

**DIGITAL MEDIA AND DESIGN
MFA THESIS PROJECT – PROCESS AND PROCEDURES
GRADUATE SCHOOL – PLAN B THESIS**

Academic Year 2015 - 2016

GENERAL INFORMATION

The **Master of Fine Arts** in Digital Media & Design is intended to provide educational and career-training within an experiential learning environment in which students engage in collaborative projects with external corporate and creative companies while exploring their personal artistic/experiential work toward the goal of developing a personal area of practice within the Digital Media space. The program is structured to develop an in-depth understanding of digital media aesthetics, technology, practice, procedure, design, implementation and/or research techniques employed in the areas of Digital Art, Business, Communications, Digital Humanities/Social Sciences, STEM, and Entertainment.

The Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Digital Media & Design (DMD) will require a two-year commitment of full-time resident graduate study. A minimum of 48 graduate level credits will be required to graduate and the program of study will follow the Graduate School's "Plan B" (no thesis). The M.F.A. candidate will however work with their faculty advisor to develop an "M.F.A. Project" (Thesis) involving the creation of a program demonstrating their personal strengths and vision within their specific area of study.

Graduate School - Plan B (non-thesis) Description

You should consult your major advisor about the departmental requirements for your degree if you are unclear. This plan of study should be submitted in the beginning of your final semester prior to graduation. Information: <http://grad.uconn.edu/current-students/masters-degree-program/>

MFA Plan of Study: http://dmd.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/DMD_MFA-POS-2015-2016.pdf

Plan B (non-thesis) – Plan of Study for the Master's Degree form – FOR GRADUATION:
<http://grad.uconn.edu/fragrant-fog/wp-content/uploads/planofstudymasters.pdf>

Report on the Final Examination for the Master's Degree Form

You should prepare and bring to your final thesis presentation two (2) copies of the "Report on the Final Examination for the Master's Degree" form. The form must be completed and signed by your MFA Advisory Committee prior to the conferral date in which you plan to graduate. The form can be found at the following location: http://grad.uconn.edu/fragrant-fog/wp-content/uploads/reportonfinalexam_masters.pdf?update1

HOW DO WE DEFINE A “THESIS” WITHIN THE DMD PROGRAM?

- A DMD thesis is a declaration or statement of what you believe and what you intend to prove through the creation of an artifact or final project. A successful DMD thesis is not a simple retelling of facts but rather the notation of the conception of an idea and a process of thoughtful research leading to a proof of concept as portrayed by your final project.
- Within your DMD thesis abstract - as a single sentence within your first paragraph – there should be a statement that clearly presents your point of view or argument for what you propose as a project and why you have chosen this project, topic or challenge. The rest of the abstract and ensuing project outline will contain a discussion and presentation of the information you will gather in support of your view or position and organizes your evidence and/or outcome such that the final project will persuade your committee of the logic behind your interpretation.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A THESIS PROJECT?

A successful thesis project:

- Portrays for your MFA Advisory Committee how you interpreted the significance of the subject matter you chose for your project;
- Lays out a road map of your projects development from start to finish such that it portrays for your committee how you arrived at your final outcome;
- Will, by way of your final product, directly address and answer the question or challenge you have posed in your abstract;
- Evolves and presents your interpretation of the topic or challenge you have elected to study; it is not a regurgitation of the topic or challenge itself.
- Must reveal your point of view relative to the topic or challenge you have chosen to explore;
- In some instances, a thesis will make a claim or present a concept or idea that others might dispute.

MASTER OF FINE ARTS THESIS PROCESS

As an MFA candidate in the Digital Media and Design program, you are responsible for initiating and driving your thesis project to completion. Following are responsibilities that you alone must accept and act upon:

- You must initiate the thesis process and are responsible for driving the process forward and to completion. It is not the DMD faculty’s responsibility to prompt and push you through this process.
- You must decide which faculty you would like to invite to sit on your Advisory Committee and approach those, faculty, inviting them to join your MFA Advisory Committee. Be sure to make these requests early in your process as a faculty member is typically capable of serving on only 1, possibly 2 MFA committees each year.

- Your MAJOR advisor must be a DMD faculty member approved by the Graduate School as a Graduate Advisor. The following DMD faculty are currently approved by the Graduate School to act as MFA Major Advisors: Ken Bowen, Tim Hunter, Dan Pejril, Tom Scheinfeldt, and Samantha Olschan.
- One of your Associate Advisor must also be from within the DMD program and have some familiarity with your specific area of interest/study. This would include any DMD AAUP members including: Clarissa Ceglio, Bill Congdon, Joel Salisbury and Mike Vertefeuille.
- Additional Associate Advisors from outside the DMD program may be invited to join your advisory committee if you so chooses as long as a CV is provided to the Department Head and Grad School and the DH and Grad School approves the faculty member. This could include someone from within UCONN or from another University, research organization, or in the case of the Humanities it could be anyone associated with a grant project that a DMD grad may be working on.
- Basically, as long as two of your committee members are from within DMD and the major advisor is a Grad School approved DMD advisor, you may invite any other UConn faculty to be a member of your advisory committee.
- You are responsible for setting up and running all meetings while insuring that the full committee is available to meet with you at their convenience – not yours.

THESIS PROJECT SCHEDULE

Listed below are the progressive steps you must follow to successfully complete your MFA thesis project by the end of your two-year program. (Keep in mind that if you do not complete and pass your MFA thesis defense in the allotted timeframe, going forward you will have limited access to your committee as they will be working with new MFA candidates. Also, you will likely incur on-going university fees to continue being recognized as a student by the university while you finish you MFA thesis project.)

April – May of your First Year:

1. Determine a topic or specific project that you would like to address through your MFA thesis;
2. Speak with your Graduate Advisor about this topic to determine its viability and relationship to your area of interest;
3. Gain written approval by your Graduate Advisor to pursue the topic you have put forward;
4. Following approval of your topic or challenge from your Graduate Advisor, you should contact at least one to three faculty within the DMD department and ask as to their interest and availability to server as advisors on your MFA Thesis Advisory Committee. You should share your topic or project with them at that time to insure they are comfortable in serving on your committee. You should take care to select faculty who you think will be valuable to you for their insight, comments and guidance as you progress through your thesis.
 - a. Your regular Major Advisor should serve as your Major Advisor on this committee – if they are approved by the Grad School, available to serve, and have the time to do so. If they are not available to you, or are not approved by the Grad School, you will need to select another DMD faculty member to serve as your Major Advisor. (If

- your current Graduate Advisor is not recognized by the Grad School, (s)he is eligible to serve as an Associate Advisor on your committee);
- b. You may also select up to four (4) faculty to serve as Associate Advisors on your committee. One of these Associate Advisors must come from within the DMD program. (The minimum number of faculty required for an MFA Advisory Committee is three (3) faculty including your Major Advisor.)
 - c. Keep in mind that your committee will meet with you on numerous occasions over a period of about 10-months and that the more faculty you invite to join your committee, the greater the challenge you will face when it comes to scheduling meetings with your full committee;
 - d. Note that you may also invite faculty from other departments and/or schools to serve on your committee but your Major Advisor and one other DMD faculty member must be members of your advisory committee.

During the Summer between your First and Second Year:

1. Working from your Major Advisor approved topic or challenge, develop an abstract outlining your MFA thesis. The abstract should clearly state your thesis topic or challenge.
2. Your abstract must include:
 - a. A statement in the first paragraph that clearly presents your point of view or argument for what you propose as a project and why you have chosen this project, topic or challenge;
 - b. Follow-on discussion or rationale of your vision and point of view for the project;
 - c. Identification of goals and outcomes for your thesis project;
 - d. The abstract should be no more than two-pages in length. Be succinct!

Early August of your Second and Final Year:

1. Share your completed abstract (electronically) with your Major Advisor and gain their approval of the abstract;
2. Following communication with your Major Advisor, make any revisions necessary or requested and then seek final approval to move forward.

Late August of your Second and Final Year:

1. Contact your full committee and provide them with an electronic version of your final abstract for their review;
2. Set a meeting with your full committee to take place prior to the middle of September of your final year;
 - a. For this September meeting, prepare a presentation of your full abstract along with sample visual or written material to support the thesis project;
3. Following this meeting, begin the process of making any and all changes necessary based on your thesis advisory committee's feedback.

Late November/Early December of your Second and Final Year:

1. Set a meeting with your advisory committee to present and review progress on your thesis project. By this point your thesis project should at a minimum be about 40% complete;
2. You should prepare a presentation representing the current status of your thesis project so your committee can review and comment on your work to date;
3. Following this meeting, begin the process of making any and all revisions necessary based on your thesis committee's feedback.

Second Week of February

1. You must prepare **four (4) completed** Graduate School “Plan of Study for the Master’s Degree” forms for signature by your committee. You must arrange with each faculty member to get their signature on this form and SUBMIT THE FULLY EXECUTED FORM TO THE GRAD SCHOOL BY THE END OF THE 4TH WEEK OF THE SPRING SEMESTER.
2. Following is a link to the Plan B (non-thesis) – Plan of Study for the Master’s Degree form – FOR GRADUATION: <http://grad.uconn.edu/fragrant-fog/wp-content/uploads/planofstudymasters.pdf>

Mid-March of your Second and Final Year:

1. Set a meeting with your advisory committee to present and review progress on your thesis project. By this point your thesis project should at a minimum be about 80% complete;
2. You should prepare a digital presentation representing the current status of your thesis project so your committee can review and comment on your work to date;
3. Following this meeting, begin the process of making any and all revisions necessary based on your thesis committee’s feedback.

Last week of April of your Second and Final Year:

1. Set a meeting with your committee to present and review your 100% completed thesis project;
2. You should prepare a final digital presentation incorporating the full arc of your thesis development. Include all materials in support of vision, goals and outcomes outlined in your abstract inclusive of all the faculty input you have received;
3. You should be prepared to present an oral defense of your thesis project and expect numerous and varied questions and comments about your thesis;
4. Prepare and bring to this meeting, **two (2) completed Graduate School “Report on the Final Examination for the Master’s Degree”** forms for signature by your advisory committee upon successful completion and acceptance by your faculty committee of your thesis project;
5. You must also prepare 2 written and/or digital copies of the complete documentation and presentation of your thesis project with professional bindings for archiving within the department.

NOTE: It is imperative that you complete your thesis within the prescribed timeframe if you plan to graduate in early May of your final year (or December if you are on a split-year cycle.) Keep in mind faculty are very busy near the end of a semester and especially at the end of the academic year. You should set all of your MFA Faculty Advisory Committee meetings far in advance of the dates you would like to meet.

In keeping with this perspective of proactive scheduling; contact your advisory committee members at least 3-weeks in advance of the desired final meeting date to insure their availability for your final MFA thesis review. This final meeting should take place at least 1-week prior to graduation to insure all paperwork is completed and received by the Grad School prior to your graduation date.