

4th Year Check List - Advance

For students following a Five-Year Undergraduate Pathway.

Welcome to your 4th year at RISD! This is an exciting time to deepen your creative practice, strengthen your portfolio, and gain meaningful professional experience. Continue expanding your network, pursuing internships, exhibitions, freelance opportunities, and leadership experiences while refining your career goals. This guide will help you build momentum and prepare for a successful transition into your fifth and final year at RISD.

Fall: Advance Your Professional Practice

☐ Explore Career Directions

As your interests become more focused, take time to evaluate the types of opportunities you hope to pursue after graduation. Explore employers, studios, graduate programs, freelance work, artist residencies, and entrepreneurial pathways using the [Resources by Major](#) page and Career Center advising.

☐ Update Your Professional Materials

Refresh your resume or CV, website, LinkedIn profile, artist statement, and biography with your newest work and accomplishments. Schedule a Career Center appointment for feedback and review. You can also explore our [resume](#) & [cover letter](#) resources for examples and templates.

☐ Refine Your Portfolio

Continue documenting and refining your strongest work. Seek feedback from faculty, peers, and the Career Center to strengthen your portfolio and begin tailoring it toward your professional goals. Explore the Career Center's [portfolio](#) resources and attend [portfolio review events](#).

☐ Attend Career Center Programs & Events

Take advantage of career workshops, panels, and networking [events](#)—especially those connected to your creative field. These gatherings can give you valuable insight into how artists and designers navigate the professional world, from industry expectations to building sustainable careers.

☐ Take Part in the Art of Business Series

Business skills can benefit every aspect of your creative professional goals – freelancing, studio practice, and full-time and part-time work. Gain knowledge from [Art of Business](#) guest speakers that can help you succeed and prepare you for what lies ahead in your professional life – finances, legal issues, pricing, marketing, and building your freelancing or business.

☐ Expand Your Professional Network

Attend employer events, artist talks, portfolio reviews, alumni programs, and networking events. Continue connecting with alumni on LinkedIn and consider scheduling informational interviews to learn about career paths in your field. Career Advisors can help you prepare for these conversations.

☐ **Explore Funding & Professional Opportunities**

Research grants, fellowships, residencies, conferences, competitions, publications, and exhibitions related to your discipline. Visit the Career Center's [Artist Resources](#) page and [Resources by Major](#) to begin identifying opportunities throughout the year.

☐ **Engage in Student Organizations and Department Activities**

Use [Involved@RISD](#) to participate in clubs, student organizations, or department events which can help you build leadership skills, create connections, and add depth to your resume.

☐ **For Architecture Students: Review Departmental Professional Requirements**

If you are in a program with specific professional milestones — such as Architecture — review your department's internship expectations, licensure preparation steps, or other graduation requirements. Confirm timelines with your department and ensure your job search and internship plans align with these benchmarks. The Career Center can help you strategize how to meet both departmental and professional goals.

Winter: Evaluate & Plan

☐ **Meet with a Career Advisor**

Schedule an advising appointment to review your progress, discuss your career goals, and begin planning for your final year. Career Advisors can help you develop a personalized strategy based on your interests.

☐ **Attend Wintersession Career Programs**

Wintersession is an excellent opportunity to participate in workshops, portfolio reviews, employer events, and networking programs. You'll receive Career Center emails and can also find programs in ArtWorks, on our Events page, and on Involved.

☐ **Research Career Paths**

Explore employers, graduate programs, studios, museums, galleries, nonprofits, and organizations related to your interests. Use the **Resources by Major** page to discover industry-specific career paths and employers.

☐ **Seek Guidance & Advice from Faculty and Mentors**

Continue connecting with faculty, visiting artists, and mentors through office hours, critiques, and department events. These relationships can provide valuable guidance, recommendations, and professional connections.

Spring: Build Momentum

☐ **Apply for Summer Opportunities**

One of the advantages of a five-year program is the opportunity to gain another summer of professional experience before graduation. Apply for internships, artist opportunities, residencies, freelance work, or studio positions that align with your goals. If you're an international student, it's important to meet with [ISSA](#) and to confirm the requirements for [CPT - Curricular Practical Training](#) - if you plan on doing an internship in the U.S.

☐ **Refine Your Portfolio**

Make sure your [portfolio](#) is ready for applications. Review it with a Career Center advisor for feedback, and update it with recent work or any special projects from Wintersession (if applicable). Consider how your work is evolving and begin identifying the pieces you want to feature most prominently during your fifth-year job search.

☐ **Attend the Design or Fine Arts Portfolio Reviews**

This is the perfect time to attend these major events to gain professional feedback on your portfolio as you prepare for internships, jobs, freelance and more related to your fields of interest and industries. Find lots of helpful information about the [Design and Fine Arts Portfolio Reviews](#) through their websites.

☐ **Explore Graduate School (if applicable)**

If you're planning to pursue [graduate studies](#), start researching programs, preparing your application materials, and ensuring deadlines are met. Begin working on your statement of purpose, gathering recommendations, and refining your portfolio for application.

☐ **Visit the Career Center for Advising & Resources**

Make an [advising appointment](#) to support you through the opportunities you're seeking and to further explore your interests and career goals.

Summer: Prepare for Your Final Year

☐ **Build Experience Through Summer Opportunities**

Gain hands-on experience by completing an internship, assisting an artist, participating in a residency program, working on a studio or gallery project, or

pursuing a personal project. Document your work and reflect on what you learn to strengthen your portfolio and focus your goals for senior year.

☐ **Update Your Professional Materials**

Add new work, experiences, and skills to your resume, portfolio, and LinkedIn profile. Keep these updated as you gain these experiences so you're prepared to show your work to employers or collaborators at any time.

☐ **Refine Your Networking Skills**

Summer is also a great time for [networking](#). Try to reach out to 3–5 alumni in your field on LinkedIn. Ask them about their creative interests, career paths from RISD, day-to-day work, and potential opportunities in their fields. Don't worry about their level or status; LinkedIn is all about making connections.

☐ **Reflect on Career Goals for Your Fifth Year**

As you step soon into your final year, take a moment to reflect on how far you've come. Which projects and experiences have shaped you the most? What do you want to accomplish before graduation—whether that's refining your body of work, experimenting with bold new concepts, or building connections for life after school? Setting clear intentions now can help you make the most of this upcoming milestone year and carry your momentum into your professional life after graduation. Also consider valuable Professional Practices classes that may be available in your department for this upcoming 5th year.