Pratt

Pratt Institute
Department of Digital Arts

Master of Fine Arts in Computer Graphics Thesis Requirements

Revised July 2007

PREFACE

The Thesis Requirements document applies to all DDA650 Thesis Research, DDA660A and DDA660B Thesis, and DDA700 Thesis-In-Progress students.

This document 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/

Any 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 requirements by signing the Guidelines Agreement at the end of this document and by registering for courses DDA650 Thesis Research, DDA660A Thesis I, DDA660B Thesis II, and DDA700 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 Proposal**.

PART I: THESIS RESEARCH

The purpose of Thesis Research is to help MFA candidates select a topic for their Thesis, and to plan and propose its implementation. If the Thesis Committee accepts the Thesis Project 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 the thesis paper, production timeline, budget, research source materials and pre-visualization materials, such as maquettes, installation drawings, sketches, work prints, storyboards, animatics, interface designs, etc.

1.0   Criteria for Approval of Thesis Project Proposal
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, artistic merit, 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 also prevents young artists from developing their own technical and conceptual skills. Proponents say that appropriation *is* an art form 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 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.

Additional Information regarding Copyright Protection
(source: Stanford University Libraries)

All works published in the United States before 1923 are in the public domain. Works published after 1922, but before 1978 are protected for 95 years from the date of publication. If the work was created, but not published, before 1978, the copyright lasts for the life of the author plus 70 years. However, even if the author died over 70 years ago, the

copyright in an unpublished work lasts until December 31, 2002. And if such a work is published before December 31, 2002, the copyright will last until December 31, 2047.

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 Department of Digital Arts full time professors, Chairperson and Assistant Chairperson.

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-take Thesis Research (and in any other courses recommended by the Committee or 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.

PART II: 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 full time faculty 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 Thesis proposal is approved, Thesis Research students must seek out the Thesis Advisor of their preference and obtain permission to register for DDA 660A 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 three additional Thesis Candidates in order to be assigned a Thesis section. Students who wish to work with a Thesis Advisor without an assigned

Thesis 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 <u>full</u> access to the labs they require (as specified in their approved thesis proposal) for each term of Thesis I, Thesis II and TIP.

PART III: THESIS

3.0   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.

3.1   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 <u>before</u> it is to be signed by the Chairperson. Thesis students are personally responsible for the delivery of materials to each signatory, <u>allowing a total of two weeks for review by each party</u>. Extra time should be allotted for final corrections.

<u>Note:</u>

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. <u>Please consult with your Thesis Advisor.</u>

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.

3.2   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 <u>**not**</u> 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.

3.3 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.

3.4 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 printouts 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.
• On the signature page, the space above the signature line should be at least ¾" high.
• 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.

3.5 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, <u>not</u> 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.

Pratt Institute's **Writing and Tutorial Center (WTC)** is located on the first floor of North Hall, and 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.

3.6 Format of the Visual Project

All time-based projects (animation, video, motion arts, 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.

Total Run Time. The total run time (TRT) for all time-based projects must not exceed four (4) minutes. If the TRT is exceeded, permission must be obtained from the Thesis Committee and an edited version of the final project (either a trailer or a short film version) must be submitted with the full-length project.

Settings. All time-based projects must be edited using the DV-NTSC settings specified below:

- Resolution: 720 x 480
- Frame Rate: 29.97 fps
- Compression: NONE
- Pixel Aspect Ratio: 0.9
- Interlacing: NONE
- Audio: 48 kHz sampling rate, 16 bit stereo, uncompressed (WAF, AIFF or SD-II)

Calibration. Evaluate the brightness and color of the project on a properly calibrated NTSC video (non computer) monitor. Calibration is accomplished by adjusting the brightness and color controls on a video monitor while color bars are displayed. *(If you do not do this, your project may appear brighter or darker than expected.)*

Audio Levels. The loudest sounds in the project should peak between -5 and -1 dB as indicated on the audio level meters within your video editing software. Adjust the audio levels to these settings will ensure that your project is not louder or softer than expected.

• **Digital Animation and Motion Arts projects** must be delivered on both Mini-DV and DVD media.

Visual Effects Highlight Reel. For projects including visual effects, create a **brief, separate** highlight reel featuring the layered, composited effects scenes in your project. This reel must follow the credits after your complete project and should be submitted on the same media listed below.

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) <u>One</u> copy of the project will be presented to the Library on a playable DVD.
2) 1 set of the completed thesis paper.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

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, stereo-lithography, 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.*

Students should note that a $20.00 binding fee must be paid to the Library.

3.7   Final Presentation & Exhibitions
• **Final Thesis Presentation.** All Thesis Candidates must present their Completed Thesis project to the Thesis Committee in a scheduled presentation arranged by the DDA Office.

• **Screening Day.** Each Spring, the Department of Digital Arts presents the work of graduating BFA and MFA students to the Pratt community and public. During the Screening Day event, the Thesis Committee will jury selections for the Pratt Show.

• **Pratt Show**. The annual Pratt Show is the premiere exhibition of the highest caliber work of the Institute's graduating students. In order to be considered for the Pratt Show, students must participate in the Screening Day.

• **Exhibition.** 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.

3.8   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 department Chairperson
> • Credit for contributors or collaborators, if any
> • List of software used
> • The words "Pratt Institute" *(logo <u>required)</u>*
> • The words "Department of Digital Arts" *(logo optional)*
> • The date (month and year)
> • A copyright statement in the following format: "© [year] [Your name]"*

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.

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

3.9   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 IV: THE THESIS PROCESS

4.0   The Thesis Process Schedule
Please note that all MFA candidates must complete DDA650 Thesis Research before they may enroll in Thesis.

Semester	Class	Credits	Status
3rd	DDA650 Thesis Research	3 Credits	Full-time

If student's Thesis Proposal is approved by the Thesis Committee:

4th	DDA660A Thesis I	6 Credits	Full-time
5th	DDA660B Thesis II	3 Credits	Full-time

If thesis studies continue, the following applies:

6th	DDA700 Thesis-In-Progress	0 Credits	Full-time
7th	DDA700 Thesis-In-Progress	0 Credits	Half-time
8th	DDA700 Thesis-In-Progress	0 Credits	Half-time
9th	DDA700 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 DDA 660AThesis I, DDA 660B Thesis II, and each semester of 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.

4.1   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 (DDA700) 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.

4.2   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 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 at the end of each 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 <u>Pre-Registration periods*</u> for DDA700 Thesis In-Progress.

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

4.3   Advisor's Report
Thesis advisors will provide the DDA Chairperson with an end-of-semester status report for all thesis students (DDA 660A, DDA660B and DDA 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.

4.4   Thesis And TIP Grading Policy
All Thesis students will receive a letter grade for DDA 660A Thesis I.

DDA 660B Thesis II and Thesis In Progress are graded 'IP' until the Thesis advisor assigns a final grade upon completion of the Thesis project.

A failing grade may be assigned if the student fails to remain in proper progress or communication, or fails to complete a satisfactory thesis project and paper.

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Pratt Institute
Department of Digital Arts

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

Revised: July 2007

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 DDA650

Thesis Research, DDA660A Thesis I, DDA660B Thesis II and/or DDA700 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.

_____

Student's Name (*please print clearly)*

_____

Student's Signature

_____

Received by Thesis Research Advisor

_____

Date