



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

# Graduate Program Handbook - 2025/26

## *Digital Media M.A.*

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Reference this handbook to learn about the unique policies, requirements, procedures, resources, and norms for graduate students in the **Digital Media M.A.** degree

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Nicholson School of Communication and Media • Games and Interactive Media

Last updated: Fall 2025



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# Navigating Policy and Resources at the University of Central Florida

This handbook is one of many sources to consult as you become familiar with the policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms of graduate education at the University of Central Florida.

## ACADEMIC CATALOGS

These online catalogs can help you quickly locate and save details about our undergraduate and graduate programs. Whether you are a prospective student or already enrolled, you can easily see what the University of Central Florida has to offer!



## THE GOLDEN RULE STUDENT HANDBOOK

## STUDENT LIFE

ORLANDO, FL | 73°F

### Student Handbook

### Knights Life at UCF

Don't just go to college — get the most out of it. At UCF, you'll have many ways to get involved inside and outside of the classroom. From application to graduation, you'll be inspired to do amazing things. So whether you prefer academics and research or campus activities and athletics, we'll provide you with the tools and support you need to find your place and foster your purpose.

Discover your next adventure at UCF.

### GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

### Understanding Your Graduate Experience

- [Student Handbook Intro](#)
- [Financial Matters](#)
- [Role of the College of](#)

## UCF Regulations

## Pathways to Success

Personal and Professional Development Opportunities

HOME NOTICE ARCHIVES SUBSCRIBE TO NOTIFICATIONS UCF POLICIES

## Chapter 5: Students

## How to Use This Handbook

Together, the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) [Graduate Student Handbook](#) and the Digital Media MA program handbook should serve as your main guide throughout your graduate career. The CGS Handbook includes university information, policies, requirements and guidance for all graduate students. The DM MA handbook describes the details about graduate study and requirements in our specific program. While both handbooks are wonderful resources, know that you are always welcome to talk with faculty and staff in your program and in the Graduate College.

## Who to Contact for Questions

Many of your questions about how to meet expectations and thrive as a graduate student will be answered by the various sources of policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms listed in this document. Several key positions in this department and on campus are ready to answer your remaining questions:

### Digital Media Graduate Program Staff

The Graduate Student Services Coordinator is a staff person who serves as a point person for program policy and procedures. They are well versed in most elements of graduate education that extend beyond academic instruction in your program and will likely be your first stop for questions related to anything in this handbook. For questions related to the Digital Media M.A. degree please contact:

- Michael Haney  
Graduate Student Service Coordinator  
Email: [nicholsongrad@ucf.edu](mailto:nicholsongrad@ucf.edu)  
Phone: 407-235-2576  
Location: CMB 202A

### Graduate Program Coordinator

Each graduate program has one faculty member designated to direct its educational vision and structure. For questions related to the Digital Media M.A. degree

- **Dr. Peter Smith**  
Associate Director, Games and Interactive Media  
Email: [Peter.Smith@ucf.edu](mailto:Peter.Smith@ucf.edu)  
Phone: 407-823-6100  
Location: CMB 202H

Name and contact information of your Graduate Program Coordinator can be found on your program's page in the [Graduate Catalog](#). Simply navigate to the Programs tab in the catalog and then navigate to the program name.

### **Graduate School Services**

For general graduate inquiries and graduate student services from the Graduate School, please review the [College of Graduate Studies](#) website as an additional resource.

## **Program Admissions and Onboarding**

Please review the Digital Media M.A. admission requirements, materials, and deadlines below. This information can also be found [here](#).

### Application Materials

- One official transcript (in a sealed envelope) from each college/university attended.
- A written statement (1 – 2 pages) describing the student's personal goals, objectives, and research interests in seeking the degree.
- Three letters of recommendation from former professors or employers who can address the applicant's ability to undertake graduate-level courses.
- For students intending to pursue the studio track, a link to a web portfolio of 2 – 5 substantial creative and/or technical works. For students intending to pursue the thesis track, writing sample(s) totaling 5 – 10 pages.
- Applicants applying to this program who have attended a college/university outside the United States must provide a course-by-course credential evaluation with GPA calculation. Credential evaluations are accepted from **World Education Services (WES)** or **Josef Silny and Associates, Inc.** only.

Desirable background skills for this degree include familiarity with computer coding and/or digital design, but these are not required as coursework addresses these areas.

Meeting minimum UCF admission criteria does not guarantee program admission. Final admission is based on evaluation of the applicant's abilities, past performance, recommendations, match of this program and faculty expertise to the applicant's career/academic goals, the applicant's potential for completing the degree, and the current applicant pool.

## Deadlines

<b>Digital Media MA</b>	<b>*Fall Priority</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer</b>
<b>Domestic Applicants</b>	Jan 15	Jun 1	—	—
<b>International Applicants</b>	Jan 15	Jan 15	—	—

\*Applicants who plan to enroll full time in a degree program and who wish to be considered for university fellowships or assistantships should apply by the Fall Priority date.

Applications will be reviewed at the end of each month, with the last review after the July 1st deadline.

## Introduction/Overview Section

### Complete Name of Degree

Digital Media M.A.

### College

Nicholson School of Communication and Media

### Department

Department of Games and Interactive Media

### Program Type

Master

### Program Website

[Digital Media M.A. Degree](#)

### Program Overview Narrative

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 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.

The program focuses on the following areas:

- **Theory and Practice:** The program trains students to pair theory and practice regardless of the path they choose through the program. Students will learn to develop theoretically sophisticated creative works and to pair creativity with research. This is accomplished by providing students with a solid foundation in aesthetic, design, programming, and theoretical approaches.
- **Narrative and Experience Design:** The program also emphasizes interactive storytelling and an understanding of how to design compelling experiences specifically for interactive media. This is accomplished through coursework on these subjects, and the time allotted in the program's plan of study for students to develop in-depth creative and research projects that put the concepts learned in coursework into play.
- **Social Impact:** The MA in Digital Media also takes advantage of the creative, research, and business opportunities available through the program's downtown Orlando location to provide students with a range of real-world, socially impactful research and creative experiences. Course projects and students' own creative and research work benefit from the social, cultural, and economic context of a thriving downtown sector.
- **Professional and Scholarly Outcomes:** The MA program offers two equally in-depth and rigorous tracks—the Thesis or Studio Production paths. The required coursework provides the foundational skills and knowledge needed for students to create an exhibition or publication-ready projects.

## Student Learning Outcomes/Competencies

Throughout the program, students will gain technical proficiency in programming and aesthetics for interactive environments and develop design-related skills for the purpose of conceptualizing, prototyping, and polishing expressive, critical interactive works. Students will be introduced to histories and theories of media art and interactivity and will develop analytical writing skills with the intention of critiquing and engaging with broader discourses in digital media. Lastly, students will learn to evaluate and troubleshoot their own interactive systems as well as critique those of their peers.

## Student Expectations

To be successful, graduate students admitted to the Digital M.A. program are expected to practice project management for time-intensive digital projects, engage in course materials/assignments and be prepared for each lab, studio, and/or lecture, as well as practice resourcefulness: learning technical and design skills that parallel their individual interests in digital media. Students are expected to communicate promptly and courteously with faculty to submit all required paperwork on time.

## **Program Professional Conduct/Ethics Statement**

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](#)

## **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 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](mailto: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](mailto: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/](http://csgs.org/).

### **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](http://www.career.ucf.edu))

### **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](http://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/](https://facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/). For individual department or graduate program organizations, please see program advisor.

### **Advising/Mentoring**

Advising relationships are a central part of academia, important to both the experience and development of students and faculty members alike.

Your advisor has two main roles: 1) To assist you in acquiring the highest possible level of knowledge and competence in the field, and 2) to chair the committee that will determine whether you have performed at an acceptable level in each of your degree milestones. Other roles of your advisor may include tracking your progress in completing your degree, assisting with course selection and planning your academic path, and helping you identify possible research mentors, committee members, and research opportunities.

Both the student and advisor are responsible for making their expectations clear to each other. Be sure to discuss this with your advisor.

### **Finding & Selecting an Advisor**

Regardless of their intended track, students are required to assemble a faculty committee to supervise their work by the end of the first year. The student should approach a faculty member about being their adviser with a preliminary proposal of what the thesis or studio project will be. Once the adviser has agreed, the rest of the committee should be selected in consultation with the adviser. Students should select an adviser and supporting committee that is appropriate, in terms of subject matter, methodological, or other expertise for their intended thesis or studio project. At a minimum, this committee will meet with the student once each in the spring of their first year, the fall of their second year, and the spring of the second year. Before enrolling in thesis/studio credit the committee must review and approve a 1-page concept document that gives an overview of the student's thesis/studio project. In addition, students may not enroll in thesis/studio credit until they have signed a master's degree mentorship compact (see below).

Your advisor should be a faculty member in the program whose expertise and project/research interests match closely with those that you intend to acquire. To learn more about the faculty in your program, consider consulting the following sources:

- Courses and seminars you attend
- Our program website ([Digital Media M.A.](#))
- Faculty publications
- Students currently in a prospective advisor's group/lab

Additionally, you may wish to have a discussion with a prospective advisor. Below are some questions to consider asking in this discussion, though it is not a complete list. You should spend some time identifying what is most important to you in your graduate training and ask questions accordingly.

#### Questions to Ask of Prospective Advisors

- What thesis projects would be available to me if I were to join your group?
- Would these projects expose me to a variety of different approaches?
- In general, how available will you be to answer questions I might have?
- What is your philosophy regarding the amount of guidance the advisor should provide to a student during preparation of the thesis proposal, literature seminars, thesis writing, etc.?
- Do you encourage your students to attend seminars and journal clubs, including those that may be outside of their narrow field of interest/research?

- Do students in your group/lab have the opportunity to attend professional meetings where they can interact with colleagues/researchers from other institutions?
- Do you include your graduate students in professional activities that will familiarize them with their field of interest/research, such as reviewing manuscripts and meeting with visiting speakers?
- How long do you think it should take me to get my degree?
- What are your former graduate students (if any) doing now?
- What is your general philosophy of graduate training and what goals do you have for your graduate students?

No faculty member is obligated to accept a student's request to serve as advisor, though invitations are often accepted unless the faculty member judges that a different advisor would serve your needs better.

### **Changing Your Advisor**

As the advisor-student relationship is one of mutual agreement, it may be terminated by either party. If you decide that you would prefer working with a different advisor, discuss this with your prospective advisor to seek the change.

### **Compact Between Master's Students and Their Advisors**

Graduate training entails formal education in a specific discipline and research or creative production experience in which the student trains under the supervision of one or more faculty mentors. A positive mentoring relationship between the graduate student and the primary advisor is a vital component of the student's preparation for future careers and mentoring roles.

Individuals who pursue a graduate degree embark on a path of lifelong learning and are expected to take responsibility for their professional learning and development from the onset. Graduate students must take ownership of their progress through their program. This means seeking guidance on and knowledge about course requirements and program requirements, policies, and procedures. Students must commit to working on an individual development plan. Faculty members who advise students—with the backing of the graduate program and institution—fulfill the role of mentor, which includes providing disciplinary training, guidance, and instruction in the responsible and ethical conduct of research and creative work. The faculty advisor serves as a disciplinary and professional role model for the student. In addition, the advisor and the program more generally offer encouragement as the student prepares and pursues their individual development plan and facilitates the experiences and professional skills development essential for a broad set of career paths.

### **Institutional Commitment**

Graduate institutions must be committed to establishing and maintaining rigorous programs with the highest disciplinary and ethical standards. Institutions should work to ensure that students who complete their programs possess the foundational knowledge, skills, and values that will allow them to mature into professionals of integrity. Institutions have oversight of the graduate curricula, length of study, stipend levels, benefits, career guidance, grievance procedures, and other matters relevant to the education of graduate students (e.g., consideration of, preparation for, and exposure to various career paths). Institutions recognize and reward their graduate faculty. With changing and diversified workforce needs, institutions need to recognize the necessity of faculty development around multiple career paths for students and provide opportunities for faculty to acquire such skills and experiences. Additionally, institutions need to foster an environment that is diverse and inclusive.

### **Program Commitment**

Graduate programs establish training that prepares students with broad and deep knowledge and the technical, professional, and leadership skills necessary for a successful career in their field of study. Programs should closely monitor the progress of graduate students during their course of study by establishing milestones and clear parameters for outcomes assessment, as well as maintain and make available career outcomes data.

### **Quality Mentoring**

Effective mentoring is crucial for graduate students as they begin their future careers. Faculty mentors must commit to dedicating substantial time to the disciplinary, professional, and personal development of graduate students. Whether a faculty member acts as the primary advisor or sits on a student's advisory committee, a relationship of mutual trust and respect between mentor and graduate student is essential for healthy interactions and to encourage individual growth. Effective mentoring should include teaching appropriate methodologies and/or techniques, providing regular feedback in the form of positive support and constructive criticism to foster individual growth, teaching the "ways" of the discipline, and promoting careers by providing or directing students to appropriate opportunities. The best mentors are careful listeners who actively promote and appreciate diversity. They possess and consistently maintain high ethical standards, acknowledge and recognize the contributions of students—in publications and intellectual property, for example—and have an established record of research and/or creative accomplishments. Finally, it should be recognized that mentoring does not end with a student's completion of the graduate program but continues throughout the student's professional life.

## **Skill Sets and Counseling for a Broad Range of Career Choices**

The institution, training programs, and mentors should provide training relevant to a broad variety of careers that will allow graduate students to appreciate, navigate, discuss, and develop career choices. Effective and regular career guidance activities should be offered.

## **Commitments of Graduate Students**

**I acknowledge that I have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of my degree.** I will be committed to my graduate education and will demonstrate this by my efforts in the classroom, the research and/or studio space and all other related academic and professional activities. I will maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, initiative, engagement, curiosity, and ethical standards, including complying with institutional and departmental standards for contributing to an inclusive environment.

**I will meet regularly with my advisor to provide updates on the progress and results of my course work, research and/or creative work, and professional and career development activities.**

**I will work with my advisor to develop a thesis/studio project.** This will include establishing a timeline for each phase of my work. I will strive to keep engaged with the work, discuss findings and any pitfalls, and meet the established goals and deadlines.

**I will work with my advisor to select a thesis/studio committee.** I will commit to meeting with the members of this committee each semester. I will discuss my progress to date and be responsive to the advice and constructive criticism from my committee.

**I will be a good citizen of the program and School.** I agree to take respect and help maintain shared work spaces. I will follow posted rules and guidelines for these spaces and help maintain the security of these spaces. I will maintain a professional demeanor in these spaces and through my personal conduct I will contribute to an environment that is safe, equitable, and free of harassment.

**If serving as a GTA, I will be aware of and follow university, college, and program and School policies. As needed, I will discuss policies on work hours and medical leave, with my graduate program and any faculty member that I am assigned to assist.** I will consult with the faculty members that I am assigned to and, if necessary, the graduate program coordinator in advance of any planned absences. I will apprise

the faculty members that I am assigned to of any unexpected absences due to illness or other issues.

**I will discuss policies on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with my program and thesis advisors.**

**I will be knowledgeable of the policies and requirements of my graduate program, graduate school, and institution.** I will commit to meeting these requirements in the appropriate time frame and will abide by all institutional policies and procedures.

**I will attend and actively participate in School/program meetings, seminars, and other events that are part of my educational program.** I will seek out other enrichment opportunities, such as participation in professional organizations and meetings, both at UCF and in the wider profession.

**I will be knowledgeable of all institutional research policies.** I will comply with all institutional human subjects research policies. As appropriate, I will participate in my institution's Responsible Conduct of Research Training Program and practice the guidelines presented therein while conducting my research. I will also seek input on and comply with institutional policies regarding my research design and data analysis.

**I acknowledge that I have the primary responsibility for the development of my own career.** I recognize that I need to explore career opportunities and paths that match and develop my individual skills, values, and interests to achieve my desired career goals. I understand that there are tools such as the individual development plan that I should use to help me define my career goals and develop my training plan. I will seek guidance throughout my graduate education from my research advisor, career counseling services, thesis/ dissertation committee, other mentors, and any other resources that can offer advice on career planning and the wide range of opportunities available in the discipline's workforce.

### **Commitments of Graduate Advisors**

**While serving as a graduate student's advisor or mentor, I will be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful.** I will foster the graduate student's professional confidence and encourage intellectual development, critical thinking, curiosity, and creativity. I will continue my interest and involvement as the student moves forward into a career. I will be committed to meeting one-on-one with the student on a regular basis. I will regularly review the student's progress and provide timely feedback and goal-setting advice.

**I will be committed to the graduate student's research/studio project.** I will work with the student to help plan and guide the research/studio project, set reasonable and attainable goals, and establish a timeline for completion of the project.

**I will help the graduate student select a thesis/studio committee.** I will assure that this committee meets at least once each semester to review and discuss the graduate student's progress and future directions. I understand that the function of this committee is to help the student complete the proposed research or studio project, and I will respect the ideas and suggestions of my colleagues on the committee.

**I will provide an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, equitable, and free of harassment.**

**I will demonstrate respect for all graduate students as individuals without regard to gender, race, national origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation, and I will cultivate a culture of tolerance among all of my students.**

**I will be knowledgeable of and follow institutional policies that relate to reporting responsibilities such as those associated with Title IX violations and student and academic misconduct.**

**I will assist my advisees in pursuing financial resources, as appropriate and according to my institution's guidelines, to conduct thesis/studio work.**

**I will discuss with the graduate student authorship policies regarding papers or exhibits.** I will acknowledge the graduate student's contributions when they provide assistance and will acknowledge their contribution as a co-author when the work is collaborative. I will provide assistance and guidance to the student as they are preparing to publish their research or exhibit their creative work.

**I will be knowledgeable of and guide the graduate student through the requirements and deadlines of the graduate program and the institution, as well as teaching requirements, if any, will refer them to HR and other offices as appropriate.**

**I will encourage the graduate student to attend and present their research and creative work at conferences.**

**I will promote the training of the graduate student in professional skills needed for a successful career. These skills include but are not limited to oral and written**

**communication, grant writing, management and leadership, collaborative research and/or creative work, responsible conduct of research and/or creative work.** I will encourage the student to seek opportunities to develop skills in other areas, even if not specifically required by the student's program. I will also encourage the graduate student to seek input from multiple mentors.

**I will create an environment in which the student can discuss and explore career opportunities and paths that match their skills, values, and interests and be supportive of their career path choices.** I will be accessible to give advice and feedback on career goals. I will work with the student on an individual development plan to help define career goals and identify training milestones. I will provide letters of recommendation for the student's next phase of professional development.

## **Giving & Receiving Feedback**

Once formed, graduate students and their studio / thesis committees are expected to meet at least once each semester to discuss progress.

## **Program Costs and Fees**

Design projects can vary greatly from course to course and individual to individual. Students are expected to cover the costs of materials needed for their self-driven design projects. For students in the studio track, this can be a significant cost. Tools and equipment are available to graduate students in the Maker Space, but students are responsible for providing their own materials to use with said tools.

## **How to Get Involved**

As a graduate student at UCF, you have a multitude of opportunities to become involved on campus and in your academic discipline. This involvement often enhances your academic, professional, and personal growth through developing advanced leadership, communication, and collaboration skills. It also provides opportunity for professional networking. Faculty regularly seek research assistants from the graduate student population. If you are interested in a faculty member's research, be sure to reach out to them.

## **In Our Discipline**

Students are encouraged to write posters and papers with their faculty for venues like the Association of Computing Machinery (ACM), the Electronic Literature Association

(ELO), and the International Conference on Interactive Storytelling (ICIDS), among others. These conferences often have a graduate student symposium and student volunteer options to make participation more accessible.

## In Our Program/Department

Attend graduate student milestones, like orientation, first year critique, and second year exhibition, regardless of your enrollment year. Everyone is welcome to attend these events.

## On Campus & In the Community

UCF supports the reality that education should influence and improve people's lives beyond the university classroom. Since its inception, this idea has guided the university's work. The College of Graduate Studies has many ways for students to get involved in campus and community life.

# Curriculum Section

## Admission Requirements

### Application Materials

- One official transcript (in a sealed envelope) from each college/university attended.
- A written statement (1 – 2 pages) describing the student's personal goals, objectives, and research interests in seeking the degree.
- Three letters of recommendation from former professors or employers who can address the applicant's ability to undertake graduate-level courses.
- For students intending to pursue the studio track, a link to a web portfolio of 2 – 5 substantial creative and/or technical works. For students intending to pursue the thesis track, writing sample(s) totaling 10 – 15 pages.
- Applicants applying to this program who have attended a college/university outside the United States must provide a course-by-course credential evaluation with GPA calculation. Credential evaluations are accepted from [World Education Services \(WES\)](#) or [Josef Silny and Associates, Inc.](#) only.

Desirable background skills for this degree include familiarity with computer coding and/or digital design, but these are not required as coursework addresses these areas.

Meeting minimum UCF admission criteria does not guarantee program admission. Final admission is based on evaluation of the applicant's abilities, past performance, recommendations, match of this program and faculty expertise to the applicant's career/academic goals, the applicant's potential for completing the degree, and the current applicant pool.

## Degree Requirements

### Required Courses

24 Total Credits

- Complete the following:
  - [DIG5487](#) - Media Aesthetics (3)
  - [DIG5508](#) - Programming for Digital Media (3)
  - [DIG5831](#) - Computational Media (3)
  - [DIG6136](#) - Design for Interactive Media (3)
  - [DIG6551](#) - Theory and Practice of Interactive Storytelling (3)
  - [DIG6647](#) - History and Theory of Dynamic Media (3)

- [DIG6817](#) - Contemporary Topics in Interactive Media (3)
- [DIG6825](#) Research Methods for Interactive Media (3)

### Thesis/Non-Thesis Option

12 Total Credits

- Complete 1 of the following
  - Thesis track
    - [DIG6971](#) - Thesis (6+)
    - Electives (6+)
  - Studio track
    - [DIG6524](#) - Studio 1 (3)
    - DIG 6909 - Research Report (3+)
    - Electives (6+)

Electives may come from any COM, DIG, or FIL prefix or other as approved by the graduate coordinator. Many graduate-level courses in the College of Arts and Humanities can be used as electives, based on an adviser-approved plan of study. These courses must be selected to ensure that at least one-half of the courses in the student's plan of study are taken at the 6000 level.

**Grand Total Credits: 36**

#### Thesis Track Notes:

Each candidate for the Master of Arts thesis track submits 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 of Studies. This committee is chaired by the adviser and includes two or more additional faculty members from the Nicholson School of Communication and Media. 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 theses.

#### Studio Track Notes:

Each candidate for the Master of Arts studio track will take Studio 1 and present a prospectus and preliminary design document for a creative project selected in consultation with the adviser. The studio project is initiated by the preparation of a proposal that meets both departmental and the project advisor's requirements for the project. Prior to enrollment into Research Report credit hours, the adviser, in consultation with the student, designates a Project Committee. This committee is chaired by the adviser and includes one or two or more additional faculty members from the Nicholson School of Communication and Media. The members of the student's studio project committee judge the proposal as the preliminary step to beginning the thesis. This committee must approve the Studio Project Proposal before academic credit can accrue. The Studio Project will then be completed as part of the Research Report course. The Studio Project also includes an archival copy of the resulting creative product. The creative product must be delivered in a digital or physical form, acceptable by the DMMA Program to be displayed in either a gallery space or the program website.

## Culminating/Capstone Experience

Thesis track: In addition to a written thesis, the final step in completing the thesis requirement is an oral defense before the thesis committee. Candidates must present their creative or research work and explain its creation in an oral defense. These presentations are made to the student's committee in a public meeting that other faculty and students may attend.

Studio track: Students in the Studio track are required to hold a public exhibition of their work during their final year.

## Sample Plan of Study/Course Sequence/Completion Timeline

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

Example timeline for full-time students:

<b>Year One (18 hours)</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIG 6647 History &amp; Theory of Interactive Media (3 hours)</li> <li>• DIG 5487 Media Aesthetics (3 hours)</li> <li>• DIG 5508 Programming for Digital Media (3 hours)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIG 6136 Design for Interactive Media (3 hours)</li> <li>• DIG 6825 Research Methods for Interactive Media (3 hours)</li> <li>• DIG 5831 Computational Media (3 hours)</li> </ul>

<b>Semester Total: 9 credit hours</b>	<b>Semester Total: 9 credit hours</b>
<b>Year Two (18 hours)</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIG 6971 Thesis OR DIG 6524 Studio 1 (3 hours)</li> <li>• DIG 6551 Theory &amp; Practice of Interactive Storytelling (3 hours)</li> <li>• Elective (and COM, DIG, FIL prefix or other as approved by the graduate coordinator) (3 hours)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIG 6971 Thesis OR DIG 6909 Research Report (3 hours)</li> <li>• DIG 6817 Contemporary Topics in Digital Media (3 hours)</li> <li>• Elective (and COM, DIG, FIL prefix or other as approved by the graduate coordinator) (3 hours)</li> </ul>
<b>Semester Total: 9 credit hours</b>	<b>Semester Total: 9 credit hours</b>
<b>Total Credit Hours: 36 credit hours</b>	

Students with significant existing commitments should consider an extended part-time timeline:

<b>Year One (12 hours)</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIG 5487 Media Aesthetics (3 hours)</li> <li>• DIG 5508 Programming for Digital Media (3 hours)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIG 6136 Design for Interactive Media (3 hours)</li> <li>• DIG 5831 Computational Media (3 hours)</li> </ul>
<b>Semester Total: 6 credit hours</b>	<b>Semester Total: 6 credit hours</b>
<b>Year Two (12 hours)</b>	
<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIG 6551 Theory &amp; Practice of Interactive Storytelling (3 hours)</li> <li>• DIG 6647 History &amp; Theory of Interactive Media (3 hours)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIG 6817 Contemporary Topics in Digital Media (3 hours)</li> <li>• DIG 6825 Research Methods for Interactive Media (3 hours)</li> </ul>
<b>Semester Total: 6 credit hours</b>	<b>Semester Total: 6 credit hours</b>
<b>Year Three (12 hours)</b>	

<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIG 6971 Thesis OR DIG 6524 Studio 1 (3 hours)</li> <li>• Elective (and COM, DIG, FIL prefix or other as approved by the graduate coordinator) (3 hours)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIG 6971 Thesis OR DIG 6909 Research Report (3 hours)</li> <li>• Elective (and COM, DIG, FIL prefix or other as approved by the graduate coordinator) (3 hours)</li> </ul>
<b>Semester Total: 6 credit hours</b>	<b>Semester Total: 6 credit hours</b>

## Statement of 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.

# Studio Section

## Master's Non-Thesis

### Studio Concentration Requirements (Non-Thesis beginning Fall 2019)

#### Committee

Studio committees must be approved by the GaIM Graduate Committee using the designated form. The committee must be chaired by a member of the Games and Interactive Media graduate faculty and includes at least 2 total members. One committee member may be external to GaIM, as appropriate to the student's work.

#### Proposal

Studio option students must submit a studio project proposal and preliminary bibliography (4-8 pages) on a topic selected in consultation with the adviser. The creative project is initiated by the preparation of a proposal that includes an explanation of the expected outcome and underlying concepts of the project. The members of the student's studio committee judge the proposal as the preliminary step to beginning the creative project. The student should submit the Studio Proposal during the first half of the first semester of studio credit. At the end of the first semester of studio credit, the student will submit their Studio 1 prototype to the committee for approval to proceed to Studio 2.

#### Studio Project Guidelines

Students who choose the Studio track will complete the DIG 6524: Studio 1/DIG 6909: Research Report 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 studio 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. They will also generate professional portfolio quality documentation of their project. This documentation will be used in applications for a public exhibition, showcase, and/or conference.

As part of the degree requirement for the studio track, students will be expected to exhibit their completed project through a public facing event. The context and scope of the exhibition will be decided upon by the student in agreement with their advisor and committee. The showcase of student work may take the form of an exhibition, festival, conference, or a participatory, online format; acceptance to an internally or externally juried or peer reviewed exhibition/festival/conference will fulfill this requirement.

### **Steps to Submit Studio Project**

The studio project also includes an archival copy of the creative product. A documentation website and/or video of the creative product must be delivered in digital form to the committee chair.

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

- Submit a preliminary copy of the digital project file for initial review by the university thesis format review deadline.
- Hold their public exhibition by the end of the semester.
- Submit signed project approval form by final university submission deadline.
- Submit final studio product by the university thesis submission deadline.

All university deadlines are listed in the Academic Calendar. The College of Sciences (COS) 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.

### **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 examination process is designed to evaluate both 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.

# Thesis Section

## Master's Thesis

### Thesis Requirements

The thesis option is strongly recommended for students who intend to pursue a PhD degree.

#### Committee Requirements

Regardless of their intended track, students are required to assemble a faculty committee to supervise their work by the end of the first year. The student should approach a faculty member about being their adviser with a preliminary proposal of what the thesis or studio project will be. Once the adviser has agreed, the rest of the committee should be selected in consultation with the adviser. **Students should select an adviser and supporting committee that is appropriate, in terms of subject matter, methodological, or other expertise for their intended thesis or studio project.**

At a minimum, this committee will meet with the student once each in the spring of their first year, the fall of their second year, and the spring of the second year. Before enrolling in thesis/studio credit the committee must review and approve a 1-page concept document that gives an overview of the student's thesis/studio project. In addition, students may not enroll in thesis/studio credit until they have signed a master's degree mentorship compact (see below).

#### Committee

The committee must be chaired by a member of the Games and Interactive Media graduate faculty and includes 3 total members, two of which must be GaIM graduate faculty. One committee member may be external to GaIM, as appropriate to the student's work. Thesis committees must be approved by the College of Graduate Studies Dean using the [Thesis Advisory Committee Form](#). Thesis committee members external to UCF must be approved as Graduate Faculty Scholars by the College of Graduate Studies using the [Nomination and Appointment to Graduate Faculty and Graduate Faculty Scholars](#) form.

#### Prospectus

Thesis students must submit a thesis prospectus and preliminary bibliography (9-12 pages) 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. 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 during the first semester of thesis credit.

### **Thesis Guidelines**

The thesis is a formal written document. Please search the UCF STARS database to find at least three Master thesis on a similar topic as yours to understand the scope and final published product. A draft of your thesis is due to your committee by March 15<sup>th</sup> of your second year. This recommended timeline will provide you with enough time to complete and format your thesis before the UCF due dates. It is your responsibility to create a schedule with milestones and to meet with your chair and advisors as needed.

The introduction gives an overview of the project and its purpose; includes a literature review that explains and cites previous research on the topic of the thesis or related topics, in order to situate the project in its scholarly context; and explains the method the student used in conducting the project.

The body of the thesis explains what was learned through the project and any evaluation that was performed. Examples include, but are not limited to, textual, procedural, or formal analysis of a game or interactive media text, interviews or surveys with makers or users of games or interactive media products, or design and user testing of a game or interactive media product. The conclusion of the thesis includes plans for future work.

If your research includes human subjects such as with interviews or surveys, you must abide by UCF requirements regarding IRB approval. Consult your adviser for assistance with the [required IRB training](#) and submission of an application. IRB materials must be submitted for review by November 1<sup>st</sup> if you plan to graduate at the conclusion of the following spring semester.

### **Steps to Submit Thesis and Graduate**

The thesis also includes an archival copy of any resulting creative product. Both the thesis and any 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 thesis 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 policies and procedures. The College of Graduate Studies thesis and dissertation office is best reached by email at [editor@ucf.edu](mailto:editor@ucf.edu).

All university deadlines are listed in the [Academic Calendar](#). The College of Sciences 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.

## University Thesis Requirements

Master's thesis students must be enrolled continuously (including summers). Exceptions to the continuous enrollment policy may be appealed to Graduate Studies. Graduate policy states students have seven years from beginning the program to complete the degree.

The College of Graduate Studies [Thesis and Dissertation page](#) contains information on the university's requirements for thesis formatting, format review, defenses, final submission, and more.

All university deadlines are listed in the [Academic Calendar](#). Consult with graduate director or advisor for potential earlier deadlines.

**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 document by final submission deadline

Students must format their thesis according to the standards outlined in Thesis and Dissertation Webcourse.

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

The College of Graduate Studies thesis and dissertation office is best reached by email at [editor@ucf.edu](mailto:editor@ucf.edu).

# Program and Institutional Policies

## Absences

Students who anticipate that they may not be able to enroll continuously due to external circumstances should apply for [Special Leave of Absence](#). Specifically, students who are taking courses should apply for a Special Leave of Absence when they cannot enroll in more than two consecutive semesters. Students who are in thesis/dissertation hours should apply for a Special Leave of Absence when they cannot enroll in every semester (including summer).

To qualify for a Special Leave of Absence, the student must demonstrate good cause (e.g., illness, family issues, financial difficulties, personal circumstances, recent maternity/paternity, employment issues). The specific reason for the Leave of Absence request must be indicated by the student on the [Leave of Absence Form](#). Due to current U.S. government regulations, international students must be enrolled every fall and spring semester. For students in this category, a Special Leave of Absence is only available for documented medical reasons.

## Academic Standards/Conduct/Integrity

### Professional Conduct Expectations

As a community of scholars and creators, the Digital Media MA program recognizes that the freedom of inquiry essential to scholarly and creative work carries with it the responsibilities of professional conduct. Students are expected to adhere to the rules and regulations as stipulated by the University of Central Florida and the Digital Media MA handbook.

First, our teaching, creative production, and inquiry must be respectful. Members of our scholarly and creative community actively demonstrate respect for others. We also do not exploit or discriminate against others on grounds including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious creed, age, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, or disability; we do not sexually harass students, colleagues, or staff members; and we do not use language that is prejudicial or gratuitously derogatory. All members of the community are expected to behave in a respectful and courteous manner to others, avoiding threatening or bullying behaviors such as stalking, dishonesty, disrespect for others' personal space, or misuse of shared spaces. We demonstrate respect for knowledge by avoiding capricious or arbitrary decisions regarding professional status or academic freedom, the misuse of confidential or private information, and the practice of deceit or fraud of the academic community or the public.

We will value this respect in our own conduct and will actively admonish failures of respect in the action of others.

Second, professional conduct requires the responsible use of evidence in developing original arguments and both fairness and generosity in hearing and reading the arguments of others. We accept the obligation to exercise critical self-discipline and intellectual honesty in the production and dissemination of knowledge.

Third, our community rests upon the fundamental assumptions of ethical authorship within the responsible conduct of research. Graduate students must not plagiarize the work of others. In addition, submitting the same work to fulfill more than one requirement will be considered self-plagiarism unless there is a substantial revision or addition to the first work and the resubmission takes place with full knowledge and approval of the faculty member to whom the work is being submitted.

Fourth, our community upholds these research standards in all areas including in our interactions with human and nonhuman participants in research, in our engagements with cultural knowledges, in identifying and managing conflicts of interest, in managing data, in using UCF resources, in mentoring and training, and in collaboration.

Enacting these responsibilities upholds the research and academic integrity of our community and the personal integrity of its members. In the assessment of professionalism, instructors and program administrators will consider each student's conduct; the quality of interactions; and meaningful engagement in all aspects of the program.

Students who are in violation of these behaviors will be counseled according to the procedures below and reminded of UCF/DM MA expectations. If, after such counseling, the faculty or program administrators conclude that the student is not able or willing to demonstrate an acceptable standard of professionalism, or if there is repeated disregard or violation of standards of professionalism, such behavior will lead to dismissal from the program.

### **Academic Progress Expectations**

Each student's academic progress is reviewed by both the DM MA program and the College of Graduate Studies each semester. Students who have not met conditions or restrictions of their admission may be prohibited from further study in the program. Additionally, students who have not performed to academic standards of the program or university will be placed on Probationary Status or Dismissed from the program. In accordance with the College of Graduate Studies' Policies and with the minimum university standards for satisfactory performance to continue graduate study, the DM MA program maintains the following requirements for all students:

Students must maintain a GPA\* of at least 3.0 or higher in order to maintain regular graduate student status, receive financial assistance, and qualify for graduation.

A course in which a student has received an unsatisfactory grade may be repeated; however both grades will be used in computing the GPA.

\*All references to GPA refer to Graduate Status Grade Point Average. A graduate status GPA will be calculated based on the graduate courses taken at UCF since admission into each degree or certificate program. See UCF Graduate Catalog for more information: <http://catalog.ucf.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=201#grade-system>

## **Accommodations**

UCF admits a diverse graduate student population. Some of those students may need an (or a variety) of accommodations to help them be successful in the program. Students in the program will be provided information related to how the program approaches accommodations for its students. If you require any accommodations to assist in producing a nurturing and successful learning environment, please contact Student Accessibility Services at: <https://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/accommodations/>

## **Appeals/Grievances**

There will be instances where students will not agree with an assessment related to their development or progress in a program. In these instances, it is essential that students understand the proper course of action to come to a resolution. If students have a grievance within the degree program, they should contact their designated graduate program coordinator to discuss the issue. More so, students can consult the [Academic Grievance](#) section under General Graduate Policies in the graduate catalog. If students have an issue with a specific course, we recommend that they first discuss the problem with the course professor.

## **Communication**

### **Student Responsibility for University Communication**

UCF uses email as the official means of notifying students of important university business and academic information concerning registration, deadlines, financial assistance, scholarships, student accounts (including tuition and fees), academic progress and problems, and many other critical items for satisfactory completion of a UCF degree program. The university sends all business-related and academic messages to a student's UCF Email address to ensure that there is one repository for that information. Every student must register for, and maintain a UCF Email account at <https://extranet.cst.ucf.edu/kmailselfsvc> and check it regularly to avoid missing important and critical information from the university. Any difficulty with establishing an

account or with accessing an established account must be resolved through the [UCF Computer Services Service Desk](#) so that a student receives all important messages.

Additionally, each student must have an up-to-date emergency e-mail address and cell phone number by which to be reached in case of a crisis on campus. This emergency contact information will be used only for emergency purposes. Also, both permanent and local mailing addresses must be on the record, so that any physical documents that must be mailed can be delivered.

It is critical that students maintain and regularly check their UCF Email account for official announcements and notifications. Communications sent to the UCF Email address on record will be deemed adequate notice for all university communication, include issues related to academics, finances, registration, parking, and all other matters. The University does not accept responsibility if official communication fails to reach a student who has not registered for, or maintained and checked on a regular basis, their UCF Email account. Please ensure that this information is current and that any changes in contact information are made online through the myUCF portal at <https://my.ucf.edu/>.

## **Continuous Enrollment**

All graduate students are required to enroll in at least one class over the span of the Academic year. Failure to enroll in 3 consecutive terms results in dismissal from the program. For more information, students should consult the following sections: [Continuous Enrollment](#) and [Continuous Enrollment and Active Students](#).

## **Disability Statement**

This degree program and larger UCF community is committed to making an inclusive and accessible learning environment for all individuals with disabilities. If you are a student with disabilities and need different kinds of access to course material or accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Services (Ferrell Commons, 7F, Room 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone (407) 823-2371).

More so, the degree program abides by the following creed from Student Accessibility Services:

### **ACCESS matters.**

**Purpose:** We envision UCF to be a fully accessible campus and inclusive environment for people with disabilities. We do this by:

- **Acknowledging** disability as an aspect of human diversity;
- **Cultivating** awareness of the environment's disabling barriers;
- **Collaborating** on and proactively facilitating accessible environments and experiences;
- **Educating** faculty and staff to create and maintain access in their spheres of influence;
- **Shifting** to an inclusive-minded attitude;
- **Supplementing** with reasonable accommodations as a last resort measure to ensure access.

## **Dismissal/Discipline**

It is a reality that some students will not be able to remain in good academic standing or will not be able to meet the standards of internships, clinical, or practicum experiences. Some students may also not be able to meet program level professional/behavior standards. This could result in the necessary avenue to either formally discipline students or dismiss students from the program.

### **Probation and Dismissal Policy and Process**

Probationary Status in The DM MA means that the student is at risk (academic, professional, or ethical) within the program. A student cannot graduate from the DM MA program while on probationary status.

A student may be placed on Probation if any of the following occur:

Academic Probation: Per College of Graduate Studies' policy, if the graduate status GPA falls below the required 3.00, the student will have 9 credit hours to bring the GPA above a 3.00 in order to have the Academic Probation removed. Students will receive notice in writing from the College of Graduate Studies.

Conduct Probation: Any minor violation of the aforementioned professional conduct expectations, may result in conduct probation. The GaIM Assistant Director will determine the severity of violation by reviewing the documentation provided and will notify the student based on the procedures outlined in the following section. A severe conduct violation, which may lead to dismissal from the DM MA program will always require the review of an ad-hoc disciplinary committee as described below.

Conduct Violation Process:

1. If a violation of a conduct policy occurs, it will be reported to the DM MA program director in writing. This should include specifically which aspects of the professional conduct policy the student has allegedly violated, when these violations allegedly took place, and any available evidence to support the allegation, to allow the Director to understand the situation and counsel the student appropriately.

2. the DM MA program committee will evaluate the matter and determine an appropriate course of action ranging from a written warning to convening an ad-hoc disciplinary committee of the T&T faculty for evaluation based on the egregiousness of the violation. The committee will be comprised of faculty members who do not have a relationship with the student as adviser, exam/dissertation committee member, or RA/TA supervisor and who are not involved in the complaint. The GaIM Assistant Director will serve as an ex officio member of the committee unless barred by the relationships listed above.
3. If a disciplinary committee is convened, members will discuss the student's professional conduct. The committee will consult the complaining party, the student, and the student's adviser, and recommend appropriate action based on the severity of violation up to and including program dismissal.

### **Removal of funding for Graduate Assistants (GTA, GRA) Policy and Process**

Assistantships are normally offered for a period of two years on admission to the program, or for GRAs for a set period related to a specific project's funding. However continued funding is contingent on satisfactory performance in the assistantship.

### **Expectations**

Assistants must work their scheduled number of hours (standard: 20).

Assistants are expected to communicate with their supervisor consistently, as discussed at the beginning of the assistantship. It is the responsibility of the assistant to be proactive in starting the conversation with their supervisor. If an assistant is having trouble communicating with their supervisor, they should contact the GaIM Assistant Director for help.

Teaching Assistants must hold class as scheduled, grade student work in a timely fashion, respond to student emails, hold regular office hours in accordance with the policy of the Assistantship department, and submit final grades by the deadline each semester. Further, they must be mindful of the power relationship between themselves and the students in their classes and maintain a professional relationship with students, without social interactions, for the duration of the course.

Research Assistants must perform the tasks specified in their assignment description in a timely fashion. They must be mindful of research ethics and work to minimize any potential harm to human or nonhuman participants or communities in such research. Moreover, they should be fully cognizant of the purpose or purposes for which their work is intended, and recognize that research-based decisions and actions may have long-term consequences for communities and individuals being studied.

### **Procedure**

A faculty member supervising an Assistant who is not meeting the expectations of their assistantship will first inform the student in writing, reminding them of the expectations and clearly indicating which expectations are not being met and when the failures to meet expectations have taken place.

If, after the faculty member has communicated with the student, the expectations continue not to be met, they will notify the GaIM Assistant Director in writing. This should include specifically which expectations are not being met, when the failures to meet expectations have taken place, and any other pertinent information to allow the Director to understand the situation and counsel the student appropriately.

The student will be provided with a Letter of Counseling/Instruction from the GaIM Assistant Director about the expectations of their assistantship, in addition to having a face-to-face meeting with the GaIM Assistant Director to discuss the expectations.

Any further failure to meet the expectations of the assistantship after an Assistant has been counseled should be documented as above and provided to the GaIM Assistant director in writing.

Students who establish a pattern of failure to meet the expectations of their assistantship will not be offered a continuing assistantship in subsequent terms.

## **Diversity Statement**

The University of Central Florida considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be a strength and critical to its educational mission. UCF expects every member of the university community to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture for all in its classrooms, work environments, and at campus events. Dimensions of diversity can include sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, intellectual and physical ability, sexual orientation, income, faith and non-faith perspectives, socio-economic class, political ideology, education, primary language, family status, military experience, cognitive style, and communication style. The individual intersection of these experiences and characteristics must be valued in our community.

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at <https://letsbeclear.ucf.edu> and <http://cares.sdes.ucf.edu/>.

If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible and/or contact [Student Accessibility Services](#).

For more information on diversity and inclusion, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF's complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – OIE <http://oie.ucf.edu/> & [askanadvocate@ucf.edu](mailto:askanadvocate@ucf.edu)
- Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services – <http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/> & [sas@ucf.edu](mailto:sas@ucf.edu)
- Diversity and Inclusion Training and Events – [www.diversity.ucf.edu](http://www.diversity.ucf.edu)
- Student Bias Grievances – Just Knights response team – <http://jkrt.sdes.ucf.edu/>
- UCF Compliance and Ethics Office – <http://compliance.ucf.edu/> & [complianceandethics@ucf.edu](mailto:complianceandethics@ucf.edu)
- Ombuds Office – <http://www.ombuds.ucf.edu>

## Enrollment in Thesis/Dissertation Hours

The university requires all doctoral students to take a minimum of 15 credit hours of doctoral dissertation hours; however, specific programs may require more than this minimum. Dissertation research is considered to be a full-time effort, and post-candidacy enrollment in at least three doctoral dissertations (XXX 7980) credit hours constitutes full-time graduate status. Doctoral students who have passed candidacy and have begun taking doctoral dissertation hours (XXX 7980) must enroll in at least three dissertation hours each semester (including summers, without skipping a semester) and continue doing so until they complete and successfully defend the dissertation. Students wishing to enroll in fewer than 3 credit hours must have approval from their advisor. Students who need to interrupt their dissertation work for extenuating circumstances must submit a [Leave of Absence Form](#) to the College of Graduate Studies. Submission and approval of the form must be obtained prior to the first day of classes for the term of non-enrollment.

## Golden Rule

The Golden Rule is the university's policy regarding non-academic discipline of students and limited academic grievance procedures for graduate (grade appeals in individual courses, not including thesis and dissertation courses) and undergraduate students. Information concerning The Golden Rule can be found at [www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/](http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/). Section 11, Student Academic Behavior, addresses appeals of graduate program actions or decisions.

## Grading and Grading Procedures

Students within the program should adhere to grading protocols outlined on graduate course syllabi or refer to the [Grade System](#) section within General Graduate Policies of the grad catalog as well as the Incomplete Grades Section within Academic Progress and Performance Policy under General Graduate Policies.

## Harassment

The University of Central Florida values diversity in the campus community. Accordingly, discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital status, parental status, veterans status, sexual orientation, or genetic information is prohibited.

Sexual harassment, a form of sex discrimination, is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature including any of these three situations.

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or enrollment.
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or enrollment decisions affecting such individual.
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or enrollment, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment.
- 4.

Sexual harassment is strictly prohibited. Occurrences will be dealt with in accordance with the guidelines above and university rules. Employees, students, or applicants for employment or admission may obtain further information on this policy, including grievance procedures, from the OIE Coordinator. The Director of the Office of Institutional Equity Programs is the campus Equity Coordinator responsible for concerns in all areas of discrimination. The office is located on the main campus, in Barbara Ying CMMS Building 81, Suite 101. The phone number is (407) 823-1336. Policies and guidelines are available online at <http://www.eeo.ucf.edu>.

## International Students

The DM MA Program welcomes international students and encourages them to apply and participate in our program fully. Students will need to meet all international requirements established by the University and should consult with UCF Global <https://global.ucf.edu/> for additional support.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism in the Digital Media M.A. degree program will not be tolerated. Students should familiarize themselves with the terms of what constitutes a breach in academic integrity by consulting the [UCF Rules of Conduct](#). Please consult the [UCF Golden Rule](#) for more information and reach out to the graduate program coordinator or your thesis adviser if you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism.

Students can be directed to the College of Graduate Studies website on this topic:  
<https://graduate.ucf.edu/plagiarism/>

Students should also consider enrolling the College of Graduate Studies webcourse: “Pressures to Plagiarize”. This is offered through the Pathways to Success program.

## **Probation**

Regarding probationary action within the degree program students should reference the [Academic Progress and Performance](#) section from the Graduate Catalog.

## **Satisfactory Progress**

Students must maintain a GPA of at least 3.0 to keep graduate student status. Students must also earn a grade of ‘B’ or higher in all graduate coursework. Students who do not earn at least a ‘B’ in a course may have an opportunity to retake the course the following year.

## **Time Limits to Degree Completion**

Regarding time requirements for the Digital Media M.A. degree, students should refer to the [Time Limitation and Continuous Enrollment Policy](#) in the Graduate Catalog.

## **Transfer Credit**

Regarding transfer credits within the Digital Media M.A. degree, students should refer to the [Transfer of Credit Policy](#) in the graduate catalog.

## **Turnitin**

The university requires all students submitting a thesis or dissertation as part of their graduate degree requirements to first have their electronic documents submitted through iThenticate for advisement purposes and for review of originality. The thesis or dissertation chair is responsible for scheduling this submission to iThenticate and for reviewing the results from iThenticate with the student's advisory committee. The advisory committee uses the results appropriately to assist the student in the preparation of their dissertation.

Before the student may be approved for final submission to the university, the dissertation chair must indicate completion of the Review for Original Work through iThenticate by signing the [Dissertation Approval Form](#).

## Additional Program Details

### Financial Aid Funding

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](https://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/](https://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. For more information, please consult the following [Graduate Assistantships](#).

### Graduation Requirements

To set yourself up for a successful graduation:

- Complete your Plan of Study (including all needed petitions, course substitutions, and transfer work) and submit to College of Graduate Studies for review and approval. This should be done in the Spring of your first year.
- Complete required and elective coursework
- Form your studio or thesis advisory committee. Complete the [Thesis Advisory Committee Form](#) and submit it to the College of Graduate Studies for review and approval. This should be done in the Spring of your first year.
- Enroll in required thesis hours by the semester deadline.
- File your online intent to graduate at [myUCF](#). Please ensure that your Diploma Mailing Address is correct. The ability to file online opens at mid-term of the semester prior to the semester of graduation. Intents to graduate should be filed online no later than the last day of registration for the semester of graduation.
- Meet with your studio / thesis committee at least once each semester of your second year.

- Schedule your studio exhibition / thesis defense with your committee and announce the defense through your program. Typically held in the Spring of your second year.

Thesis students have additional steps as listed on the [Commencement](#) and [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) sites.

## Commencement

Information on Commencement, including the ceremony, tickets, parking, cap and gown, etc. can be found on the [Commencement website](#).

## Job Search and Career Pathways

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](http://www.career.ucf.edu))

## Student Associations

Students should refer to the [Student Involvement](#) site for potential collaborations with student associations.

## Graduate Student Center

UCF is fortunate to have its own Graduate Student Center. It is a great place to relax, practice a presentation in one of our conference rooms, have your lunch, and to meet other graduate students. Students should refer to the [Graduate Student Center](#) for more information.

## Student Research Week/Student Scholar Symposium

Many of the graduate students who come to UCF will be involved in research. The College of Graduate Studies hosts an annual Student Scholar Symposium to provide a conference setting for our own students to showcase their work either with poster

presentations or a face-to-face presentation. For more information, students should refer to the [Student Research Week](#).

### 3 Minute Thesis (3MT)

The College of Graduate Studies also hosts a 3MT competition for graduate students in both the Fall Semester. For more information, students should refer to [3MT](#).

### 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/Resources

- [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](#)

## Graduate Faculty

### **Harrington, Maria**

College: College of Science - Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Digital Media, Learning Sciences Cluster

Research Interests: [immersive](#) informal learning application design, development, and evaluation, augmented and virtual and reality, human computer environment interaction, user centered design and user experience, digital twins as models of the natural world, STEM education technology, information science and aesthetics

Contact Info: [Maria.Harrington@ucf.edu](mailto:Maria.Harrington@ucf.edu)

### **Mosher, Matthew**

College: College of Science - Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Digital Media

Research Interests: tangible interaction design, physical computing, visual aesthetics, audio aesthetics, media installations

Contact Info: [Matthew.Mosher@ucf.edu](mailto:Matthew.Mosher@ucf.edu)

Website: <https://mosher.art>

### **Murray, John**

College: College of Science - Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Digital Media

Research interests: platform studies, augmented and virtual reality, adaptive learning, game studies, electronic literature, artificial intelligence, interactive digital narratives, education and technology

Contact Info: [jtm@ucf.edu](mailto:jtm@ucf.edu)

Website: [lucidbard.com](http://lucidbard.com)

### **Sengun, Sercan**

College: College of Science - Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Digital Media

Research interests: Video Game Studies, Game Design, Gamer Communities, Cultural Informatics, Virtual Identities, Avatars, Personas, Representation in Virtual Environments, Interactive Narratives

Contact Info: [Sercan.Sengun@ucf.edu](mailto:Sercan.Sengun@ucf.edu)

### **Smith, Peter**

College: College of Science - Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Digital Media

Research interests: Serious Games, Games, Games for Health, Simulation, Training, Alternative Controls, Accessibility in games

Contact Info: [Peter.Smith@ucf.edu](mailto:Peter.Smith@ucf.edu)

### **Underberg-Goode, Natalie**

College: College of Science - Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Digital Media

Research interests: digital folklore, digital ethnography, digital storytelling, visual ethnography, participatory digital methods, Latin American folklore and cultural heritage, cultural heritage tourism, Peru and Latin Americans in the U.S.

Contact Info: [Natalie.Underberg-Goode@ucf.edu](mailto:Natalie.Underberg-Goode@ucf.edu)

Website: <https://natalieunderberggoode.com/>

## **Graduate Scholars**

### **Howard, Taylor**

College: College of Science - Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Disciplinary affiliations: Digital Media

Contact Info: [Kenton.Howard@ucf.edu](mailto:Kenton.Howard@ucf.edu)

## **Description of Core Courses**

### **Programming for Digital Media**

This course provides a foundation for understanding and applying the elements of programming which target interactive media. Topics include functions, variables, classes, data types, and design patterns.

### **Media Aesthetics**

Aesthetics within digital environments, relationship between technologies, visual elements, and the body. Introduction to theoretical traditions along with written and digital projects, including an exhibition.

### **Theory and Practice of Interactive Storytelling**

Analysis and creation of interactive stories within and across platforms. What makes stories compelling, how to exploit the particular affordances of media through authors communicate.

### **Design for Interactive Media**

This studio course gives students tangible experience with the design principles, methodologies, and processes used for interactive media.