

# Master of Arts in Museum Studies

## Museum Studies M.A. Program

The course of study leading to the Master of Arts in Museum Studies comprises 36 credit hours at the graduate level. Each entering student enrolls in the Museum Studies Core, and then, with guidance of M.A. advisor(s) and program staff, crafts an individualized, multidisciplinary program of study in which they master both general and specific topics appropriate to their interests and relevant to current museum standards. In addition to courses in topics such as collections management, museum education, exhibit design, and museum management ("Museum Professional Courses"), students can take advantage of the resources of a major research university to gain skills in fields as diverse as scenography, learning theory, audience evaluation, nonprofit leadership, psychology, and public administration, among others. Students are also encouraged to take courses in academic disciplines such as history, area studies, anthropology, art history, natural sciences, and visual arts ("Museum Topical Courses"). Museum Studies students have access to the staff and resources of several acclaimed museums located on the KU campus, as well as museums in the region. Many of the courses are taught by museum professionals who work in institutions locally.

## Admission to Graduate Studies

### Admission Requirements

- All applicants must meet the requirements outlined in the Admission to Graduate Study (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/admission-to-graduate-study/>) policy.
- Bachelor's degree: A copy of official transcripts showing proof of a bachelor's degree (and any post-bachelor's coursework or degrees) from a regionally accredited institution, or a foreign university with equivalent bachelor's degree requirements is required.
- English proficiency: Proof of English proficiency (<https://gradapply.ku.edu/english-requirements/>) for non-native or non-native-like English speakers is required. There are two bands of English proficiency, including Admission and Full proficiency. For applicants to online programs, Full proficiency is required.

## Admission to the Museum Studies M.A. Program

Students are admitted to the M.A. program only in the fall semester, and the application deadline is **February 1**. If February 1 falls on a weekend, the deadline will extend to the following business day.

Eligibility criteria for admission to the M.A. program follow Graduate Studies' admission policy (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/admission-to-graduate-study/>).

Required Application Materials:

1. A copy of your official transcript, issued by the Registrar's Office of the institution from which you have (or will have) earned your bachelor's degree (and master's degree, if applicable).
2. One essay not to exceed three single-spaced pages. A fourth page can be added for a bibliography, if needed.

Please respond to this prompt: How has a museum experience shaped your outlook on the function and relevance of museums? Explain how you have seen museums engage with their various audiences, stakeholders, or communities.

Feel free to draw from personal experiences, visits to museums or volunteer/paid positions you have held, or current events or other instances of museum engagement you have learned about in your studies. Be analytical. Use your essay to help the Admissions Committee to better understand your worldview and how you think about museums, and your career objectives in them in critical, comparative, and aspirational terms. We realize you may not have museum work experience so we want to know how you envision approaching museum studies and your unique perspective as an emergent scholar. We also want to see how well you write. Feel free to cite and support your essay with representational examples from museums, related socio-cultural or political events, and/or interventions that you see are necessary in the field.

We evaluate your work based on the clarity of your vision, the evidentiary support for your perspective and claims, and your passion for the field as an incoming scholar. We want to know who you are and realize your subject position greatly impacts how you navigate the academy and the field. Therefore, we encourage you to think critically about your areas of interest and how your particular subject position and experience, broadly conceived, offers a fresh perspective to an incoming graduate cohort in Museum Studies at KU. Cogency and clarity are at least as important as content.

Topics you might consider (but are not limited to): ethical responsibility to the community; programming surrounding collections and holdings; repatriation of collections; decolonizing museum collections; ecology; environmental justice concerns; natural history and ethics of collecting; places and people; the role of objects in deepening people's capacity for self-awareness.

3. A personal statement, not to exceed three double-spaced pages. The statement should cover: (a) aspects of museums and museum studies that particularly interest you; (b) your professional goals, including the area of museum work that most attracts you; (c) your relevant experience and background, (d) how you believe KU's Museum Studies Program matches your interests; and (e) anything else you think is important for us to know. If you believe your academic record does not reflect your potential to perform well in the KU Museum Studies Program, please provide an explanation.
4. Three letters of recommendation. At least two of your letters should come from professors, instructors, or other individuals who can speak directly to your academic ability.
5. A resume or curriculum vitae that lists your education, employment history, volunteer experience, internships, scholarships/fellowships, and academic awards. Please calculate your junior/senior GPA and include it on your resume.

## M.A. Degree Requirements

Code	Title	Hours
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### Museum Studies Core

The Museum Studies Core ensures that all Museum Studies students gain a comprehensive understanding of the theories, history, techniques, and problems common to museums, historical agencies, and related institutions. MUSE 803, taken in a student's third semester of study, provides training for students to conduct research or other creative activities that advance the discipline of museum studies in preparation to write and defend their capstone project in the fourth semester.

MUSE 801	The Modern Museum: Institutions, Knowledge and Audiences	3
MUSE 802	The Museum Profession: Ethics, Standards and Cultural Awareness	3
MUSE 803	The Contemporary Museum in Practice: Debates and Research Methodologies	3

### Museum Professional Area Courses 9

Students will develop expertise in the principal specialties of museum work by completing at least three of the following courses. Courses incorporate training in best practices, policy development, and legal and regulatory concerns, as well as future trends.

MUSE 699	Anthropology in Museums	
MUSE 701	Managing Museums	
MUSE 703	Introduction to Museum Exhibits	
MUSE 704	Introduction to Collections Management and Utilization	
MUSE 705	Museum Education and Public Engagement	
MUSE 706	Preventive Conservation in Museums	
MUSE 707	Archival Theory and Practice	
MUSE 710	Natural History Curation and Collections Management	
MUSE 780	Special Topics: _____ Depending on the topic of the course	

### Museum Topical Courses 6

Museum topical courses address the conceptual and theoretical foundations of museums in depth. These courses place museological subjects in broader historical and intellectual frameworks and are often taken in disciplines represented in their museums/institutions of specialization. Students may take courses offered in one or several disciplines. Courses will be selected in consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator - Advising and Museum Studies Director based on the student's research and professional interests, the general relevance of the course, and assurance that the student's work will be applicable to museum studies.

### Supplemental Program of Study 9

Students design a unique program of study in consultation with their committee chair/advisor, the Graduate Program Coordinator - Advising, and Museum Studies Director. Courses are selected based on the student's research and professional goals and should inform the capstone project. Courses may be taken within or outside the Museum Studies Program.

### Museum Experience

While enrolled in the Museum Studies Program, students are required to gain at least 500 hours of museum experience, of which at least 250 hours must be in an approved, professionally supervised internship. Students enroll in 3 credit hours of MUSE 799 to meet this requirement.

MUSE 799	Museum Internship	3
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>36</b>

## M.A. Capstone Project and Oral Examination

Each student will be responsible for a capstone project--developed through research or other creative activity--that contributes to the field of museum studies and demonstrates the student's ability to engage conceptually and professionally with the discipline.

A student will successfully defend their project as part of the final examination of their work. The oral master's examination, taken during the student's final semester of course work, focuses on the student's capstone project, while also revealing the candidate's mastery of museum principles and practices.

The examination is evaluated (Pass, Pass with Revisions, or Unsatisfactory) by each member of the exam committee. A favorable majority is required to pass the exam.

## Course-Level Requirement and Selection Process

Students pursuing an M.A. in Museum Studies must take 50% or more of their coursework at the 700 level or above.

All courses, aside from the core, must be selected in consultation with the student's committee chair/advisor, Graduate Program Coordinator-Advising, and Museum Studies Director, as appropriate.

## Graduate Student Handbook & Graduate Policy

Students are encouraged to review Museum Studies' Graduate Student Handbook (<https://museumstudies.ku.edu/graduate-student-handbook/>) and Graduate Studies' policies (<https://ogs.ku.edu/policies/>) related to master's degree programs for information about other requirements that may apply.

At the completion of this program, students will be able to:

- apply a critical understanding of museum functions as institutions, bodies of knowledge, and communicators with a public audience.
- apply an understanding of professional standards including ethics and cultural awareness.
- show knowledge, application, and analysis of museological scholarship (historical and contemporary).
- display practical experience in museum leadership, collections, exhibitions/interpretation, and education.
- synthesize scholarship, professional standards, and practical experience to create new museological research or tools of use to the profession.