

## ***Master of Fine Arts in Computer Graphics Thesis Requirements and Guidelines***

*Revised September 19, 2006*

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## PREFACE

These guidelines apply to all CG650 Thesis Research students, CG660A and CG660B Thesis students, and CG700 Thesis-In-Progress students.

The guidelines are meant to clarify thesis-related issues, and should be read in conjunction with the latest version of the Library Guidelines, available at the Pratt Library.

Questions concerning organization and formatting of materials should be discussed with the Information/Reference department of the Pratt Library before final typing. Please call 718-636-3680 or 3686 for assistance, or visit:

<http://www.pratt.edu/library/>

As outlined in this document, questions concerning content and support requirements should be discussed with your Thesis Advisor and/or the Chairperson of the Department of Digital Arts at the beginning of the thesis process.

Thesis candidates will indicate their full acceptance of these guidelines by signing the Guidelines Agreement (page 15) and by registering for courses CG650 Thesis Research, CG660A Thesis I, CG660B Thesis II , and CG700 Thesis In-Progress.

Any waiver or modification of these guidelines must be in writing and approved by the Thesis Advisor.

Note:

The term **Thesis Research** is defined as the planning and preparation of all aspects of the Thesis Project *before* the actual Thesis Project begins.

The term **Thesis** is defined as the execution of the approved Thesis Project.

## **PART I: THESIS RESEARCH**

The purpose of the Thesis Research course is to help MFA candidates select a topic for their Thesis, and to plan and propose its implementation. If the Thesis Committee ultimately accepts the resulting Thesis Proposal, the Thesis Candidate is permitted to advance into Thesis.

The selection of a topic involves analysis of the candidate's own interests, strengths, weaknesses, experiences, historical precedents, current trends within the digital arts and professional and artistic goals. Proposals must be presented in a professional manner and include a draft of thesis of paper, production timeline, budget, research source materials and pre-visualization materials i.e. maquettes, installation drawings, sketches, work prints, storyboards, animatics, interface designs etc.

### **1.0 Criteria for Thesis Proposal Approval**

Thesis projects must demonstrate originality and creativity in both content and presentation. Topics must represent a significant exploration of concepts and techniques in your discipline.

Proposals will be evaluated on visual sophistication, discipline significance, feasibility, evidence of work ethic, critical reflection and professionalism.

### **1.1 Academic Integrity**

Absolute integrity is expected of every member of the Pratt Community in all academic matters, particularly with regard to academic honesty. When a student submits any work for academic credit, he/she makes an implicit claim that the work is wholly his/her own, executed without the assistance of any person or source not explicitly noted, and that the work has not previously been submitted for academic credit in any area.

### **1.2 Appropriation vs. Plagiarism**

Appropriation is the act of using borrowed elements in an artwork. Walter Benjamin argues that a new context gives the borrowed element new meaning. Critics point out that this practice not only constitutes intellectual theft but prevents young artists from developing their own technical and conceptual skills. Proponents say that appropriation *is* an art form and with its own technical and conceptual requirements. Other supporters of appropriation argue that copyright and ownership of imagery are outdated concepts and any image may be used by anyone.

In the Department of Digital Arts, appropriation is acceptable only if the act of appropriation is of conceptual significance to the artwork and the appropriated material is properly cited. Borrowing elements, as a matter of convenience, that do not significantly contribute to the conceptual meaning of the work is unacceptable.

Plagiarism means presenting work or ideas created by another person or entity as your own. It is unequivocally unacceptable at Pratt Institute, and may result in receiving a failing grade for the course, suspension from classes for a semester, and/or expulsion from the Institute.

It is possible to refer to another person's work and *not* plagiarize. For example, if you use an illustration from a book or website, it is acceptable as long as you clearly cite the author and source of the illustration. Using text from a book or website is acceptable, as long as you:

- a) clearly indicate the author and source of the text
- b) present the text as either a long or short quotation. For guidelines on the proper use of text and quotes, see the "*Sample Thesis Document*", available from your Thesis Advisor.

If you use someone else's work and do not indicate the source, you are implying that you did the work yourself. This is dishonest, and it is plagiarism.

Clear examples of plagiarism include:

- o using a 3d model or animation sequence developed by someone else and *not* crediting the original artist(s)
- o quoting text from a book or website and *not* citing the source
- o using an illustration and *not* citing the original artist
- o engaging another student in the production of your project *without* indicating their contributions in your production credits
- o using a piece of music composed by someone else and *not* citing the original composer
- o using programming code for an effect or process which was written by someone else and *not* citing the source of that code

Some forms of plagiarism are harder to define. If you use a set of ideas developed by someone else and reshape them for use in your own work, you must still credit the originator of those ideas. For example, if you create an animation based on an existing story, you must acknowledge this in production credits. An example of appropriate credit may appear in this form: "Based on the novel by James Joyce".

Collaboration with other Pratt students is encouraged and does not constitute plagiarism as long as all contributors are properly credited.

If you are in doubt as to whether something constitutes plagiarism, speak to your Thesis Advisor before you proceed.

In addition to citing the source of borrowed content for use in your Thesis proposal, if borrowed content appears in your finished Thesis in audio or visual form, you must first obtain written permission from the copyright owner in order to use such content. Documentation of this permission must be included in the finished paper. The Institute policy on this issue is as follows:

#### **Digital Copyright and Intellectual Property Protection**□

It is the policy of DDA and Pratt Institute to promote respect for the creative works of others. Infringement takes place when a substantial part of a work is copied, made available to others, or adapted into a new form without the permission of the creator. Images, text, logos, software, sounds, film/video clips, email, postings to newsgroups, and other works distributed electronically are protected by copyright, just as they are in traditional media. Protection technologies such as watermarking and encryption are supported and must be respected. DDA does not condone copyright infringement and disciplinary action will be taken if this policy is violated.

### **1.3 Thesis Proposal Approval Procedure**

Thesis Research students are required to make a Thesis Proposal Presentation to the Thesis Committee. The Thesis Committee is comprised of the full time professors, Chairperson and Assistant Chairperson of DDA.

If the Committee accepts the proposal with little or no change requested, the Thesis Research student will be considered a Thesis Candidate and will be permitted to advance to Thesis. It is expected that the Thesis project will be developed as proposed.

If the proposal is not accepted by the Committee, the Thesis Research student will be required to re-enroll in Thesis Research (or in another course recommended by the Committee and/or approved by the Department Chair), and present a revised Thesis Proposal. No Thesis Research student will be permitted to advance to Thesis until his or her Thesis Proposal is accepted.

Unsuccessful Thesis Research students may also opt to withdraw from the program. If a Thesis Research student fails to achieve advancement into Thesis after three semesters of Thesis Research, s/he will not be permitted to continue in the MFA program.

## **Advancing to Thesis**

### **2.0 Establishing Thesis Advancement**

Once the Thesis Committee determines the status of a Thesis Research student, the student will receive a letter from their Thesis Research advisor noting the final determination of the candidate's advancement status and include a summary of reasons for the decision. A copy of this letter will be held on file, along with a copy of the Thesis Proposal.

Thesis Research students who do *not* advance into Thesis are advised to consider this letter in the preparation of their revised Thesis Proposal presentation. Thesis Research students who advance into Thesis will be expected to pursue their Thesis project as approved by the Thesis Committee.

### **2.1 Finding a Thesis Advisor**

The members of the DDA Thesis Committee constitute a pool of potential DDA Thesis Advisors. When a Thesis Candidate advances into Thesis, the candidate is required to find a suitable Thesis Advisor among those scheduled to conduct Thesis I. The pairing of Thesis Candidates with Thesis Advisors is to be achieved by mutual consent.

After the first set of Thesis Proposal Presentations, Thesis Research students must seek out the Thesis Advisor of their preference and obtain permission to register for DDA 600A Thesis I with this Advisor. If this is not done, an advisor will be assigned by the Chair.

Continuation with the same advisor is expected throughout Thesis and Thesis In-Progress (TIP). Students who wish to change advisors must consult with their current advisor and make a special request to the Chairperson. Such changes will generally not be permitted except in special circumstances as determined by the Chairperson.

### **2.2 Forming a Thesis Class**

In order for a potential Thesis Advisor to conduct a scheduled section of the Thesis course, a minimum of four and a maximum of nine Thesis students must be enrolled. If a Thesis Committee member agrees to undertake Thesis advisement for any student, s/he must be prepared to undertake at least four (more) Thesis Candidates in order to be assigned a Thesis section. Students who wish to work with a Thesis Advisor without an assigned The-

sis section may recruit other Thesis students to work with the same Advisor in order to achieve sufficient enrollment for a Thesis section.

### **2.3 Lab Access**

Thesis students will be granted **full** access to the labs they require (as specified in their approved thesis proposal) for each term of Thesis I, Thesis II and TIP.

## **PART II: THESIS (and Thesis-In-Progress)**

### **1.0 Submitting Drafts of the Thesis Paper**

Timely drafts of the written thesis document are essential to the successful completion of all thesis projects. All first semester (DDA 660A) Thesis I students must submit two draft versions of the written document to their Thesis Advisor. The first draft is due on the 8th session of the semester. The second draft (or final) is due on the 14th session. If a thesis student fails to submit these reports on time, s/he will not be allowed to advance to Thesis II.

### **1.1 Submitting Completed Thesis Project and Paper for Approval**

Thesis students must submit their completed thesis project and paper and receive approval, indicated by signature of the Advisor and the Chairperson.

The deadlines for submitting completed theses are:

**The third week of April for May graduates.**

**The first week of December for February graduates.**

The Thesis Advisor must approve and sign both copies of a completed thesis paper before it is to be signed by the Chairperson. Thesis students are personally responsible for the delivery of materials to each signatory, allowing a total of two weeks for review by each party. Extra time should be allotted for final corrections.

#### **Note:**

1 - Theses submitted for signatures without sufficient time allotted to meet the Library deadline, or theses presented without all required visual materials may not be considered and may be returned unsigned.

2 - Requests for signature and approval cannot be considered during holidays, vacations, or any other time when faculty do not normally work. For this reason, Thesis Advisors usually arrange a deadline date that falls within their schedule. Thesis students are expected to complete their work by their Thesis Advisor's deadline, which may be different than those listed above. Please consult with your Thesis Advisor.

3 - Thesis advisors are not available for summer submissions.

4 - Thesis candidates must not presume that their Thesis Advisor will approve their thesis paper upon submission. Most thesis papers are not approved the first time they are submitted. Thesis Candidates should plan for at least two revisions to their paper before receiving approval from their Thesis Advisor.

### **1.2 Library Deadlines**

When the above requirements have been met, the Thesis is then ready to be delivered to the Library by the following deadlines:

**January 15 for February graduates**  
**May 15 for June graduates**

*NOTE: \*\*There is a September 15 deadline listed by the Library that does not apply to DDA students. DDA Thesis Candidates are not permitted to graduate in October.*

One copy of the completed Thesis must be presented for archiving in the Resource Center of the Department of Digital Arts.

### **1.3 Components of a Thesis**

Theses submitted to the Library and to the DDA Resource Center must contain both the written document and the visual project. Students who have not completed both components of a thesis and submitted these materials for archiving to the Library and the DDA will not be permitted to receive their degrees.

### **1.4 Format of the Written Document**

The written document must be unbound and printed on 8½"x11" watermarked, acid-free, minimum 20-lb. weight white paper for preservation purposes. Only letter quality print-outs with a minimum of 300 dpi/ppi resolution are acceptable. All illustrations accompanying the written document (not the visual project) may be mounted or printed on the same paper used for the thesis document.

- Each page must have a left-hand margin of 1.5 inches to allow for binding. The right, top and bottom margins should be 1" wide.
- The space for signatures (on the signature page) should be tall enough for signatures to fit comfortably ( $\pm 3/4"$ ).
- Underlined text is not acceptable; italic or bold text should be employed instead.
- The first paragraph of each chapter or section should not be indented.

The Graduate Theses section on the Pratt Institute Libraries website should be consulted for further details.

<http://library.pratt.edu/theses.html>

For reference, please obtain a copy of a properly formatted "*Sample Thesis Document*", available from your Thesis Advisor.

### **1.5 Contents of the Written Document**

The written document is an extension of the Research Report and Thesis Proposal, and should contain both technical and aesthetic processes and discoveries. Since technique is an important component of this MFA program, technical issues must be properly documented in all theses.

Thesis students must check periodically with their advisors and make sure that their written reports (the students' report) are both readable and interesting. "Readable" means that there are no major flaws in clarity, syntax, spelling or grammar. "Interesting" means that projects are discussed and documented in an articulate, original, and artistic manner, and that technical innovations and discoveries are explained in detail so that others in our community may benefit from them.

**Please note:**

Thesis Research and Thesis Advisors are responsible for advisement, not for proofreading or text correction. Research and Thesis students must possess sufficient command of the English language in order to execute their paper. It is the responsibility of the student to engage the assistance of a qualified proofreader in order to compose a graduate-level paper.

**The Pratt Institute Writing Center (718.636.4461), located in North Hall 101,** is a highly recommended resource for reviewing papers. While the Writing Center cannot offer extensive, detailed assistance, it is very helpful in improving initial drafts.

## **1.6 Format of the Visual Project**

All time-based projects (animation, video, motion arts projects, as well as documentations of installations and interactive works) must be delivered in full-length and utilize the standard opening and/or closing credits provided by the Department of Digital Arts. The Total Run Time (TRT) for all time-based projects shall not exceed five minutes.

Please refer to the “**Preparing Files for Graduate Thesis Projects**” document for the appropriate technical specifications.

The visual project may be presented in a variety of ways:

- **Animation, video, and motion arts projects** must be delivered on both Mini-DV and DVD media.

Department:    1) One Mini-DV tape.  
                      2) One DVD disc, playable as a movie on DVD players.  
                      3) One data-DVD containing the project as an uncompressed original file

Library:            1) One copy of the project will be presented to the Library on DVD media (see 1.9).  
                      2) 1 set of the completed thesis paper (as per section 1.5, above).  
                      *\*Students should note that a \$20.00 binding fee must be paid to the Library.*

- **Computer-screen-based interactive projects:**

Department:    1) Video documentation of the project on a mini-DV tape and DVD.  
                      2) Digital files of key screens on a data DVD or CD-ROM.  
                      3) A hybrid (Mac+PC) CD-ROM of the interactive project. The project must run on Mac OSX and Windows. Web projects must be prepared to run locally if at all possible. Required plug-ins and appropriate runtime players (such as projectors) must also be included, in addition to the authoring file(s). The CD-ROM must also contain a directory of the required digital screen grabs.

Library:            1) A hybrid (Mac+PC) CD-ROM (above).  
                      2) 1 set of the completed thesis paper (as per section 1.5, above).  
                      *\*Students should note that a \$20.00 binding fee must be paid to the Library.*

The interface design must provide either a consistently available method for users to restart the project, or a timeout feature that will automatically restart the project after two minutes of inactivity.

- **Installations and interactive objects:**



Department: 1) Video and photographic documentation of the project in use on a mini-DV tape and DVD.  
2) Digital files of key screens on a data DVD or CD-ROM.  
3) Uncompiled files of the programs used to control the installation or object, and documents describing the installation plan and wiring diagrams as appropriate, must be included on the CD-ROM.

Library: 1) Video and photographic documentation of the project in use on a DVD.  
2) 1 set of the completed thesis paper (as per section 1.5, above).  
*\*Students should note that a \$20.00 binding fee must be paid to the Library.*

• **Multiple edition projects**  
(artist's books, prints, photographs)

Department: 1) Original files on CD-ROM or data DVD at original resolution.  
2) Photographic documentation uncompressed at high resolution.  
3) One finished copy of the book or:  
4) Printouts of a representative set of the images printed on 8 1/2 x 11" acid-free archival paper. These printouts should be included within the thesis paper.

Library: 1) Original files on CD-ROM or data DVD at original resolution.  
2) Photographic documentation uncompressed at high resolution.  
3) 1 set of the completed thesis paper (as per section 1.5, above).  
*\*Students should note that a \$20.00 binding fee must be paid to the Library.*

• **One-of-a-kind visual projects** (i.e. mixed media works, stereolithography, etc.)

Department: 1) Original files on CD-ROM or data DVD at original resolution.  
2) Photographic documentation uncompressed at high resolution.

Library: 1) Original files on CD-ROM or data DVD at original resolution.  
2) Photographic documentation uncompressed at high resolution.  
3) 1 set of the completed thesis paper (as per section 1.5, above).  
*\*Students should note that a \$20.00 binding fee must be paid to the Library.*

### **1.7 Final Presentation & Exhibition**

- All Thesis Candidates must present their Completed Thesis to the Thesis Committee in a scheduled presentation arranged by the DDA Office. The annual Pratt Show is the premiere exhibition of the highest caliber work of the Institute's graduating students. During a scheduled presentation, or Screening Day, the Thesis Committee will jury selections for the Pratt Show. All students must participate in the Screening Day in order to be considered for the Pratt Show.
- All Thesis Candidates must publicly exhibit the visual portion of their thesis in such a manner as to make it readily viewable by the Thesis Committee, the students and faculty of the Department, and the Pratt community. Such exhibitions must be arranged in advance with, and approved by, the DDA Office.
- All Thesis projects must be submitted to at least one appropriate major venue, as approved by the Thesis Advisor.

### **1.8 Credits**

The opening or closing credits on all visual projects must reflect the information contained on the title page of the thesis. This includes the following:

- Your name
- The Title of your thesis
- The name of your thesis advisor
- The name of the Chairperson of the DDA dept.
- The words "Pratt Institute" (logo required)
- The words "Department of Digital Arts" (logo optional)
- The date (month and year)
- A copyright statement in the following format: "© [year] [Your name]"\*  
*\*pending Pratt Institute policy revision*

This information may be displayed in any style, as long as it is readable (i.e. for a reasonable period, in a legible color, typeface, and size, etc.). The final arrangement must be approved by the DDA office.

Special questions regarding the format of unique and/or complex visual projects should be directed to the Chairperson of the Department of Digital Arts.

### **1.9 Permission to Reproduce Work**

Thesis students agree to permit Pratt Institute to use and distribute reproductions of still images, motion pictures and related materials or information for educational or promotional purposes.

## PART III: The Thesis Process

### 3.0 The Thesis Process Schedule

Please note that all MFA candidates must complete CG650 Thesis Research before they may enroll in Thesis.

Semester	Class	Credits	Status
3 <sup>rd</sup>	CG650 Thesis Research	3 Credits	Full-time
If student's thesis proposal is approved by the Thesis Committee:			
4 <sup>th</sup>	CG660A Thesis I	6 Credits	Full-time
5 <sup>th</sup>	CG660B Thesis II	3 Credits	Full-time
If thesis studies continue, the following applies:			
6 <sup>th</sup>	CG700 Thesis-In-Progress	0 Credits	Full-time
7 <sup>th</sup>	CG700 Thesis-In-Progress	0 Credits	Half-time
8 <sup>th</sup>	CG700 Thesis-In-Progress	0 Credits	Half-time
9 <sup>th</sup>	CG700 Thesis-In-Progress	0 Credits	<Half time

Students in all stages of Thesis status (Thesis Research, Thesis I, Thesis II, Thesis In-Progress) are **required** to pre-register for the upcoming semester before the previous semester ends. *\*Spring semester Pre-Registration occurs in early November; Fall semester Pre-Registration usually begins in late March.*

In order to remain in good standing, Thesis students must fulfill all obligations to their advisor, such as attending all scheduled advisement meetings, and demonstrating progress. All students will be required to present their progress to the Thesis Committee at the end of CG 660A Thesis I, CG 660B Thesis II, and after the second semester of CG 700 Thesis In-Progress.

MFA studies are limited to a maximum of seven years of continuous enrollment. Thesis studies are limited to a maximum of three years, or six semesters of continuous enrollment, beginning with enrollment in DDA 660A Thesis I. If, by the end of that period, the thesis requirements are not met and/or the thesis paper and thesis project are not accepted, the student will be withdrawn from thesis credit and required to re-register for the unfulfilled thesis credit requirements. Furthermore, anyone who is required to undertake thesis for a second time must re-submit his or her thesis proposal and gain re-approval for advancement into Thesis.

### 3.1 Thesis-In-Progress Status

If at the end of Thesis II, completion of the thesis is pending, students receive an In-Progress (IP) designation at the end of the term. TIP students are required to register for Thesis-In-Progress (CG700) during each Fall and Spring semester they remain In-Progress. Note: Students registered as TIP in the Spring will be considered as continuously registered through the Summer.

### 3.2 Thesis-In-Progress Policies

Thesis candidates must remain current in Thesis or Thesis-In-Progress without interruption until the Thesis Advisor and Chairperson accepts their thesis. Students are responsible for their continuous enrollment each Fall and Spring semester.

TIP students must meet at least once with their Thesis Advisor during each semester and must demonstrate reasonable progress to the satisfaction of their Thesis Advisor. As noted in Section 3.0, all Thesis In-Progress students must present their project to the Thesis Committee after the second semester of TIP.

Students who do not fulfill these requirements will lose their IP status. If they wish to complete their thesis and earn their degree, they will be required to repeat the thesis process from the beginning. To avoid late fees, Thesis-In-Progress students must register during the Pre-Registration periods\* for CG700 Thesis In-Progress.

*\*Spring semester Pre-Registration occurs in early November; Fall semester Pre-Registration usually begins in late March.*

### **3.3            Advisor's Report**

Thesis advisors will provide the DDA Chairperson with an end-of-semester status report for all thesis students (CG 660A, CG660B and CG 700) no later than one week after the last class of the semester. This report must include an indication of whether or not the thesis student is current, and may include a brief assessment of the student's progress as well as the advisor's recommendations.

### **3.4            Thesis And TIP Grading Policy**

All Thesis students will receive a letter grade for CG 660A Thesis I. CG 660B Thesis II and Thesis IP are graded 'IP' until their advisor assigns a final grade upon completion of the Thesis project. A failing grade may be assigned if the student failed to remain in proper progress or communication, failed to complete a satisfactory thesis project and paper.

A TIP student who fails to remain in satisfactory standing may alternatively be assigned a grade of WD (withdrawal). In that case, the student must repeat the Thesis process from the beginning.

## ***Master of Fine Arts in Computer Graphics Thesis Requirements and Guidelines Agreement***

*Revised: September 19, 2006*

I have received and read the document entitled “Master of Fine Arts in Computer Graphics Thesis Requirements and Guidelines.” I understand that by enrolling in courses CG650 Thesis Research, CG660A Thesis I, CG660B Thesis II and/or CG700 Thesis In-Progress, I consent to all terms and conditions stipulated in the preceding document. This includes but is not limited to issues regarding deadlines, components of a thesis, format of the written paper, format of the visual project, permission to reproduce and exhibit work for educational purposes, and lab access.

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Student's Name *(please print clearly)*

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Student's Signature

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Received by Thesis Research Advisor

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Date