

VISUAL STUDIES

Graduate Program Head	Christopher Reed
Program Code	VSTUD
Campus(es)	University Park
Degrees Conferred	Dual-Title
The Graduate Faculty	View (https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/gpms/?searchType=fac&prog=VSTUD)

Students electing this program through partnering departments earn a degree with a dual-title at the Ph.D. level, i.e. Ph.D. in (graduate program name) and Visual Studies.

The dual-title Ph.D. in Visual Studies fosters an interdisciplinary approach to humanistic study, which, spurred by technological dynamics that increasingly integrate text and image, engages analysis of specific images, physical and virtual environments, and visual sign systems; histories of visual modes of communication, apprehension, and aesthetic pleasure; and conceptions of the nature of visibility itself. Students in this program analyze and assess visual media that, integrated with texts, are integral to humanistic scholarship and pedagogy today. Dual-title degree programs increase the intellectual rigor and breadth of graduate work and provide a context in which students learn to synthesize knowledge within and across disciplinary boundaries in both scholarship and teaching. Drawing from knowledge and practices produced across the humanistic disciplines while responding to ongoing challenges to conventional disciplinary boundaries, this degree highlights existing strengths of graduate training in the humanities at Penn State, structures the continuing development of these programs, and credentials our graduates' training and work with visual forms, environments, and media.

Admission Requirements

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-titles/>).

Students must apply and be admitted to their primary graduate program and The Graduate School before they can apply for admission to the Visual Studies dual-title degree program. Applicants interested in the dual-title degree program may make their interest known on their applications to their primary graduate program, and should ensure their personal statements reflect their interest in the Visual Studies dual-title graduate program. After admission to their primary program, students must apply for admission to and meet the admissions requirements of the Visual Studies dual-title program. Doctoral students must be admitted into the dual-title degree program in Visual Studies prior to taking the qualifying examination in their primary graduate program.

With the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies in their primary graduate program, students already enrolled in a co-operating graduate program at Penn State may apply to the Visual Studies program after they are admitted as graduate students in their primary graduate programs. Applicants must submit the following materials to the Visual Studies Academic Advisory Committee, which will determine admission to the program:

- A letter of approval from the Director of Graduate Studies in your primary graduate program

- A copy of your Graduate School Application which was originally submitted to your primary graduate program
- Official transcripts from previous coursework, including transcripts that accompanied application to the Graduate School and transcripts of coursework completed at Penn State (Photocopies of transcripts sent from the home department are acceptable)
- Official GRE scores (Photocopies of GRE scores sent from the home department are acceptable)
- A writing sample
- A personal statement that describes how the dual degree program fits with your scholarly interests
- 1 letter of recommendation from a Visual Studies faculty member at Penn State

Degree Requirements

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-titles/>).

To qualify for the dual-title degree, students must satisfy the requirements of their primary graduate program. In addition, they must satisfy the requirements described below, as established by the Visual Studies dual-title degree program.

The minimum course requirements for this dual-title Ph.D. degree are as follows:

- 15 credits of course work related to Visual Studies, all at the 500- or 800-level. In certain circumstances, a 400-level course may be substituted with the approval of the Director of the Visual Studies graduate program and the student's adviser. Such approval must be granted in writing before the course is taken and will require work supplementing the syllabus, such as a culminating research paper. Of the 15 credits required for the Visual Studies dual-title, 6 must come from the two required core courses in the Visual Studies program: VSTUD 501 and VSTUD 502.
- Students must also take 9 elective credits from courses approved by the Visual Studies Academic Advisory Committee. In order to promote interdisciplinarity, at least 3 of these credits must be from a college, department, or program outside the student's home department or program. Students may complete the courses contributing to the Visual Studies degree in any sequence.

A list of courses approved to count towards the Visual Studies dual-title degree requirements will be maintained by the program office.

Qualifying Examination

The dual-title field will be fully integrated into the qualifying exam for the doctoral program. The qualifying examination committee for the dual-title Ph.D. degree must include at least one Graduate Faculty member from the Visual Studies program. Faculty members who hold appointments in both programs' Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. In addition, students in the dual-title Ph.D. degree program in Visual Studies will be required to present to their qualifying examination committee a portfolio of work in Visual Studies, including:

- a statement of the student's interdisciplinary research interests,
- a program plan, and
- samples of writing that indicate the student's interest in questions related to the Visual Studies.

Because students must first be admitted to a graduate major program of study before they may apply to and be considered for admission into a dual-title graduate degree program, dual-title graduate degree students may require an additional semester to fulfill requirements for both areas of study and, therefore, the qualifying examination may be delayed one semester beyond the normal period allowable.

Ph.D. committee Composition

In addition to the general Graduate Council requirements for Ph.D. committees (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/phd-dissertation-committee-formation/>), the Ph.D. committee of a Visual Studies dual-title doctoral degree student must include at least one member of the Visual Studies Graduate Faculty. Faculty members who hold appointments in both programs' Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. If the committee chair does not represent Visual Studies, the committee member representing Visual Studies must be appointed as co-chair.

Comprehensive Exam

After completion of required course work, doctoral students in the dual-title doctoral degree program must pass a comprehensive examination. The Visual Studies Graduate Faculty member on the candidate's committee is responsible for developing and administering the Visual Studies portion of the student's comprehensive exam. The exam must incorporate written and oral components addressing Visual Studies based on the student's areas of interest and specialization in Visual Studies.

Dissertation and Final Oral Examination

The candidate must complete a dissertation on a topic that reflects his or her original research and education in both the primary graduate program and Visual Studies. In order to earn the dual-title Ph.D. degree, the dissertation must be accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School, and the student must pass a final oral examination (the dissertation defense).

Minor

A graduate minor is available in any approved graduate major or dual-title program. The default requirements for a graduate minor are stated in Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>) and GCAC-700 Professional Degree Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>), depending on the type of degree the student is pursuing:

- GCAC-611 Minor - Research Doctorate (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-611-minor-research-doctorate/>)
- GCAC-641 Minor - Research Master's (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-641-minor-research-masters/>)
- GCAC-709 Minor - Professional Doctorate (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-700/gcac-709-professional-doctoral-minor/>)
- GCAC-741 Minor - Professional Master's (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-700/gcac-741-masters-minor-professional/>)

Student Aid

Graduate assistantships available to students in this program and other forms of student aid are described in the Tuition & Funding (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-funding/>) section of The Graduate School's website. Students on graduate assistantships must adhere to the course load limits (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gsad/gsad-900/gsad-901-graduate-assistants/>) set by The Graduate School.

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Courses

Graduate courses carry numbers from 500 to 699 and 800 to 899. Advanced undergraduate courses numbered between 400 and 499 may be used to meet some graduate degree requirements when taken by graduate students. Courses below the 400 level may not. A graduate student may register for or audit these courses in order to make up deficiencies or to fill in gaps in previous education but not to meet requirements for an advanced degree.

Visual Studies (VSTUD) Course List (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/university-course-descriptions/graduate/vstud/>)

Contact

Campus	University Park
Graduate Program Head	Chris Reed
Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Professor-in-Charge (PIC)	Daniel Leonhard Purdy
Program Contact	Chris Reed cgr11@psu.edu (814) 865-4242
Program Website	View (http://www.visualstudies.psu.edu/)