



AMERICAN ACADEMY
of **BOOKBINDING**
A School of Excellence in Bookbinding Education

Founded in 1993

Diploma Program Guidelines
FINE BINDING

Updated October 11, 2017

The American Academy of Bookbinding

is an internationally known degree-oriented bookbinding and book conservation school that offers book enthusiasts of all levels the opportunity to initiate and improve their skills in a generous and supportive learning environment.

Founded in 1993, the American Academy of Bookbinding offers a program that gives serious bookbinding and book conservation students an opportunity to initiate and improve their skills in a fertile and supportive setting. The Academy holds intensive courses in the fine art of leather binding, conservation and related subjects. The goal of the Academy is to graduate professional level binders and book conservators who have the knowledge and skills to produce the highest quality work and the ability to pass on these skills to the next generation. The Academy is unique in the United States in its ability to offer a comprehensive diploma granting program in the study of bookbinding and book conservation, taught by some of the most experienced and highly regarded book artists and conservators in the world.

Founders of the Academy are Tini Miura, Einen Miura and Daniel Tucker. The Director of Fine Binding is Don Glaister and the Director of Integrated Studies is Peter Geraty. Current and past faculty members include Monique Lallier, Don Etherington, Tini Miura, Einen Miura, Louise Genest, John Franklin Mowery, Eleanore Edwards Ramsey, Hans-Peter Frölich, Hélène Jolis, Brenda Parsons, Suzanne Moore, Tim Ely, Don Glaister, and Renate Mesmer, Gabrielle Fox, Peter Geraty, Coleen Curry, Daniel Kelm, Christopher McAfee, Pamela Smith.

AAB DIPLOMA OPPORTUNITIES

The American Academy of Bookbinding has designed diploma programs in both Fine Binding and Integrated Studies. This document will outline the requirements for a **Diploma in Fine Binding**.

A candidate seeking a diploma in fine binding is required to complete twenty bindings through a combination of practical *Course Work* at the Academy, *Elective Course Work* and *Independent Study*.

The candidate will then choose a *Diploma Project*, consisting of two design bindings with protective enclosures and a research paper. Experts in the field will then jury the Diploma Project and successful candidates will graduate with an official diploma from the Academy.

Course Work

Students will learn fine binding techniques through a series of courses in which a total of ten books will be realized during five courses. In addition, the student must complete other essential courses. Required courses for all students are as follows:

- Fundamentals of Bookbinding (two weeks)
- Intermediate/Advanced Fine Binding, at least three repetitions. (two-week class sessions) after completion of *Fundamentals of Fine Leather Binding*.
- Decorative Techniques (one-week) The student may choose from a variety of courses to fill this one week requirement; it is recommended but not required that the student attend more than just one week of decorative technique classes. Examples of decorative technique classes include: Onlays and Inlays; Alternative Decorative Techniques; and more.

- Titling (one-week)
- Tooling (one-week) This would include blind, foil and gold tooling.
- Protective Box Making (one-week)
- Design (one week)
- Basics in Paper Conservation
- Two elective courses: Students may choose from the following: Millimeter Binding, Case Binding with Paper and Cloth, Stiff Board Vellum, Limp Vellum, Miniature Full Leather Binding, Leather Box Making, Paste Paper, Marbling, Edge Decoration, Edition Survey and more.
- Note that students may enter the program at different levels, and that curriculum requirements may differ based on personal skills and previous experience.

Through instruction in the above courses, each candidate will be introduced to the following techniques:

Bookbinding techniques:

- sewing & forwarding
- edge decoration
- weaving headbands
- board shaping
- leather work (overall, and with attention to interior & exterior joints)
- titling

Design techniques:

- innovative design
- relationship between design and book
- execution of design

Protective box making techniques:

- clamshell box

To assist a candidate in understanding his or her skills, a review is held at the end of each required course taken. During this 'review,' the student will receive a

numerical grade from 1-5, with 5 being excellent. The instructor bases a student's grade on:

- understanding of techniques
- quality of work
- consistency of performance
- skill development

During this review process, a student's strengths and areas needing improvement will be discussed. The focal point of the homework assignment will be determined by this discussion. (For example, if the instructor feels the student needs to practice his or her design with onlays, the student's homework might be "Full leather binding with onlay work.")

These assignments will be detailed in the *Certificate of Course Completion*. This is a document that verifies the student's participation in an AAB course and lists the student's grade, as well as any other instructor comments. It is sent to the student after the completion of a course. It also serves as the yearly diploma guide for both the student and the administration of the Academy. Copies of all certificates are kept on file at the Academy for later review during the diploma evaluation period.

Independent Study

As well as the ten books produced in class, each student will make ten 'homework' books independently. All books produced at home will demonstrate the techniques learned in each course.

Students will complete their homework assignments before the next class they attend. Work completed at home should be sent to the instructor for review following each class or brought to the next class as arranged with the instructor. Homework is critical to the development of each student and is taken seriously by Academy instructors. Documentation of homework assignments is the

responsibility of the student. Please contact the Academy to make sure your homework assignments are being properly recorded. Students will be expected to complete a report twice a year outlining their progress and goals.

Additional Courses

The Academy offers a variety of courses that students are encouraged to take, though they are not required for the diploma. The additional courses are meant to enhance training, giving the student a stronger and broader background in fine bookbinding. For example, courses may be offered in German Style Leather Binding, Alternative Designs for Leather, Decorated Paper, Vellum Binding, Millimeter Binding, and other relevant classes. These “extracurricular” courses are taught by permanent faculty and visiting experts.

The Student as a Candidate for Diploma

After required course work is completed, the Director and candidate will meet to discuss the student’s readiness to be a Candidate for Diploma. They will review the student’s file, including prior grades and ‘homework’. At that time the Director determines if the candidate is satisfactorily producing independent bindings, or if more work is required. If it is determined that the candidate is ready to begin work on the *Diploma Project*, possible topics for the Research Paper will be discussed, and a date for the jury process will be proposed. This will enable the candidate as well as the Director and staff of the Academy to prepare for this process. Note: a final meeting of similar nature must occur *a year in advance* of expected graduation, confirming the jurying date. By this time, the candidate will have executed examples of the following bindings:

- a half-leather binding
- a raised band binding
- an example of ‘sunken suede doublures’ in a binding
- an example of edge-to-edge doublures in a binding
- examples of paper, suede and leather flyleaves in various bindings
- two full leather bindings with design and protective enclosures

GRADUATION PROCESS FOR A DIPLOMA IN FINE BINDING

The Diploma Requirements for Fine Binding are accomplished through *Required Course Work, Independent Study*, and by study in non-required elective courses offered by the Academy. The Director of Fine Binding elects the student as a Candidate for Diploma only when the student demonstrates the level of skill and proficiency that will ensure success before the jury. The candidate then chooses a mentor from the faculty of the Academy and has one year to produce the *Diploma Project* (two bindings with protective enclosures, and a research paper.) During this period, the candidate and mentor will be in monthly contact to monitor progress of the Project and to discuss any complications that may arise. The Project will be evaluated by the jury. There is an additional filing fee of \$200 required for the jurying process.

DIPLOMA PROJECT GUIDELINES

Two Complete Bindings

The candidate for Diploma must produce two leather bindings with protective enclosures. These bindings will be realized entirely independently, with only spoken consultation provided during monthly contacts with the mentor. The Diploma Project books are meant to showcase both the candidate's creativity and technical skill at fine leather design bindings. They should exhibit inventive design and demonstrate the candidate's skill in the use of decorative techniques such as gold and blind tooling, onlays, inlays, and edge decoration, as well as less traditional decorative techniques. Both books and protective enclosures should be titled. A single page explanation of the title, materials and techniques used in the binding should accompany each book. The candidate should also write an artist statement about the design. (Please see attached sample descriptive sheet.) Both projects should reflect the knowledge and skills that the candidate acquired from the Academy's instruction and independent study.

Research Paper

The Candidate for Diploma must also write a *Research Paper* on a topic approved by the Director. Examples of potential subjects are as follows:

- Historic bookbinding techniques, i.e. “The History of Gilding”
- Noteworthy bookbinders and their careers
- Specialized techniques and their traditions

Academy instructors will be available to discuss and offer suggestions for the topic of the Research Paper. The paper should demonstrate the candidate’s ability to do independent study and write effectively on the subject of bookbinding. It must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the subject matter. The paper should be a minimum of ten pages in length, double-spaced.

Portfolio

Each applicant will submit a comprehensive portfolio, which should show a varied selection of different kinds of fine bindings that the candidate has made. The portfolio is comprised of photographs of the bindings. The portfolio may include photographs of both in-class and homework assignments, and this should be accompanied by pertinent descriptive information. Care should be taken in how the portfolio is displayed.

Portfolio and Paper Presentations

Candidates will be required to submit an electronic version of their paper and portfolio six weeks prior to their jury review. They will present a bound or boxed copy of each on the day of their jury review. These will then be included in the AAB library for reference by future students.

Jurying Process

The Fine Binding Director will select a jury of three or four professional bookbinders. The jury convenes as needed in the autumn, during the annual Guild of BookWorkers ‘Standards of Excellence’ Conference. The Director of Fine Binding will not be a member of the Jury but will be on hand to answer the jury members’ questions.

The candidate is required to send his/her Diploma Project, Portfolio and Research Paper to the Director for review. At least six weeks prior to jurying, and after the Director has reviewed all Project materials and determined them to be of high quality and complete, the books will be returned to the candidate. Digital copies (pdf preferred) of the research paper and portfolio will be forwarded to all jurors.

The candidate is responsible for bringing his or her final projects to the jurying. The jurying will take one or two days, with the jurors meeting both privately and with the candidate in attendance. The jurors will be looking for the candidate's proficiency in the following areas :

- Fine Binding
- Edge Decoration
- Headband Sewing
- Design and Execution of Design
- Titling
- Protective Enclosures and Boxes

(Please see the Fine Binding Evaluation Sheet, attached, for a more specific list of areas of concern to the Jury.)

After reviewing and discussing the candidate's bindings and research paper, the panel will arrive at a decision to either grant the candidate a diploma, or it will provide specific guidelines for further work necessary to meet the required standards.

Receipt of Diploma

The signed Fine Binding Diploma will be sent to the candidate within three months of the jurying process.

American Academy of Bookbinding
Diploma Requirements Checklist for Fine Binding

_____ Completion of course work in Fine Binding instruction. This includes the completion of two bindings during each course (a total of ten bindings). The following classes are required:

- Introduction to Leather Binding
- Intermediate Fine Leather Binding
- Advanced Fine Leather Binding

_____ Completion of ten bindings produced independently, at home

_____ Completion of Additional Courses in:

- Protective Box Making (one week)
- Decorative Techniques (one week)
- Titling (one week)
- Tooling (one week)
- Paper Conservation (one week)
- Design (one week)
- Two elective one-week courses

_____ Completion of a Diploma Project to be juried:

_____ Two books with protective enclosures

_____ Descriptive paper with each book

_____ Research paper

_____ Completion of a Comprehensive Portfolio

FINE BINDING EVALUATION SHEET

Student: _____ Homework? _____

Title of Book: _____ In-Class? _____

Today's Date: _____

Grade and Definition (1-5)

The following definitions are pointed at the control that the student has over tools, materials and techniques. Please assess your skills in each category below relative to these definitions.

5. Needs very little or no help in producing fine and elegant work as directed.

Seems in control of the work and recovers well when things go wrong. Excellent hand skills and hand-eye coordination. Has developed a critical eye for detail.

4. Usually has good control of tools and materials. Makes neat and tidy work with supervision though can improve with practice. Good eye for detail but sometimes needs prompting. Learns quickly and takes direction well.

3. Often controls tools and materials satisfactorily but is inconsistent. Can make neat and tidy work but frequently needs help. Can improve technique with practice. Is developing a good eye for detail. Shows enthusiasm for learning new techniques and can improve with follow through.

2. Work is uneven. Needs work controlling tools and materials. Needs to develop an eye for detail. Can improve with practice.

CATAGORIES (scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest level of control for the task)

Sewing	1	2	3	4	5
Rounding and Backing	1	2	3	4	5
Squares	1	2	3	4	5
Edge Decoration	1	2	3	4	5
Headbands	1	2	3	4	5
Board Shape	1	2	3	4	5
Paring Leather	1	2	3	4	5
Covering (consider the below elements)					

A. Headcaps	1	2	3	4	5
B. Corners	1	2	3	4	5
C. Outer Joints	1	2	3	4	5
Inner Joints	1	2	3	4	5
Decorative Techniques					
A.	1	2	3	4	5
B.	1	2	3	4	5
C.	1	2	3	4	5
Handling					
Doublures / Pastedowns / Flyleaves	1	2	3	4	5
Overall	1	2	3	4	5

Optional Comments below:

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Optional Comments below:

DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS : FINE BINDING

STUDENT NAME: _____

Coursework			
Course	Review Date	Instructor	Grade
Fine Leather 1			
Fine Leather 2			
Fine Leather 3			
Fine Leather 4			
Fine Leather 5 (if needed)			
Decorative Techniques (Trad.)			
Decorative Techniques (Alt.)			
Design			
Basics in Paper Conservation			
Elective 1			
Elective 2			
Protective Box Making			
Tooling			
Titling			
Bindings Completed in Class			
Title	Review Date	Instructor	Grade
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
Bindings Completed at Home			
Title	Review Date	Instructor	Grade
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS : FINE BINDING

STUDENT NAME: _____

8			
9			
10			
<i>Additional Courses</i>			
Course	Review Date	Instructor	Grade
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
<i>Additional Bindings</i>			
Title	Review Date	Instructor	Grade
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
<i>Annual Advisory Meetings</i>			
Title	Date	Instructor	Administrator
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
<i>Jury Books</i>			
Title	Preview Date	Instructor	Grade
1			
2			
<i>Research Project</i>			
Title	Preview Date	Instructor	Grade
<i>Jurying</i>			
Location	Date	Comments	Diploma