

ASSESSMENT REPORT 2021-2023

Master of Fine Arts in Cultural Technology (MFACT)

(Instructional Degree Program)

MFA

(Degree Level)

Program Mission:

The general mission of the Department of Media Arts & Technology (MA&T) is to educate students in the technical skills, theoretical underpinnings, and the sociocultural context for the disciplines represented by the academic programs. MA&T seeks to inspire students to work creatively and collaboratively towards the goal of contributing to our own communities. Collaboration, experimentation and a willingness to push the boundaries of where art and technology intersect are the hallmarks of MA&T.

In its collaborative enterprises, MA&T provides opportunities for students to work closely with faculty and staff in its academic courses. Community organizations and cultural institutions join the department for many projects and activities. MA&T aims to incorporate elements from northern New Mexico's history of arts and innovation, and the rich heritage of Hispanic and Native American cultures that are distinctive to the state of New Mexico. Ultimately, MA&T aims to prepare its students for an active professional life in each discipline through the knowledge, creativity, teaching skills, and dedication of its faculty and staff, showing excellence in teaching, experimentation, scholarship, and professional applications.

Student Learning Outcome 1:

Students will deliver a qualifying oral and visual oral presentation covering their creative research.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1

- Effective Communication Skills
- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:

At the end of their first academic year, MFACT students will deliver a qualifying visual presentation covering the results of their creative research to the faculty and propose plans for its forthcoming progress. Successful completion of this oral exam enables continuation to year two of the program. 85% of students should be able to pass this oral exam.

Summary of Data:

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:

The MFACT program was severely affected by pandemic restraints and fear in just the second semester after launching (fall 2019). Graduate students' independent studio work and research were challenged and inhibited without in-person faculty to support them, and they lost momentum. Spring 2020 presentations were postponed to accommodate students, with a hope that in-person learning would return in the fall allowing students to be better prepared. However, instead several students withdrew, accounting for the diminished enrollment and lack of additional SLO data. However, the remaining student in the program successfully delivered the postponed talk and proposed research plans for year two.

Student Learning Outcome 2:

Students will be able to effectively research and write academically about media art in globalized society.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 2

- Effective Communication Skills
- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills
- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:

By the end of year one, MFACT students will independently select and research a cultural technology subject in a scholarly, written paper discussing media art in globalized society. Opportunities to achieve this SLO are available in each of the first year required courses. 90% of students should be able to earn a B or better.

Summary of Data

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:

The MFACT program is designed to support and encourage SLOs such as this one, which is applicable to most of the first-year courses. Being prepared in this area indicates success later when students create their theses. Low participation, as described above, was affected by the pandemic.

We increasingly notice a reluctance in many graduate students to select appropriate readings and subject matter on their own which supports their independent research, and we seek new ways to inspire improvement in this area. One thing that has helped this challenge in the past is a guest speaker series featuring alumni and other professionals from our field; this practice will be continued and increased when possible. Bringing in expert specialists is also assistive considering the faculty attrition we have been experiencing for the last 5 or more years.

Student Learning Outcome 3:

Graduate students will successfully complete an internship with a client and supply professional project deliverables.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 3

- Effective Communication Skills
- Effective Use of Technology
- Mastery of Content Knowledge and Skills
- Critical and Reflective Thinking Skills

First Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

MART 6980, Cultural Technology Internship. Supported by faculty mentorship, MFACT graduate students will effectively complete professional deliverables and internship work for a real world cultural institution client.

Summary of Data

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:

Our internship program repeatedly proves to be one of the strongest curricular proofs of our students excelling in areas of content mastery and communication. It is very rare that a student is unable to complete an internship assignment, and more often students

continue on to do more than expected or planned. Occasionally, factors warrant that the internship time is extended to accommodate project completion.

Utilization of Results:

These results show that with sound advising, coursework and internships, graduate students can gain needed technical and presentation skills to create a masters' level creative research thesis and move on to employment in the field. Our newest MFA cohort exhibits promising ambition towards tackling challenging concepts and projects.

Changes to Program Based on Results:

We are confident that our graduate program is currently preparing students for professional careers. However, as our program grows, we may reassess these outcome expectations in accordance with results, and the changing conventions of the media arts field along with the needs of cultural institution partners. For example, over the past several years along with social changes imposed by the pandemic, we have seen an increased community partner interest in electronic solutions that emulate physical exhibition spaces and experiences.

Retention Strategies:

Regular advising centered on standard MFA expectations and practices, while fostering the ability to independently pursue personal research interests may be essential to retention. Previously, increased distance learning and pandemic fear likely inhibited students' confidence in the pursuit of challenging, exploratory creative hands-on projects. Also, students need additional support when they are in graduate assistantship roles, which creates more pressure for them. Having enough skilled faculty is critical to our improvement in these areas.

We have begun to weigh the potential value of a future low-residency model which may offer new flexibility and help with broader recruitment and retention.