

How we assess MFA-level work at CIIS:

1. Critical dialogue about Program Learning Outcomes in the Department of Writing, Consciousness and Creative Inquiry (MFA).

The **MFA faculty meet monthly** to attend to Department Business, to review major course assignments and any student concerns – especially if any students are struggling to meet Program Learning Outcomes as articulated in course syllabi. Faculty take action on a case by case basis. Sometimes a student simply needs to meet with the instructor or program chair to clarify program and course expectations; sometimes a student needs additional time to complete an assignment, or needs access to university resources (Dean of Students, Dean of Diversity and Inclusion, Financial Aid/Work Study, Center for Writing and Scholarship) for support. **We have seen a rise over the last few years in stress among students serious enough to interfere with work or to require medical attention, and often caused by economic pressure in the expensive Bay Area.** Some students work full-time in addition to attending the weekend intensive MFA Programs – and still struggle to make ends meet. **One action the Department has taken is to begin to develop a summer semester of classes, so some students can take fewer units per semester without slowing down time to degree.**

The **core of the MFA Programs is the MFA Project Proposal (first year) and the MFA Project (second year).** Two required courses in Year 1 – Movements and Frameworks and Cultural Identity – prepare students to write a strong essay situating their capstone project in a cultural, historical and theoretical context in Year 2.

In March of each year faculty meet to review MFA Project proposals by first-year students. Proposal drafts are written in Workshop II, discussed in class, and assessed by the Workshop instructor according to a short rubric (attached). All core faculty read all the first-year student proposals, and evaluate them based on a project rubric (attached). Faculty may also make recommendations to students for improving the proposals before they are approved. Once their proposals are approved, students are assigned to faculty advisors, who meet with the students individually for two semesters. In the second year, students also have an outside reviewer in their field, who meets two or three times per semester with the individual student to review work and make recommendations. **In April of each year, the faculty advisor and the outside reviewer assess the Year 2 capstone projects using department-developed MFA Project rubrics (see below). The Department Chair reviews and signs off on all capstone projects.**

WCC Faculty meet in January and June of each year for an all-day program retreat for collective discussion and action on new initiatives, program review, assessment matters, and future planning.