

**OFFICE OF QUALITY PROFESSIONALS AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Items**  
**October 17-18, 2013**

**OFFICE OF EDUCATOR LICENSURE**

09. Approval of Proposal from Mississippi College to Recognize two Class AAA Licenses as Recommended by the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development
- A. Recognize the Juris Doctorate Degree as a Class AAA License as Recommended by the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development
- B. Recognize the Master of Fine Arts Degree as a Class AAA License as Recommended by the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development

Background Information:

On September 7, 2012, Mississippi College (MC) proposed a request to the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development to recognize the Master of Fine Arts degree (MFA) in Visual Art and Juris Doctorate degree as a Specialist or Class AAA license.

The Commission approved the proposals on November 2, 2012.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

**OFFICE OF QUALITY PROFESSIONALS AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Items**  
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**OFFICE OF EDUCATOR LICENSURE**

- A. Approval of Proposal from Mississippi College to Recognize the Juris Doctorate Degree as a Class AAA License as Recommended by the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development

Background Information:

Mississippi College (MC) proposes a request to recognize the Juris Doctorate degree as a Class AAA license.

Currently, the Office of Educator Licensure (Licensure) issues a Master's or Class AA license in Social Studies to educators that hold a Juris Doctorate degree. MC presented a proposal to the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development (the Commission) on September 7, 2012 to consider approving a policy to allow Licensure the authority to issue a Specialist or Class AAA equivalency to any licensed educator who holds a Juris Doctorate degree and applies for an upgrade.

The Commission approved the proposal on November 2, 2012.

Recommendation: Approval

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**OFFICE OF EDUCATOR LICENSURE**

- B. Approval of Proposal from Mississippi College to Recognize the Master of Fine Arts Degree as a Class AAA License as Recommended by the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development

Background Information:

The Department of Art at Mississippi College (MC) proposes a request to recognize the Master of Fine Arts degree (MFA) in Visual Art as a Class AAA license. The MFA is a 60-hour program where as other master's degree programs are 30-hour programs. The coursework is twice the hours of a regular master's degree program; therefore, other states award the MFA license at the Specialist or Class AAA level. Around the country, other states nationally recognize the MFA program as terminal degrees.

Currently, the Office of Educator Licensure (Licensure) issues a Master's or Class AA license to educators that hold a MFA degree because the transcript from MC shows a conferred master's degree. MC presented a proposal to the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure and Development (the Commission) on September 7, 2012 to consider approving a policy to allow Licensure the authority to issue a Specialist or Class AAA equivalency to any licensed educator who holds an MFA degree and applies for an upgrade.

The Commission approved the proposal on November 2, 2012.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached



Office of Teacher and Administrator Preparation  
 Mississippi Department of Education  
 359 N. West Street/P.O. Box 771  
 Jackson, MS 39205-0771  
 601.359.3631

## EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL REQUEST FORM

Institution: Mississippi College Date Submitted: July 12, 2012  
 Submitted by: Stephanie Busbea, PhD Commission Approval Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ State Board Approval Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed date of Program Implementation: Fall 2013

Proposal Request and Support Materials are provided for the approval to implement:

New Program  Modifications to Existing Program  Licensure Requirement

In addition to your current education program course list/description, you must provide: 1) a copy of the proposed new program; 2) the current program with clear indication of proposed modifications; 3) any evidence of institutions (state, regional or national) with the same or a similar course of study; 4) evidence of qualified faculty; and 5) any other documentation that further supports the proposal.

Please state your specific request:

We wish to request the Class AAA Specialist degree level license include not only the specialist degrees, but also the terminal degrees in an area of specialty which are 30 hours above the Master's degree. Our primary interest is to grant the Class AAA license to teachers with a Master of Fine Arts degree, which is the terminal degree in studio art, and 30 hours beyond the Master of Arts degree and Master of Education degree in Art.

State rationale:

I conducted a limited investigation of states who recognize the MFA at a certification/and or compensation level beyond a 30 hour master's degree. These states were selected because their information was readily available online. Many of the states I looked at did not post their certification levels and/or qualifications for stated levels. I did find a strong precedent for recognizing the MFA at a level equal to the specialist degree. One such example is South Carolina. They have a Specialist classification which is a Master's degree plus thirty semester hours of graduate credit. This classification

can be met by earning two master's degrees or one master's degree that contains at least sixty graduate semester hours. In their system the MFA recipient would receive Specialist credentials.

Tennessee also has an Education Specialist's degree designation in which an individual who has earned a terminal professional degree, such as an MFA, is given credit at the Education Specialist level. Other states including Delaware and West Virginia don't have a specialist level, but designate the levels between the Master's degree and Doctorate degree by the number of graduate credits received. The MFA would fall into the Masters Degree plus 30 category. In my research I also noted the New York City school district recognizes 60 credit master's degree in their salary differentials between Master's degree and doctoral degree. Georgia has 7 levels of certification with the MFA recognized as a level 6 which is the same as an education specialist. In Kentucky's classification of teachers, those with a Master's degree plus 30 hours earn the highest ranking alongside someone with a doctorate degree.

Colleges and Universities recognize the MFA as the terminal degree in studio art and hire art faculty who have this degree. I have not checked other universities to see how they rank MFA with their masters, specialist, and doctoral degrees, but I do know Mississippi College recognizes the MFA as a terminal degree and has used this designation to hire full time tenure track art faculty. Currently, the Department of Art employs eight MFA art faculty members who are on tenure tracks. Also the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), accrediting agency for higher education art programs, recognizes the MFA degree in studio art as a terminal degree.

In conclusion I hope you will consider rewarding the members of our teaching community who have worked hard to complete the Master of Fine Arts degree, which is the terminal degree in studio art. They deserve to be rewarded with the Class AAA Specialist degree level license.

July 12, 2012

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR RECOGNITION OF THE MASTER OF FINE ARTS  
DEGREE TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR THE AAA LEVEL OF TEACHING LICENSURE

Stephen D. Cook, M.F.A., Professor of Art, Mississippi College

*M.F.A., University of Mississippi, 1975; Short Course Certificate, The Royal College of Art, London, United Kingdom (sponsored by an ITT International Fellowship), 1975-76.*

**The Master of Fine Arts degree** deserves recognition as being a basis for AAA level licensure for Standard teaching licenses granted to those holding the M.F.A. degree.

Currently, a Master's degree is recognized for the AA license, the Education Specialist degree for the AAA license, and the Doctor of Philosophy or other doctorate degree for the AAAA license. The M.F.A. lacks the recognition due to it for the substantial additional requirements involved in obtaining this degree, which are well beyond other Master's degrees.

**History and Recognition:** The Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) has an honorable history of over seventy years. A 2004 news release from the University of Iowa claims that that university awarded the first M.F.A. degree in 1940 to Elizabeth Catlett, an African-American artist of great importance to the art of the United States.

( <http://news-releases.uiowa.edu/2004/may/050504librariesgrant.html> ,  
[http://www.art.uiowa.edu/history\\_2.html](http://www.art.uiowa.edu/history_2.html)

The **College Art Association** is generally regarded as the major American organization for establishing the standards of graduate degrees. To quote from their document, "Standards and Guidelines"\*:

*MFA Standards*

*Adopted by the CAA Board of Directors on April 16, 1977; revised on October 12, 1991, and October 26, 2008.*

*Definition and Purpose*

*The master of fine arts (MFA) degree in studio art and design is the recognized terminal degree in the visual arts. It is considered by the College Art Association (CAA), the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), and the vast majority of institutions in higher education in the United States to be equivalent to terminal degrees in other fields, such as the PhD or EdD....*

*The MFA degree demands the highest level of professional competency in the visual arts and contemporary practices. To earn an MFA, a practicing artist must exhibit the highest level of accomplishment through the generation of a body of work. The work needs to demonstrate the ability to conceptualize and communicate effectively by employing visual language to interpret ideas. In addition, the MFA recipient must give evidence of applying critical skills that pertain to meaning and content, ultimately encouraging a comprehensive examination and critique of the function and role of art from a variety of views and contexts.*

*Regardless of the chosen area of concentration, an MFA candidate must be able to prove not only strong conceptual development, but also the skillful execution of tools, materials, and craft. This includes programs rooted in innovative uses of technology, collaborative work, or interdisciplinary projects.*

\* <http://www.collegeart.org/guidelines/mfa>

The **National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD)** is the most well-known accrediting organization for collegiate art programs. Their document, "Handbook 2011–12"

( [http://nasad.arts-accredit.org/site/docs/Handbook/NASAD\\_HANDBOOK\\_2011-12.pdf](http://nasad.arts-accredit.org/site/docs/Handbook/NASAD_HANDBOOK_2011-12.pdf) )

states:

*NASAD recognizes the Master of Fine Arts as the appropriate terminal degree for studio faculty. At the same time, the Association recognizes that some highly qualified artist-teachers may hold other academic degrees; others may not hold any academic degrees. In such cases, the institution should base appointments on experience, training, and expertise at least equivalent to those required for the Master of Fine Arts degree in the appropriate field....*

*Academic degrees are a pertinent indicator of the teacher's qualifications for instructing in theoretical, historical, and pedagogical subjects. In general, the Doctor of Philosophy and comparable doctorates are the appropriate terminal degrees in these fields; however, creative work, research, and publication are indicators of a teacher's qualifications, productivity, professional awareness, and contribution to various aspects of art/design and art/design-related fields.*

Mississippi College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which recognizes the M.F.A. as a terminal degree as evidenced by reporting schools specifying this degree as terminal. (I was unable to locate a document online at the SACS site for this information.) I was the first person in the history of Mississippi College to be advanced to the rank of Full Professor using this degree as one of the credentials.

**Rationale for AAA Certification for the M.F.A.:** Given the fact that the M.F.A. degree is overwhelmingly supported as the terminal degree in visual arts for post-secondary education, limiting those holding the M.F.A. to AA certification for teacher licensure fails to recognize the rigorous demands for obtaining this degree; the typical M.F.A. program is roughly twice the number of academic hours as is the M.A., M.S., or M.Ed. (generally equivalent to sixty hours for the M.F.A. versus thirty for the other Master's degrees). The completion of this curriculum must be in keeping with intangibles of talent and accomplishment in the visual arts which only a limited number of persons will be able to demonstrate.

An M.F.A. program will normally include a thesis or similar capstone which corresponds to the dissertation for the Doctorate in purpose; the M.F.A. is not awarded simply for the completion of a given number of hours of academic credit.

To quote further from "Standards and Guidelines" of the College Art Association:

*The MFA degree demands the highest level of professional competency in the visual arts and contemporary practices. To earn an MFA, a practicing artist must exhibit the highest level of accomplishment through the generation of a body of work. The work needs to demonstrate the ability to conceptualize and communicate effectively by employing visual language to interpret ideas. In addition, the MFA recipient must give evidence of applying critical skills that pertain to meaning and content, ultimately encouraging a comprehensive examination and critique of the function and role of art from a variety of views and contexts.*

*Regardless of the chosen area of concentration, an MFA candidate must be able to prove not only strong conceptual development, but also the skillful execution of tools, materials, and craft. This includes programs rooted in innovative uses of technology, collaborative work, or interdisciplinary projects.*

**Conclusion:** I highly recommend that the Mississippi Department of Education confirm that the Master of Fine Arts degree be recognized as the required degree in visual arts for AAA certification.

Having persons as teachers in the elementary and secondary schools who hold the M.F.A. degree would raise the caliber of the faculty of schools so fortunate as to have such persons giving their knowledge, talent and abilities to their students. The AAA certification would give such teachers the stature and professional rewards appropriate for those who have persevered and committed the time and effort required in obtaining this degree

I have no direct professional qualification to suggest that M.F.A. degrees in drama, creative writing, or musical composition should likewise be recognized, but would suggest that those areas are worthy of consideration and research for similar recognition.



My appreciation is extended to those examining the Master of Fine Arts for AAA certification and I hope that the case is made and will be considered with all due process.

Stephen D. Cook, M.F.A., Professor of Art, Mississippi College

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