

Department of Media Study – Gold Form I - MFA Schedule and Requirements

Last revision August 2016

I: Thesis procedure

1. Overview

This document (gold form I) describes the MFA schedule and requirements. Details to the thesis requirements are given in the MFA thesis guidelines (gold form II).

The MFA program requires 60 credits, a thesis, and a project. During the course of study, students are required to constitute a faculty thesis committee to supervise and approve the thesis/project. Students *may* be able to accelerate (or delay) this schedule, depending on individual circumstances.

Academic requirements can be non-intuitive to new students. *Students should arrange to meet the DMS graduate advisor Brad Hendricks, and DGS, Sarah Elder, during each semester of their graduate studies.*

Useful documents, including those referenced on this page, are available on the [information for current students](#) page.

II: Thesis schedule

The MFA at DMS is a three year program. In order to graduate within the stipulated timeframe students are required to organize their time and resources carefully. This includes keeping the DMS administration informed of progress or lack thereof. Students are strongly advised to consult with the academic advisor to ensure that course selections (electives) meet DMS course elective requirements, especially during semesters that have no DMS internal requirements (semester 3, for example). Furthermore, students are *strongly encouraged* to make use of the summer break between semesters 4 and 5 to ensure timely (6 semester) completion of all the steps leading to graduation.

The following sections outline the flow through the 6 semester program (S1 to S6), listing mandatory courses and events. Note the *methods of making* course sequence (students must choose two out of the three offered).

S1	S2	S3	S4	S4/5summer	S5	S6
*Grad Seminar I *Methods of Making I/II/III *DMS 570 *Orientation	*First Year Review *Advising	*Methods of Making I/II/III *Advising	*Grad Seminar II *Committee Formation *Thesis Proposal *Advising	*Thesis Draft *Project Proposal *Application to Candidacy *Advising	*Complete Thesis Draft *Project Prototype, Rough Cut or First Draft *Advising	*Revised Thesis *Complete Project

1. S1: fall semester of first year

Just before the beginning of the semester there is a plenary orientation for DMS graduate students. Students will be appointed a new interim faculty mentor based on their current areas of interest. This mentor will officially serve until the formation of the thesis committee and may or may not be a member of the thesis committee. This mentor can be changed upon request. First year students will also receive help in scheduling courses, completing registration and completing course transfer forms for credit from other institutions (deadline September 15).

In general it is suggested that first semester students take all their courses within DMS. There are two required courses in the first semester and required meetings/events.

- Mandatory courses: - Graduate Seminar I + DMS 570 Media Theory + Methods of Making I or II or III
- Mandatory events: - Graduate orientation + Graduate advisor meeting

2. S2: spring semester of the first year

All MFA students are required to present their ongoing research to the DMS faculty in the first year review (see appendix IV.1 for details). The first year review will usually take place during the week before spring break.

- Mandatory courses: - None
- Mandatory events: - First year review + advising

3. S3: fall semester of the second year

This semester can be designed by the student.

- Mandatory courses: - Methods of Making I or II or III
- Mandatory events: - Advising

4. S4: spring semester of the second year

This semester commences the thesis work in DMS. Full details to this process are described in the gold form II.

- Mandatory courses: - Graduate seminar II (+ second year show)
- Mandatory events: - Thesis proposal + thesis committee selection + advising
(submit the committee selection + graduation plan form)

4b. S4/5 summer between semesters 4 and 5

- Mandatory courses: - None
- Mandatory events: - Thesis draft + project proposal + application to candidacy + advising
(submit the ATC and complete the progress map form thru the 2nd step)

5. S5: fall semester of the third year

This semester is centered around completing the first full draft of the written thesis and making progress on the production of the thesis art work.

- Mandatory courses: - None
- Mandatory events: - Complete thesis draft +project prototype, rough cut or draft + advising

6. S6: spring semester of the third year

This semester should be dedicated completely to the completion of the written thesis and the thesis production.

- Mandatory courses: - None
- Mandatory events: - Final, revised/completed thesis + completed project

Application to candidacy must be submitted long before the intended graduation date. *It is imperative that students confer with the graduate secretary to confirm the cutoff dates for the submission of the application to candidacy and the thesis progress form before making graduation plans.*

III Requirements

1. Credit Distribution Requirements.

Course credits required for graduation must be distributed as described below. There is some latitude in how a particular course might fit into this scheme. A student may apply to have suitable courses not previously listed as “production” or as “media history/theory/interpretation” accepted for credit in these categories. Students must first consult with the DMS academic advisor in this regard.

1.1 Production - 16 credits

Production courses are generally 4 credits, making the production component of the MFA contain 4 courses. Cross-listed courses in visual studies, computer science, etc. may also be counted. For students with no production background there are summer catch-up courses. However, such courses will not be accepted for graduate credit.

1.2 Media History/Theory/Interpretation - 12 credits

This requirement may be satisfied by media-related courses in media study or other departments. If in doubt, check with the graduate advisor.

1.3 Methods of Making- 8 credits total

Choose two out of the three Methods of Making courses offered. Choose two that offer skills that you are not versed in.

MMI-explores the media of film, video, and audio through a series of short projects geared toward providing an overview of production methods and establishing a basic proficiency in the ever-changing field of media production.

MM II-This graduate level course will explore the foundation of technical and conceptual skills necessary for advanced study in computational media through a series of intensive short projects focusing on embedded systems and electronics. This course introduces concepts and techniques for creating objects, spaces and media that sense and respond to their physical surroundings and the actions and events that transpire there. Moving beyond the interface paradigm of screen, keyboard and mouse, physical computing enables alternate models for interaction with (and through) computers that afford more subtle and complex relations between a range of human and non-human actors.

MM III-Method of Making III is a graduate-level investigation into the design and production of web-based media. Topics will include: web development (HTML5, CSS3, JavaScript, JQuery) as well as the use of content management systems (Wordpress, PHP). This is a student-driven course and topic will be determined by the interests/needs of the class. For students with basic, intermediate, or no coding experience.

1.4 Graduate Seminar - 4 credits total

Students should plan to take these courses (I and II) in the in semester 1 and semester 4. Graduate seminar I is a formative course in the theory and practice of media arts, with emphasis on research practices and methods. Graduate seminar II continues the thread of the first course, includes a graduate student show and a first formulation of the thesis topic.

1.5 Directed electives - 13 credits

Students may choose any graduate courses that generally support their thesis research, provided they operate on the level of DMS graduate courses. Students must keep records (course work and syllabi) of all course activities performed outside of DMS. This information will become important when applying for ATC.

1.6 Thesis Project - 7 credits

Thesis/project work is usually credited by registering for DMS 598 project supervision during the penultimate semester and DMS 700 thesis guidance in the final semester, in any combination of credits suited to the work.

No course equivalency form is required for graduate seminar, project supervision, capstone internship, or thesis guidance.

It is also a requirement that (at least) three courses are taken in (an) other department(s). These may be DMS cross-listed courses. However, the idea is to show diversity in research. **Students are required to keep documentation (syllabi, semester papers, etc.) for these courses.** All credits must be in graduate level courses (500 level and above). However, *under special circumstances subject to approval by the DGS*, a student may petition to a 400 level course accepted for graduate credit. Please see the Academic Advisor for help with this.

IV. Appendix

1. First Year Review guidelines

All first year graduates are required to present their work and work in progress to the DMS faculty in their second semester of the MFA program. The first year review provides the faculty with an opportunity to assess students' engagement with the department, and to appreciate their progress. It allows students the opportunity to situate their practice within the field they identify with and to indicate new directions of their research/art practice.

In selecting material to show for the first year review, students should consider that the presentation will be limited to 15 minutes including work and explanations. Students should choose work that gives some sense of the level of productivity and intellectual engagement. If the material is very specialized, a brief statement for faculty can be helpful. An artist statement should include critical self-assessment, including progress made or not made during this first year in the MFA program.

Students must send the department secretary a link to a URL with all required materials 4 days before the review date. Students are responsible for ensuring that their presentation materials can be viewed on the computer in CFA 232 (internet browsers and pdf viewer are available. Specialty software must be installed prior to the presentation - contact the equipment manager well in advance).

After the review each student will receive written notice as to whether they have passed or not. Students with a provisional pass will be asked to complete a summer study package. Completion of this package is mandatory. Each student passing the review will be assigned a mentor who will remain the point of contact for conceptual/academic questions until the student designates his/her thesis committee

2. Forms

2.1 Application to candidacy (ATC) form

The ATC form requires that students specify courses and as well as the finalized concept of the thesis/project. Later adjustments or changes require approval by the graduate school—by petition. The ATC is submitted to the graduate secretary during the summer between semester 4 and 5 (S4/5). The ATC must include the following attachments:

- A copy of the unofficial UB transcript.
- A course syllabus for every course whose title does not clearly indicate the course's relationship to media production or media history/interpretation/theory, or which is from another department.
- The MFA directed electives forms, signed by the thesis committee chair.
- The thesis progress map, completed to the second step.
- Copies of any approved graduate petitions for undergraduate courses taken for graduate credit.
- Copies of independent and directed studies for any class without an official course description.
- Original transcripts applicable to any credits for courses taken outside of UB. These courses must be approved by the director of graduate studies.

2.2 M-form

The m-form, which must be signed by the thesis committee members, certifies completion of all degree requirements. It serves as the master control document ensuring a student's compliance with DMS requirements. Students should meet with their thesis committee prior to the m-form submission date. Also, students should meet with the graduate advisor well ahead of time to insure that courses, thesis/project, and all paperwork are in order by the deadline.