

Graduate Student Career Development Checklist

Welcome to RISD! Graduate study is an opportunity to deepen your practice while preparing for your next professional steps. Whether your program is one year or three years, use this roadmap to make the most of your time at RISD. Focus on completing each stage throughout your program based on your individual timeline.

Stage 1: Launch Your Graduate Experience

First Semester

- ☐ **Access Your ArtWorks Account**

Log into your account on [ArtWorks](#), RISD's platform for jobs, internships, freelance, and artist opportunities. You will also use ArtWorks to schedule Career Center [advising appointments](#), and stay updated on career events and workshops. It's important to stay connected and aware of resources throughout the year.

- ☐ **Get to Know Career Center Resources**

Take time to familiarize yourself with the valuable resources at the [Career Center](#) website – internships, jobs, career preparation, artist resources, residencies, grants, business, and entrepreneurship information. Learning about these resources early can expand your creative options throughout your studies.

- ☐ **Visit the Career Center**

Make an [appointment](#) with the Career Center for career advising and to learn about our services, resources, programs, and events. You don't need to have any materials or topics to discuss. Just meet with us! Getting connected early can help you set career goals and make the most of valuable resources.

- ☐ **Attend Career Center Programs**

Try to attend at least one career program each semester. Most are one hour long and pack a lot of super helpful information for your career development in each session. Starting now will significantly build your knowledge and clarify your choices as you move through your RISD education. You'll receive career program emails and can also find programs in [ArtWorks](#), on our [events](#) page, and on Involved.

- ☐ **Follow the Career Center on Social Media**

Stay updated on career events, job and internship opportunities, and tips by following us on [Instagram](#) & [Facebook](#)! It's an easy way to stay connected with the Career Center and make the most of our resources.

- ☐ **Build Your Community**

Connect with classmates across graduate programs to learn about different creative practices, build interdisciplinary relationships, and identify opportunities for collaboration. You can also begin reaching out to RISD alumni through

[LinkedIn](#) to discover potential career paths and start building your professional network. Career Center advisors can help guide you in this process. Also explore [Involved@RISD](#) to learn about campus events, join clubs, and participate in workshops.

☐ **Connect with Faculty & Mentors**

Graduate school provides unique opportunities to build relationships with faculty, visiting artists, and mentors in your field. Take advantage of office hours, critiques, studio visits, and department events to learn from their experience and begin developing professional connections that can support your career long after graduation. These relationships can provide valuable guidance, recommendations, and professional connections that support your goals during and after graduate school.

☐ **Explore Funding and Professional Opportunities**

Graduate school is an ideal time to research [artist opportunities](#) like [grants](#), fellowships, [residencies](#), conferences, competitions, publications, and exhibitions. These experiences help build your professional reputation while providing valuable opportunities to share your work.

☐ **Define Your Professional Goals**

Take time to reflect on what you hope to achieve during graduate school and beyond. Whether you're interested in studio practice, industry, academia, entrepreneurship, or another path, exploring the [Resources by Major](#) page can help you discover career possibilities and identify opportunities that align with your interests and goals.

Stage 2: Develop Your Professional Practice

Throughout Your Program

☐ **Develop Your Professional Identity**

Graduate study is an opportunity to define how you present yourself as an artist, designer, scholar, educator, or creative professional. Continue refining your professional narrative, [artist statement](#), biography, [website](#), [LinkedIn](#) profile, and online presence so they clearly communicate your work, interests, and goals.

☐ **Build Your Portfolio**

Continue documenting your strongest work as you progress through your program. Keeping an organized [portfolio](#) of high-quality images and projects will make it easier to prepare applications for jobs, exhibitions, residencies, grants, and other professional opportunities.

☐ **Refine Your Professional Materials**

As your experience grows, regularly update your [resume or CV](#), [artist statement](#),

[website](#), and LinkedIn Profile. These materials should evolve alongside your practice and reflect your accomplishments.

☐ **Expand Your Professional Network**

Attend artist talks, [portfolio reviews](#), conferences, exhibitions, and networking events both on and off campus. Reach out to alumni and professionals whose work interests you to learn about their career paths and begin building lasting professional relationships. Consider scheduling informational interviews with alumni and professionals to learn about different career paths, gain industry insights, and expand your network.

☐ **Meet with the Career Center Regularly**

Career planning is an ongoing process. Schedule [appointments](#) throughout your program for portfolio feedback, [resume or CV reviews](#), [job search strategies](#), [interview preparation](#), [salary negotiation](#), [grant applications](#), exhibition opportunities, or simply to discuss your next steps.

☐ **Continue Participating Career Center Programs**

Continue attending Career Center workshops, employer events, portfolio reviews, and alumni programs throughout your graduate studies to expand your professional skills and network. You'll receive career program emails and can also find programs in [ArtWorks](#), on our [events](#) page, and on Involved.

☐ **Gain Professional Experience**

If your program timeline allows, look for opportunities to apply your skills beyond the classroom through internships, graduate assistantships, teaching, research, freelance work, commissions, exhibitions, or client projects. These experiences can strengthen your portfolio while helping you build confidence and expand your professional network.

☐ **Assess Your Online Presence**

Create or update your website, LinkedIn profile, and professional social media platforms to showcase your work and make it easy for employers, collaborators, galleries, clients, and institutions to learn about your practice.

Stage 3: Prepare for Graduation

Approximately 6-12 Months Before Graduation

☐ **Clarify Your Career Plan**

As graduation approaches, work with a Career Advisor to begin identifying the types of opportunities you plan to pursue and create a timeline for your job or opportunity search. Having a clear plan will help you stay organized and focused during your final months at RISD.

☐ **Research Organizations**

Learn about employers, studios, firms, museums, galleries, nonprofits, and organizations that align with your interests. Research opportunities before applying can help you tailor your materials and identify organizations that fit your career goals. Use our [Resources by Major](#) page for directories and industry sites.

☐ **Prepare Your Application Materials**

Complete your [resume or CV](#), [cover letters](#), [artist statement](#), teaching philosophy (if applicable), [portfolio](#), LinkedIn profile, professional bio, and reference list so you're ready to apply!

☐ **Finalize Your Portfolio**

Review your portfolio with faculty advisors, Career Center advisors, or through the [Portfolio Reviews](#) to ensure it reflects your strongest work and aligns with your professional goals. Make any updates needed before applying for opportunities.

☐ **Practice Interviewing**

Whether you're [interviewing](#) for jobs, fellowships, residencies, graduate teaching positions, or freelance opportunities, practicing beforehand can help you communicate your experience and creative practice with confidence. [Schedule a mock interview](#) with a Career Advisor.

☐ **Begin Applying for Opportunities**

Start applying for positions or reach out to organizations that align with your goals, including full-time jobs, fellowships, residencies, assistantships, exhibitions, freelance work, or commissions.

☐ **Learn to Evaluate and Negotiate Offers**

Understanding contracts, compensation, freelance pricing, and benefits is an important part of your professional career. Attend the Art of Business series or meet with a Career Advisor to discuss negotiation strategies and evaluating offers.

☐ **International Students**

If you're an international student, it's important to meet with [ISSA](#) and to confirm the requirements for [OPT - Curricular Practical Training](#) - if you plan on working in the U.S. Planning ahead will help ensure a smooth transition.

Stage 4: Transition Beyond RISD

Final Semester & Beyond

☐ **Keep Networking After Graduation**

As you transition into the workforce, continue to reach out to alumni, employers, and colleagues you've met during your RISD years. Attend [alumni events](#),

maintain relationships via [LinkedIn](#), and continue networking within your creative community.

☐ **Continue to Grow Your Portfolio**

Even after graduation, your portfolio should grow with you. Keep adding new work, projects, and experiences to show your evolving artistic practice and professional skills.

☐ **Follow Up on Job Applications and Offers**

If you've applied for jobs but haven't heard back, follow up with the hiring managers. If you've received offers, take time to consider them carefully. Assess your salary, the culture of the organization, and how the position aligns with your career goals. You can also book an [appointment](#) with a Career Advisor for guidance on follow up and salary negotiation.

☐ **Stay Organized and Set Goals for Your Career**

Establish a plan for the first few months after graduation. Whether it's finding full-time work, applying for residencies, or expanding your practice, staying organized and setting clear goals is key.

☐ **Meet with a Career Advisor**

The [RISD Career Center](#) is here to support you through your final year and beyond! As alumni, you can always book [career advising appointments](#) with us for any stage in your career. We're excited to help you take the next step in your career, whether that's through employment, freelance work, or entrepreneurial pursuits. Reach out to us at any time to ensure your transition into the professional world is as successful as possible.