and the producer, combining desirability, viability, feasibility, and responsibility. Industrial Designers also champion the use of design thinking. This user-centered approach has broad application in many social and business contexts. Our definition of Industrial Design encompasses the design of products, interfaces, interactions, and user experiences.

The degree of Master of Fine Arts (MFA) with specialization in Industrial Design (ID) prepares you for a professional career in higher education or entrepreneurial design practice. The program of study is highly individualized to help you achieve professional excellence by matching your interests, skills, and career goals with the challenges of advanced academic study in design, while also acknowledging the range of opportunities for interdisciplinary research at the Illinois. The program is international in scope, emphasizing the development of design solutions that are human-centered and culturally responsive.

The three-year MFA is recognized as a terminal qualification in design, which enables you to teach Industrial Design at the university level. The MFA program includes opportunities to assist faculty and to teach courses to undergraduate students. It also acts as preparation for advanced research degrees. Because the MFA in ID incorporates a teaching practice component, securing funding through Teaching Assistant appointments is an essential aspect of pursuing the MFA in ID.

By contrast, the two-year MDes (http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/faa/industrial-design-mdes/) program is an advanced professional qualification suited to developing your future design career in practice. First year content of both programs is broadly similar, and students in both programs enroll in some of the same classes and studios. However, there are no funding opportunities for students in the two-year MDes (http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/faa/industrial-design-mdes/) program.

Both study options are available to those with undergraduate degrees in Industrial Design or a relevant discipline (e.g., Graphic Design, Architecture, Engineering, or Business), and ideally, those with appropriate professional experience.

Individuals interested in pursuing a career in design who lack prior design education and/or relevant professional experience should consider the Graduate Certificate in Advanced Design Thinking (http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/faa/art-design/advanced-design-thinking-cert/). This certificate program provides an introduction to Design Thinking. It offers graduate credits that can be applied towards the MFA or MDES degree.

Admission

Applications are considered for Fall Semester admissions only. International applicants or applicants who are not native English speakers must meet the University of Illinois Graduate College English Proficiency for Teaching Assistants requirements (https://grad.illinois.edu/admissions/application-instructions/additional-instructions-international-applicants/) for admission to the MFA in ID degree program.

Graduate Teaching Experience

Although teaching is not a general Graduate College requirement, experience in teaching is considered an important part of the graduate experience for MFA and doctoral students.

Facilities and Resources

Resources for graduate students in art and design include the Krannert Art Museum's excellent permanent collections and changing exhibitions; the Ricker Library of Art and Architecture, one of the largest art and architecture libraries in the nation; the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts; School of Art and Design facilities, which include extensive computer laboratories, digital photography and video editing equipment, wireless networking, ink-printing facilities, ceramic, woodworking, and metal shops, rapid prototyping and laser cutting, black/white and color darkrooms, shooting studios, and a wide selection of production and presentation equipment via reservation and checkout facility. A variety of lectures, symposia, musical programs, dramatic productions, and other cultural events associated with a large and progressive university complement the Art and Design Facilities.

Financial Aid

Fellowships, assistantships, and tuition and service fee waivers are awarded each year on a competitive basis, with consideration given to the applicant's grade point average and, in the case of applicants for the M.F.A. programs, quality of creative work.

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The ID Graduate Coordinator will advise you from the outset to develop a plan of study including elective and seminar courses.

You must register for at least 12 hours of credit each semester to maintain full-time student status (particularly important for visa status). Requests for part-time status must be made before the semester needed by contacting the School Graduate office. The two-year program averages out as 16 credits a semester to make up 64 credits required for graduation. The three-year program involves study for 12 credits for five of the semesters, including a 300/400 level Design Elective with credits not counting toward the degree, and only 8 credits for Thesis completion in the final semester.

For additional details and requirements refer to the department's graduate studies requirements and the Graduate College Handbook (http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook/).

Code	Title	Hours
ARTD 501	Industrial Design I: From Inquiry to Ideation	6
ARTD 502	Industrial Design II: From Ideation to Implementation	6
ARTD 503	Industrial Design III: Design Project Formulation	6
ARTD 504	Industrial Design IV: Thesis Research	6
ARTD 505	Industrial Design V: Thesis Ideation	6
ARTD 506	Industrial Design VI: Thesis Project Implementation	6
ARTD 599	Thesis	4
Design Studio Electives (from Art and Design, Architecture or Engineering, approved by Graduate Coordinator)		8
Academic Elective (approved by Graduate Coordinator)		4
Additional Electives, including Seminars (approved by Graduate Coordinator)		12
Total Hours		**64**

Other Requirements

Requirement	Description
Other requirements may overlap	
Seminar, enrollment varies by program	8 min
Minimum 500-level Hours Required Overall	12
Minimum GPA	2.75

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At the end of the program, students will be able to:

1. **Inquiry and insight**: Select and use appropriate research and experimental methods, to access existing data or to generate new data, to analyze and draw insights, with a particular emphasis on user needs.
2. **Ideation**: Produce creative proposals to identified design opportunities, using design thinking, modelling, and prototyping strategies, with an appropriate integration of functional, technical, ergonomic and visual factors.
3. **Implementation**: Select and use appropriate making and manufacturing processes with an understanding of the potential of new technologies, and the demands of sustainability.
4. **Informing**: Use visual and verbal communication, to explain and persuade, as appropriate for different audiences.
5. **Self development**: Carry out independent learning and reflexive evaluation of your work, as well as to plan and implement action, individually or in teams, effectively managing self and others.
6. **Contextualization**: Locate your own activity within the multiple contexts of design practice, including the theoretical, professional, cultural, environmental and technological contexts.

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School of Art + Design

School of Art + Design (https://art.illinois.edu/)
Art + Design faculty (https://art.illinois.edu/about/faculty-directory/)
School Director: Brooke White
Director of Graduate Studies: Terri Weissman
Associate Director of Design: Lynne Dearborn
138 Art and Design Building, 408 East Peabody Drive, Champaign, IL 61820
(217) 333-0642

Graduate Studies Advisors:

MA; PhD in Art History: David O'Brien
MA; EdM; PhD in Art Education: Laura Hetrick
MFA in Studio: Emmy Lingscheit and Conrad Bakker
MFA and MDES in Industrial Design: Carlos Aguiar
MFA in Design for Responsible Innovation: Nekita Thomas

College of Fine & Applied Arts

College of Fine & Applied Arts (https://faa.illinois.edu/)

Admissions

Ellen de Waard (edewaard@illinois.edu)
Graduate College Admissions Requirements (https://grad.illinois.edu/admissions/apply/)