UCF

Digital Media M.A. Graduate Program Handbook

Nicholson School of Communication and Media

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Digital Media M.A.

Together, the Graduate Student Handbook and your graduate program handbook should serve as your main guide throughout your graduate career. The Graduate Student Handbook includes university information, policies, requirements and guidance for all graduate students. Your program handbook describes the details about graduate study and requirements in your specific program. While both of these handbooks are wonderful resources, know that you are always welcome to talk with faculty and staff in your program and in the Graduate College.

The central activities and missions of a university rest upon the fundamental assumption that all members of the university community conduct themselves in accordance with a strict adherence to academic and scholarly integrity. As a graduate student and member of the university community, you are expected to display the highest standards of academic and personal integrity.

Here are some resources to help you better understand your responsibilities:

- Academic Honesty
- Academic Integrity Training - Open to all graduate students at no cost
- Plagiarism

Introduction

The M.A. program in Digital Media engages students in theoretical frameworks, methods, and critical media practice related to computational, interactive media. Through rigorous creative and research projects, the M.A. prepares students for continued study in a Ph.D. program or employment within the industry. Working closely with an innovative faculty and technology partnerships in downtown Orlando, students will employ emerging technologies to communicate interactive narratives and experiences, while also producing cutting-edge research in interactive media.

The Digital Media M.A. combines theory and practice to train the next generation of interactive media scholars and practitioners. Part of the first wave of UCF's state-of-the-art downtown campus, students in this program have unique opportunities to participate in socially impactful research and artistic production. In the first year, students gain an introduction to aesthetic, theoretical, programming, and design approaches to interactive media, while gaining valuable foundations in research and storytelling. In the second year, students either pursue a thesis or creative studio production path, while learning about contemporary topics and emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) research and design. Throughout the program, students are encouraged to create portfolio-ready pieces and/or present their work at conferences, thus preparing them for future professional, artistic, and scholarly success at the forefront of interactive media.

Curriculum

Please visit the [Graduate Catalog](#) to see the current curriculum for our program.

Timeline for Completion

Example timeline for full-time students:

Year One (18 hours)	
Fall	**Spring**
• DIG 6647 History & Theory of Interactive Media (3 hours) • DIG 5487 Media Aesthetics (3 hours) • DIG 5508 Programming for Digital Media (3 hours)	• DIG 6551 Theory & Practice of Interactive Storytelling (3 hours) • DIG 6136 Design for Interactive Media (3 hours) • DIG 6825 Research Methods for Interactive Media (3 hours)
Semester Total: 9 credit hours	**Semester Total: 9 credit hours**
Year Two (18 hours)	
Fall	**Spring**
• DIG 6971 Thesis OR DIG 6524 Studio 1 (3 hours) • DIG 6817 Contemporary Topics in Digital Media (3 hours) • Elective (and COM, DIG, FIL prefix or other as approved by the graduate coordinator) (3 hours)	• DIG 6971 Thesis OR DIG 6528 Studio 2 (3 hours) • DIG 5831 Computational Media (3 hours) • Elective (and COM, DIG, FIL prefix or other as approved by the graduate coordinator) (3 hours)
Semester Total: 9 credit hours	**Semester Total: 9 credit hours**
Total Credit Hours: 36 credit hours	

Thesis Requirements

Each candidate for the Master of Arts (Thesis Option) that has selected to complete the thesis option must submit a thesis prospectus and preliminary bibliography on a topic selected in consultation with the adviser. The formal thesis is initiated by the preparation of a proposal that meets both departmental and university requirements for the thesis. Prior to enrollment into thesis credit hours, the adviser, in consultation with the student, designates a Thesis Committee to be further approved by the College Graduate Dean. This committee is chaired by the adviser and includes two or more additional faculty members from the Department of Games and Interactive Media (GaIM).

The members of the student's thesis committee judge the proposal as the preliminary step to beginning the thesis. This committee must approve the Thesis Proposal before academic credit can accrue.

The thesis is a formal written document. The introduction cites similar, related, and antecedent work. The body explains the purposes of the project, the method of its production, and any evaluation that was performed. The conclusion includes plans for future work. The thesis also includes an archival copy of the resulting creative product. Both the thesis and the creative product must be delivered in digital form, acceptable by the UCF library according to its standards for digital dissertations and thesis.

The following requirements must be met by thesis students in their final term:

- Submit a properly formatted file for initial format review by the format review deadline
- Submit the Thesis and Dissertation Release Option form well before the defense
- Defend by the defense deadline
- Receive format approval (if not granted upon initial review)
- Submit signed approval form by final submission deadline
- Submit final thesis/dissertation document by final submission deadline

Students must format their thesis according to the standards outlined in Thesis and Dissertation Webcourse. Formatting questions or issues can be submitted to the Format Help page in the Thesis and Dissertation Services site. Format reviews and final submission must be completed in the Thesis and Dissertation Services site.

The College of Graduate Studies offers several thesis and dissertation Workshops each term. Students are highly encouraged to attend these workshops early in the thesis process to fully understand the above polices and procedures.

The College of Graduate Studies thesis and dissertation office is best reached by email at editor@ucf.edu.

All university deadlines are listed in the Academic Calendar. The College of Arts and Humanities (CAH) and/or the Nicholson School of Communication and Media (NSCM) may have other earlier deadlines; please check with your program coordinator or program assistant for additional deadlines.

Please visit the College of Graduate Studies Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) webpage for information about general graduate policies, deadlines, processes, formatting resources, workshops and campus resources, copyright, binding vendors, and a final semester checklist.

Studio Concentration Requirements (Non-Thesis beginning Fall 2019)

Students who choose the Studio Concentration (Non-Thesis) track will complete the DIG 6524: Studio 1/DIG 6528: Studio 2 course sequence. The first part of the two-semester sequence will prepare students for project management, conceptualization, and prototyping related to an intensive digital project they will produce to satisfy the non-thesis requirement for the degree. Students will produce a project proposal and timeline, concept and design documentation, and a prototype. They will also engage in several critique sessions throughout the term. In the second part of the two-course sequence, students will build upon the concept development and prototyping in Studio 1 to produce a polished final project that will be showcased and/or exhibited to the public.

Examination Requirements (Non-Thesis for Fall 2018 and prior)

Non-thesis students who began before Fall 2019 and did not change to the new curriculum will take a comprehensive examination during the semester they intend to graduate. Students in the new curriculum do not have a comprehensive examination. The process is designed to evaluate both the students' basic knowledge and competencies, and their ability to synthesize and apply what they know in depth—that is, both the breadth and depth of student learning in the program. It is not intended to test specific course content for which students have already been evaluated and graded. The exam is designed to test the student's ability to respond and substantiate the response in a professional and educated fashion.

On the exam, students will be given 4 questions and asked to **choose 2** to answer by writing **5-7 page answers** (double-spaced). The exam will be administered approximately halfway through the semester during which the student plans to graduate and will take place over a 4-hour period in a quiet room on campus. A detailed rubric and suggested reading list will be provided to all students planning to take the exam on or before the beginning of the term they will take the exam. The exam uses a three-step scale: High Pass; Pass with Revisions; and No Credit. An overall evaluation (across both questions) of High Pass means the student passes the exam outright; Pass with Revisions requires the student to revise the exam and resubmit before the end of the semester; and No Credit is a fail and requires the student to wait until the next term before either re-taking the exam or undergoing an oral defense. Students may only attempt the exam twice, and, if on the second attempt the student still receives a No Credit score, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Graduate Research

Research is such a vital part of graduate education. The development of research skills and the practice of good research ethics begins with graduate study. Below are some general policies and resources.

- Research Policies and Ethics Information: UCF's Office of Research & Commercialization ensures the UCF community complies with local, state and federal regulations that relate to research. For polices including required Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval when conducting research involving human subjects (e.g. surveys), animal research, conflict of interest and general responsible conduct of research, please see their website: https://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance.html.
- Students should also be aware of and informed about policies related to Proprietary and Confidential Information found in the Graduate Catalog (Provide an introduction and direct website link to the Proprietary and Confidential Information section in the Graduate Catalog.
- You also should be aware of UCF's Patent and Invention Policy: In most cases, UCF owns the intellectual property developed using university resources. The graduate student, as inventor, will, according to this policy, share in the proceeds of the invention.
- Students will also learn how to conduct research as part of a required research methods course, during which they will learn, among other topics, how to write a research study and conduct responsible human

subjects research. Additionally, you may be interested in exploring Pathways workshops on library research, CITI Training, and writing essentials on your own.

Financial Support

Digital Media M.A. students are eligible for different kinds of support:

Need-based assistance: The University provides need-based scholarships funded by the federal government. These are based on financial need as determined by the FAFSA form and are awarded in the middle of April. We encourage all students to complete a FAFSA application form online at fafsa.ed.gov.

Fellowships: These competitive, merit-based awards are usually reserved for newly admitted students. These awards pay a stipend and/or provide a tuition waiver. To be eligible, students must have their completed application on file by January 15. To view a list of fellowships and the eligibility requirements please visit: graduate.ucf.edu/fellowships/.

Research and Teaching Opportunities: You may have the opportunity to obtain experience as a graduate assistant, grader, graduate teaching assistant, instructor of record, or graduate research assistant. We recommend that you take advantage of these opportunities as they become available to you.

Graduate Student Associations

The Conference of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) is an organization of over 200 graduate schools across the southern region of the United States. Its purpose is to consider topics relating to graduate study and research which are of mutual interest and concern to the member institutions. www.csgs.org

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is UCF's graduate organization committed to enrich graduate students' personal, educational and professional experience. To learn more or get involved, please visit facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/. For individual department or graduate program organizations, please see program advisor.

Professional Development

Pathways to Success Workshops

Coordinated by the College of Graduate Studies, the Pathways to Success program offers the following free development opportunities for graduate students including workshops about academic integrity, research, and CITI training. For more information and how to register, please visit https://graduate.ucf.edu/pathways-to-success/. Some workshop titles in particular that may be useful and of interest to students include: Lacking Experience or Changing Careers? Combination Resumes that Work; Where to Publish and Authors Rights; How it Works for You: Networking Techniques; Building an Online Brand; and Create a Professional Portfolio.

Support for Research Presentations

The College of Graduate Studies also offers Presentation Fellowships to enrolled master's, specialist, and doctoral students to share their research at a professional meeting. For requirements and application deadlines, see Presentation Fellowship.

In addition, the Nicholson School of Communication and Media (NSCM) offers limited travel funding to students who will present at academic conferences or present their work in a juried exhibition or other creative venue. Contact the Graduate Admissions Specialist in NSCM (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu) for more information on how to apply.

Scholarly Publications

Scholarly publications are not required for the M.A. degree but are advisable for all students who want to pursue the thesis track, as well as for those who want to pursue further graduate study. For more information about how to pursue these opportunities, consult with a faculty member, a member of your thesis committee, or the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Departmental Awards via College and University

The university provides several achievement awards:

Graduate Excellence Awards

Each year, students can submit a portfolio for nomination of College and University level awards of excellence. These are intended to showcase student excellence in academic achievement, teaching, research, leadership, and community service.

- **Award for Excellence by a Graduate Teaching Assistant** - This award is intended for students who provide teaching support and assistance under the direction of a lead teacher. This award focuses on the extent and quality of the assistance provided by the student to the lead instructor and the students in the class. (This award is not intended for students who are teachers of record.)

- **Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching** - This award is for students who serve as teachers of record and have independent classroom responsibilities. The focus of this award is on the quality of the student's teaching and the academic contributions of those activities.

- **Award for the Outstanding Master's Thesis** - This award recognizes graduate students for excellence in the master's thesis. The focus is on the quality and contribution of the student's thesis research. Excellence of the master's thesis may be demonstrated by evidence such as (but not limited to): publications in refereed or peer reviewed journals, the candidates' juried exhibitions and awards record, recognitions and awards from professional organizations, and praise from faculty members and other colleagues in the field. The university award will be forwarded to a national-level competition sponsored by the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) when the thesis discipline corresponds to the annual submission request.

For more information about these awards, please see the College of Graduate Studies website.

In addition, the Nicholson School of Communication and Media (NSCM) offers graduate student awards. Consult with the Graduate Admissions Specialist in NSCM (nicholsongrad@ucf.edu) for more information on applying.

For more information about the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) thesis and dissertation awards, please see their website: csgs.org/.

Job Search

Career Services and Experiential Learning

Graduate career development issues are unique and include evaluating academic and non-academic career choices, discussing graduate school effect on career choices, as well as learning, evaluating, and refining networking and interviewing skills. Whatever your needs, the offices of Career Services and Experiential Learning offer services and resources to aid in the career exploration and job search of Master and Doctoral students in every academic discipline. Students can use a helpful program called Handshake to search for internship opportunities. (See www.career.ucf.edu)

Forms

- [College of Graduate Studies Forms and References](#)
  A complete listing of general forms and references for graduate students, with direct links, may be found here.
- [Graduate Petition Form](#)
  When unusual situations arise, petitions for exceptions to policy may be requested by the student. Depending on the type of appeal, the student should contact the program adviser to begin the petition process.
- [Traveling Scholar Form](#)
  If a student would like to take advantage of special resources available on another campus but not available on the home campus; for example, special course offerings, research opportunities, unique laboratories and library collections, this form must be completed and approved.
- Restricted Registration form: This form is used to enroll in Thesis, Directed Research, or Independent Study. If enrolling in Directed Research or Independent Study, the student needs to create a short syllabus to include: course objectives, deliverables (assignments) and due dates; information on grading; and course schedule indicating when assignments are due and when the faculty member and student will meet during the semester. Contact the Graduate Admissions Specialist for this form.

Useful Links

- [Department of Games and Interactive Media (GaIM)](#)
- [Nicholson School of Communication and Media (NSCM)](#)
- [College of Graduate Studies](#)
- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Bookstore](#)
- [Campus Map](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Financial Assistance](#)
- [Golden Rule Student Handbook](#)
- [Graduate Catalog](#)
- [Graduate Student Association](#)
- [Graduate Student Center](#)
- [Housing and Residence Life](#)
- [Housing, off campus](#)
- [Knights Email](#)
- [Library](#)
- [NID Help](#)
- [Pathways to Success](#)
- [Recreation and Wellness Center](#)
- [Shuttles Parking Services](#)
- [Student Health Services](#)
- [Thesis and Dissertation (ETD)](#)
- [UCF Global](#)
- [University Writing Center](#)
- Twitter feed for GaIM Research Group: @UCFGaIMRG (Contact mel.stanfill@ucf.edu to join group)
- [Participatory Research and Design Network](#)

Grad Faculty

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