

Department of Media Study – White Form I - PhD Schedule and Requirements

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I. Overview

This document (white form I) describes the PhD schedule and requirements. Details to the dissertation requirements are given in the PhD dissertation guidelines (white form III).

The PhD program requires 72 credits, a first year review, a qualifying exam, a dissertation, and a project. During the course of study, students are required to constitute a faculty dissertation committee to supervise and approve the dissertation /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 Director of Graduate Studies, Sarah Elder, and graduate advisor/coordinator, Brad Hendricks, during each semester of their Graduate studies.*

Most of the documents required are available via the [documents for current students](#) page.

II: Dissertation/ Project Schedule

The PhD in DMS is a four 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.

S1		S2		S3		S4		S5		S6		S7		S8	
courses	cr	courses	cr	courses	cr	courses	cr	courses	cr	courses	cr	courses	cr	courses	cr
methods of making I/II/III	4	methods of making II I/II/III	4	media theory directed elective	4	media theory directed elective	4	directed elective	4	diss+project guidance	2	diss+project guidance	2	diss+project guidance	2
DMS 570 Media Theory	4	directed elective	4	directed elective	4	PHD SeminarII	4	directed elective	4	directed elective	4	directed elective	2	directed elective	2
PhD Seminar I	4	Research Ethics	2	directed elective	4	directed elective	4	directed elective	4						
		First year review	0			qualifying exam	0	Diss/project Proposal application to candidacy	0					Dissertation & project presentation	0
	12		10		12		12		12		6		4		4

The following sections outline the path through the eight semester program (S1 to S8), listing course requirements and events. Students have exceptional freedom (and responsibility) in forming their course of study through the selection of *directed electives* throughout the program. Note the *methods of making* courses (I: video+audio, II/III: computing) are mandatory. Students should choose two of three Methods of Making courses in which they are not well versed. Students with exceptional preparation in media theory can request to have DMS 530 Media Theory waived. Students with less professional exhibition experience will be required to take Grad Seminar II as one of their directed electives. All requests are subject to approval by the DGS and department chair.

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 asked to sign up for a meeting with the DMS graduate advisor at this session. First year students will also receive help in scheduling courses, completing registration and completing course transfer forms for credit from other institutions. In general it is suggested that first semester students take all their courses within DMS. Incoming graduate students will be assigned a faculty mentor ('pre-qual mentor') who will be the main academic liaison up to the qualifying examination. Mentorship arrangements can be changed upon request of both student and faculty. There are three requirements regarding the selection of courses in the first semester and required meetings/events.

- Required: - PhD Seminar I + DMS 570 Media Theory + methods of making (I, II or III)
- Mandatory events: - Graduate orientation + graduate advisor meeting + 'pre-qual mentor' meeting

2. S2: spring semester of the first year

All PhD 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.

- Required: - research ethics (PHI 640 or similar – see below)
- Methods of making (I, II or III)
- Mandatory events: - First year review + advising

3. S3: fall semester of the second year

This semester can be designed by the student through the choice of two directed electives.

- Required: - Media theory directed elective (preparation for qualifying exam)
- Mandatory events: - Advising

4. S4: spring semester of the second year

This semester targets the qualifying exam. Select media theory electives should be used to prepare for the exam.

- Required: - PhD Seminar II + media theory directed elective (prep for qualifying exam)
- Mandatory events: - Qualifying exam

5. S5: fall semester of the third year

This semester is centered on drafting and securing approval for the dissertation/ project proposal and obtaining Application to Candidacy (ATC) status. *Students must advance to PhD candidacy by the end of the 5th term of their program in order for the Graduate School to grant full time certification while carrying reduced credits in subsequent semesters.*

- Mandatory events: - Dissertation Proposal + Application to candidacy + Advising

6. S6: spring semester of the third year

This semester should be dedicated to drafting the written dissertation and the start of project production.

- Required: - Dissertation + project guidance

7. S7: fall semester of the fourth year

This semester should be dedicated to drafting the written dissertation and the end of project production.

- Required: - Dissertation + project guidance
- Mandatory events: - Advising

8. S8: fall semester of the fourth year

This semester should be dedicated to the completion of the written dissertation.

- Required: - Dissertation + project guidance
- Mandatory events: - Thesis and project presentation

III Requirements

1. Credit Distribution Requirements.

The 72 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. Students must first consult with the DMS academic advisor in this regard.

1.1 Methods of Making – 8 credits minimum

PhD students must be literate in media creation. Based on their inclinations and background, they can take either Methods of Making I (film/video/audio) and III (computational media –networks) or II (computational media – physical media) + III. This decision should be discussed with the graduate advisor.

1.1.1 Media Theory and History - 12 credits total

Three courses (12 credits) of the foundation requirements should be dedicated explicitly to media theory and history. It is *strongly suggested* to take these courses prior to the qualifying exams. This requirement may be satisfied by media- related courses in media study or other departments. If in doubt, check with the graduate advisor.

1.1.2 PhD Seminar I and II – 8 credits total

Students are encouraged to take these courses (I and II) in semesters 1 and semester 4. PhD Seminar I focuses on research methods and practices; PhD Seminar II focuses on research strategies and preparation of manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed journals. Students will identify appropriate professional journals, publication venues and conferences for the presentation of their doctoral research.

1.1.3 Research Ethics – 0-2 credits

PhD students are required by the graduate school to understand the implications of research work and its impact on society. This requirement can be met by either (1.) enrolling in and passing PHI 640 /Graduate Research Ethics/ or RPN 541 /Ethics and Conduct of Research/ or (2.) completing the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) online Responsible Conduct of Research course with an average score of 80% or higher. Students opting to complete the CITI online course must supply documentation of its successful completion with their Application to Candidacy.

1.2 Directed Electives – 30 to 34 credits total

Students may choose any graduate courses that support their doctoral research, provided they operate on the level of DMS graduate courses. Some of the directed electives must be taken in media theory. The first media theory course should be taken in the first semester, the other two media theory courses should be taken in the semester prior to the qualifying exam. 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.

1.3 Dissertation and Project guidance – 6 to 10 credits total

Thesis/project work is usually credited by registering for DMS 598 project supervision during one of the last three semesters and DMS 702 Dissertation guidance in the final two semesters, in any combination of credits suited to the work.

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 advised to keep documentation (syllabi, semester papers, etc.) for these courses. All credits must be in graduate level courses (500 level and above).

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 PhD 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 PhD program.

Students must send the department secretary, Elaine Schwartz, 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 of DMS 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 new interim mentor based on their current research skills. This mentor will remain the point of contact for conceptual/academic questions until the student identifies his/her oral examination committee

2. Qualifying exam guidelines

Most doctoral programs require some form of a general examination after the completion of a student's coursework. This is the point of the Qualifying Examination. It is a culminating moment in your studies. It asks you to demonstrate conceptual as well as bibliographical control over a range of scholarly interests and areas in which you plan to do research and teach. In the lead-up to the exam, you will identify those areas in dialogue with your qualifying exam committee. In that sense, this is a moment where you formulate an intellectual and artistic self-definition.

After finishing all required coursework, students must take and pass the qualifying exam in order to continue towards the PhD degree. Completing the qualifying exam involves five steps normally taking two semesters:

- Constitute Qualifying Exam Committee (PhD Qualifying Exam Committee Selection Form)
- Define two fields, compile bibliography, devise research questions
- Complete written examination
- Pass oral examination
- Demonstrate artistic and research achievement

Since plans of study are individualized in DMS, much of the responsibility for this devolves upon the student, in consultation and with the approval of the committee chair.

2.1 Committee and Timeline

The Qualifying Examination committee is comprised of a chair from DMS and two additional faculty members. Identify the chair first and choose the committee in consultation with the chair. The timeline for the completion of the Qualifying Exam must be established in consultation and with the approval of the committee chair. This committee may but need not be the same as the final dissertation committee.

2.2 Fields, Bibliography, Research Questions

Taken together, the two fields should delimit academic area(s) in which the student is preparing to teach, as well the scholarly context(s) for the student's projected research. The configuration of the fields for all students will be as follows:

- * Field 1 general media history and theory
- * Field 2 candidate's research area

Two field lists, one for each field composed of approximately thirty key scholarly books, or the equivalent composed of articles, chapters, and/or books. In addition, the core bibliographies will include a comparable body of pertinent media examples. All of these texts will be chosen in consultation with committee members and the final lists must be approved by the committee chair. Subtopics such as research methodology can be included if requested by the qualifying exam committee.

Throughout the process of reading and refining the lists, students will devise six research questions (three for each field) in close consultation with the committee, that indicate the direction of their lines of inquiry.

2.3 Written exam - general media theory and history and candidate's research area

Upon the completion of step 2.2, the committee will formulate three essay assignments based on the student's two field lists and research questions. While the implementation details for the written exam are left to the qualifying exam committee chair (in consultation with the director of graduate studies), the standard approach is to complete one essay per five days.

2.4 Oral exam – general media theory and history and candidate's research area

After passing step 2.3, the student proceeds to the oral examination which lasts approximately two to three hours. The oral exam covers the student's research questions, the field lists, and the written essays. The purpose of the written and oral exam is to establish both the breadth and the depth of the student's competence and knowledge in areas where she or he plans to teach and do research.

2.5 Proof of artistic achievement and research ability – engaging peer communities and professional practice

The second requirement of the Qualifying Exam is the creation and submission of work to peer-reviewed venues. This includes submission of at least one of the following: publication or exhibition. Students are encouraged to choose the format that is least represented in their past professional track record (the DGS or the student's primary advisor should be consulted in making this selection):

- 1) The (single or lead author) crafting and submission of a high quality research paper to a peer reviewed journal or committee approved conference venue.
- 2) The creation of a media/art work and subsequent application to a juried, curated, or peer-reviewed venue.

In both cases the venues as well as the work must be acceptable to the exam committee and reviewed by the exam committee prior to submission. In both cases acceptance of the work is desirable but not a requirement for passing this part of the qualifying examination.

If a student fails either the written or oral exam, s/he will have one opportunity to re-take it once.

3. Forms

3.1 Application to candidacy (ATC) form

The ATC form requires that students specify courses and as well as the finalized concept of the dissertation/project proposal. Later adjustments or changes require approval by the graduate school—by petition. The ATC is submitted to the graduate secretary during or after semester 5. The ATC for PhD candidates must include the following attachments:

- A copy of the unofficial UB transcript.
- Proof of completion of PHI640 or successful completion of "Responsible Conduct of Research" (RCR) training
- A course syllabus for every course whose title does not clearly indicate the course's relationship to media arts or media history and theory, or which is from another department.
- The PhD Road Map completed to reflect that all required courses for the degree have been taken, except for Dissertation and Project Guidance credits and a maximum of three directed electives.
- 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. Only courses reviewed and accepted by the director of graduate study will can be counted towards the ATC and related graduation requirements.

3.2 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 dissertation committee prior to the m-form submission date. Also, students should meet with the graduate coordinator/advisor, Brad Hendricks, well ahead of time to insure that courses, dissertation/project, and all paperwork are in order by the deadline.