

**College of Communication Arts & Sciences**

**M.A. ACADEMIC HANDBOOK**

For the **Department of Media and Information**



(Updated 08/18)

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## **I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **A. AIMS OF THE MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM**

This handbook describes the Master of Arts (M.A.) program in the Department of Media and Information (MI) at Michigan State University. The Department is a unit of the College of Communication Arts and Sciences (CAS).

The aim of the M.A. program is to prepare individuals for professional positions in a broad range of positions in information and media industries. It also prepares students for continuing study in a Ph.D. program. Graduates of the program are expected to master the professional competencies required for success in these areas.

Students can customize their program to focus on any area of their choosing. Students have several options to customize their program of learning, ranging from more in-depth programs on serious games and a joint program with the College of Business (see below for more detail).

The Department is a community of scholars that attracts students from around the world who, together with our faculty, celebrate ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity for the benefit of all. Students are expected to be an active part of the intellectual life of the Department and to maintain collegial relations with their faculty and with other students.

### **B. GRADUATE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC GOVERNMENT**

In addition to participating in intellectual life of the Department, students are urged to take an active role in academic governance through participation in the Department's M.A. Studies Committee, faculty meetings, and the Council of Graduate students.

#### **1. M.A. Committee**

The M.A. Committee is composed of faculty members and two graduate students. Its functions are:

- To assure the highest level and quality of instruction.
- Regular review and evaluation of the graduate curriculum, seeking information and advice from students, faculty, authorities outside the University, including the professional community.
- Regular review and evaluation of the procedures for administering the graduate program, seeking advice and information from students, faculty, administrators, and authorities outside the University.
- Presentation at Department meetings of recommendations for revision of the curriculum, administrative procedures, and admission standards in the graduate program.
- Development and implementation of procedures for communicating administrative and curricular information to graduate students.

The Chair of the M.A. Committee will call for student nominations to the M.A. Committee early in the fall semester. All enrolled M.A. students may vote by e-mail or other means. The two obtaining the highest number of votes will serve for the concurrent fall semester and following spring semester. The person with the highest number of votes will represent students, with vote, at faculty meetings. The other is the alternate.

## **2. Representation at Department Meetings**

The work of the M.A. Studies Committee is largely confined to making studies and recommendations; it is not a legislative group. Department legislation is enacted at department meetings, called and chaired by the Department Chairperson. A Department meeting may consider reports and recommendations of the M.A. Studies Committee and may refer matters to that Committee for recommendations. Department meetings generally are scheduled in advance for the whole semester.

## **3. Council of Graduate Students (COGS)**

The Council of Graduate Students (COGS) represents the graduate student population to the rest of the University (<http://cogs.msu.edu>). We encourage students to take an active interest in its activities.

## **4. Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities**

Rights and responsibilities as a graduate student at Michigan State University are explained at <http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/graduate-student-rights-and-responsibilities>.

# **II. PROGRAM COMPONENTS/PLAN OPTIONS**

## **A. AREAS OF STRENGTH**

The growing areas of social media, games, and online technology applications are creating exciting new careers in the information age. The Master of Arts programs in the Department of Media and Information at Michigan State University prepares you to manage information technology, to create original interactive content, and to contribute to the ongoing debate about the roles communication media can play in society.

### **1. User Experience**

"User experience" (UX) design is a growing field that encompasses all aspects of the end-user's interaction with information, products, and services made available through information and communication technologies. UX approaches also take into account the organization's goals and objectives, and aim to inform or optimize the design of interactive systems through theoretically-informed, empirically validated best practices. UX design deeply integrates user research throughout all phases of the iterative design process (strategy, execution, and assessment). UX design considers quantitative and qualitative, formative and summative methods, user motivations, behaviors, and experiences, principles and processes involved in the design of interactive systems, including both interface and content.

Students focusing in this area will be able to understand user needs, generate technology designs, bring them to life, and understand their impact. We are training future information professionals to work at the intersection of cutting edge technology and social change. Career paths include user experience researcher, designer, analyst, or lead; usability tester; interaction designer; information architect; web application front-end developer.

### **2. Games, Film & Transmedia Production**

Games, both digital and non-digital, and film have long served as the leading visual forms of non-fiction and fictional storytelling. Recently, as the lines between these various forms of storytelling have begun to become

less clear, the term "Transmedia," has been used to describe the way that stories are increasingly told through interconnected experiences across multiple media platforms such as films, games, virtual reality, mobile apps, social media, and comics. Transmedia is commonly used as an approach for expanding the outreach and social impact of any given form of storytelling.

The Games, Film & Transmedia Production focus brings storytellers with expertise in one of the above forms of storytelling and puts them into collaboration with storytellers from other forms. This is a "studio" focused concentration, with the production of media products in collaboration with peers within the concentration and with undergraduate students interested in working on these various forms of storytelling media.

### **3. Management of Media and Information**

Management of Media and Information focuses on introducing core principles of management as applied to media and information, and the applications of new media and information technologies and services for all types of organizations. It is ideal for students with an entrepreneurial mindset; those seeking to build or manage media and information enterprises; or those aspiring to become a manager of new media and information systems and services in for- and not-for-profit organizations.

### **4. Economics, Policy and Society**

Economics, Policy, and Society focuses on understanding the social and economic implications of new media and information technologies and services. It introduces students to current theories and ways of studying media and information, both in the US and from a global perspective, in order to inform research, policy making, and practice. It is ideal for students seeking to pursue doctoral level study or to use new media and information for business, government, nonprofits, and society as a whole.

## **B. PROGRAM OPTIONS**

### **1. Specialization in Management of Information Technology (MIT)**

This specialization is for students wishing careers in information technology management. It includes a selection of courses from the MSU business school as well as courses in organizational communication and communication technology taken in the department.

### **2. Graduate Certificate in Serious Game Design & Research**

This three-course graduate certificate is intended for game industry professionals, educators, and media specialists, who want to better understand serious game design, theory, and player research. This certificate is open to both degree granting and non-degree granting students and is transcriptable.

## **C. EXIT PLAN OPTIONS**

Students may choose between two options, referred to as Plan A and Plan B. *Plan A* requires a thesis, enrollment in 4-6 credits of TC 899 (Thesis Research), and an oral examination in defense of the thesis. *Plan B* requires either the completion of a Master's Project oral exam or a Poster oral exam.

## 1. Plan A – Master’s Thesis

### a. Forming a Thesis Committee

The student chooses the Chairperson of the thesis and two other faculty members to form the Thesis Committee. The thesis Chairperson and one committee member must be regular faculty or an academic specialist from the Department of Media and Information. The second committee member may be regular faculty from anywhere in the university. With a general topic in mind, the student asks the faculty members if they are willing to serve on this committee. Media and Information faculty interests and research are listed online at the departmental website at <http://mi.msu.edu>. The Academic Advisor is not necessarily a member of the Thesis Committee if other members of the faculty are more appropriate for the student’s selected topic and method. The Thesis Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies must sign-off on a thesis proposal form to which the thesis proposal is attached for their review.

### b. Thesis proposal

An M.A. thesis is original research that makes a significant contribution to knowledge, and is to be prepared and published. This is a challenging undertaking, hence the need for the student to first develop a proposal. The proposal typically consists of a research statement that includes both the research question(s) and the motivation guiding the thesis, a review of relevant literature and a deduced theoretical foundation, a proposed theoretical model, the envisioned research and data analysis methods, and the implications of the thesis for both theory and practice. It is important to have a detailed proposal, so as to avoid any potential subsequent disagreement among members of the group (i.e. the student and the three advisors). Once the proposal is deemed by the chairperson of the committee to be “ready,” it is sent to the other members of the committee and an oral examination date in defense of the proposal is scheduled, with at least 2 weeks’ lead time for the committee to review the work. At the examination, the student is expected to give a brief presentation about the thesis. The committee members will ask questions, and either approve the proposal, approve with required revisions, or reject the proposal; in the latter case, the process is initiated again from the start.

### c. Thesis credits

An M.A. thesis requires enrollment in 4 to 6 credits (TC 899). No more than 6 thesis credits can count toward the required 30. A student may sign up for thesis credits in any semester, but should reserve at least one credit for the semester the thesis is to be completed.

### d. Preparation of Thesis

All drafts of the thesis must be clearly written, observing American English language grammar, usage and style. Students may be required to retain the services of a professional editor at the option of the thesis advisor. The content of one or more chapters of a thesis may come directly from paper(s) already published with multiple authors in addition to the student author of the thesis. To do so, however, the following are required:

1. These chapters must be introduced with the list of all authors, citation for the publication, and include a copy or notation of the written permission from the publisher (who generally holds the copyright) to reprint the article; and
2. If multiple articles make up the document, these must be “tied together” with a required general introduction and summary/discussion.

### e. Oral examination

After the thesis is completed, but before it is edited in final form and bound, the Thesis Committee will conduct an oral exam over the thesis. After the student has passed this exam, all members of the committee will sign a

form verifying the outcome, or may hold the form until revisions have been completed. The form is also signed by the Director of Graduate Studies, and filed in the student's folder.

### **3. Plan B – Master's Project**

#### a. Forming a Project Committee

The student chooses the Chairperson of the Project and one other faculty member to form the Project Committee. The thesis Chairperson must be regular faculty or an academic specialist from the Department of Media and Information. The second committee member may be regular faculty from anywhere in the university. With a general topic in mind, the student asks the faculty members if they are willing to serve on this committee. Media and Information faculty interests and research are listed online at the departmental website at <http://mi.msu.edu>. The Academic Advisor is not necessarily a member of the Project Committee if other members of the faculty are more appropriate for the student's selected topic and method. The Project Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies must sign-off on a Project proposal form to which the Project proposal is attached for their review.

Once you have developed a general topic you need to choose a chairperson to serve on your examination committee. Once you have selected your chairperson, work with him/her on refining your concept, developing a draft, and ultimately refining a proposal. The student will then need to finalize forming the full committee and defining the Project's topic by submitting the TC 898 M.A. Project Approval Form. This must be submitted and approved by the committee and Director of Graduate Studies prior to enrolling for any TC 898 credits. The committee for a project must consist of two members, i.e. a Chairperson and a Member of the Project Committee. This Chairperson must be regular faculty or an academic specialist from the Department of Media and Information. The second member may be regular faculty from anywhere in the university.

#### b. Project proposal

The content of a Project proposal is developed by the student and should be the culmination of the student's M.A. work. It should incorporate what the student has learned throughout the program. It should be different, better, more substantial than what s/he could have created before entering the program. The Project is the student's primary portfolio piece, the project s/he spent the most time and best showcases his/her abilities. However, the expectation of the time spent would include a majority of time creating the media work, with a minority of time writing the project report. If the project report includes research involving human subjects, then University regulations require that [Human Research Protection Program \(IRB\)](#) approval be obtained prior to conducting that research. Students whose focus is primarily on production would normally choose the Project option. The media product is the primary showpiece, supported by a paper about the project.

#### c. Project credits

An M.A. project requires enrollment in 4 to 6 credits (TC 898). No more than 6 project credits can count toward the required 30. A student must turn in a signed and approved Project Proposal form in order to enroll for Project Credits.

#### d. Preparation of Project

To earn an M.A. degree using the Master's Project option, it is necessary to pass a final examination of either an HCI or MIM project. Such a Project could be centered on a design task, a creative game, or an ICT project. A written component is required, which must be high quality and meet committee approval. The student's choice of topic and decision on whether or not to do a Project should take into account their own career goals. If there is a particular industry and industry role the student is preparing for, the project should be an impressive

showpiece of the student's abilities related to that career choice. Once the Project committee has been formed, and with guidance from the chairperson of the project committee, the student proceeds with the production, research, and writing of the project. The other committee member may be involved if he/she has a particular skill area that the student needs on the project. However, the primary relationship is between the chairperson of the committee and the student.

e. Oral examination of the M.A. Project

When the production and written component are deemed by the chairperson of the committee to be "ready," the project is sent to the other member of the committee and an examination date is scheduled, with at least 2 weeks' lead time for the committee to review the work. At the examination, the student is expected to give a brief presentation about the project. The committee members and others in attendance will ask questions. The committee then confers to decide whether the project should be accepted as is, accepted with revisions, or rejected. They will also decide upon a grade for the project. Note: See MSU's code on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; **Plagiarism will be grounds for failure. Students who fail by reason of plagiarism will not be allowed to retake the exam and will be terminated from the M.A. program.**

### 3. Plan B – Master's Poster

a. Poster Advisor and Evaluation Committee

The student works under the supervision of his/her Academic Advisor on a Poster that describes the critical portions of a research or practical experience completed concurrently with the student's enrollment in courses. Posters will be evaluated by an evaluation committee consisting of three members: two regular faculty members from the Department of Media and Information, and the Director of Graduate Studies for said Department.

b. Poster content

During the semester of graduation (fall or spring), the student must prepare a poster that describes the critical portions of a research or practical experience completed concurrently with the student's enrollment in courses. Examples of experiences suitable for poster presentations include, but are not limited to, independent study, research experiences or design projects outside of coursework, internships, course projects that have been expanded and taken further than the course allowed for, etc. Similar to the Thesis and Project, the Poster is an Exit Requirement through which a student's mastery of the subject matter can be demonstrated.

c. Poster credits

There are no credits associated with the Poster. However, students who intend to create and present a poster for this Plan B option must also be registered for at least one credit during the semester in which he or she intends to complete the culmination experience.

d. Preparation of Poster

The printed and laminated poster should be of the following dimensions: 40 in. wide by 32 in. tall. There are many resources available on the Internet that provide advice and guidelines for creating effective posters. Here are links to a few suggestions:

- <http://urca.msu.edu/poster-samples>
- <http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/>
- <http://hsp.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/ScientificPosters.pdf>

The table below provides suggestions regarding the poster’s content:

<b>Research or Design Project Poster</b>	<b>Internship Poster</b>
<b>Title</b> (Research title, student name, faculty mentor name. <i>If the project was a team effort, list team members and clearly explain the presenting student’s role</i> )	<b>Title</b> (student name, business name/business focus, location of internship, mentor & faculty name)
<b>Abstract</b> – concise summary of what was done and what was learned	<b>Abstract</b> – concise summary of what was done and what was learned
<b>Introduction</b> - one or two paragraphs explaining why the work was done and the purpose. Alternatively, the purpose may be covered in a brief section titled “objectives.”	<b>Learning objectives</b> – list of the objectives the student planned to achieve by completing the internship...why did the student pursue the internship?
<b>Method</b> - a summary of the method used to gather and analyze the data, or the process or steps followed to produce the design.	<b>Description of responsibilities/activities</b> – a summary of the major responsibilities and activities during the internship
<b>Results/Findings</b> - a brief discussion of major findings or important features of the design or product, using bullet points or numbered sentences, and whenever possible, appropriate visuals (mockups, wireframes, tables, charts and/or graphs, etc.). All visuals should include titles and/or legends. This is the most important focus of the poster.	<b>Special project description</b> – a brief discussion of the special project completed as part of the internship. Describe the objective of the project, activities necessary to complete the project and specific outcomes of the project.
<b>Implications for practice</b> – a paragraph or two of suggestions for how the results, design, or product could help/affect practitioners and/or other designers, and suggestions for future research.	<b>Application of content learned in graduate courses</b> – how did information learned in class help with the internship...what are specific class “learnings” that could be applied during the internship?
<b>Lessons learned</b> – what did you learn about the research, design or development process, the research question, etc. and what would you do differently on this or another project?	<b>Lessons learned</b> – what did you learn about the industry, the company, the career process, yourself?

e. Oral examination of the M.A. Poster

Posters will be presented at a poster session that will take place no later than the Friday before commencement (fall or spring). Poster presentations are expected to last 10-15 minutes, with 5-10 minutes for a question and answer period. As mentioned above, posters will be evaluated by an evaluation committee consisting of three members: two regular faculty members from the Department of Media and Information, and the Director of Graduate Studies for said Department. The responsibility for serving on the evaluation committee will rotate among the faculty members of the department, so the student needs to ensure the work – vis-à-vis the poster – is communicated effectively among a Committee that may not be experts in the student’s specific area of work being presented.

Students must attend the poster session in real-time (i.e., not pre-recorded), either in person or via live video conference, to interact with the evaluation committee and present the poster. Students will dress professionally and appear with their poster to answer questions from the evaluation committee and invited guests (faculty, internship company representatives, family members). Non-attendance is grounds for automatic failure.

Posters will be evaluated on a pass-fail basis. Criteria for evaluation will include dimensions related to the content (i.e., originality; relevance; grounding; comprehensiveness; appropriateness of methods/approach and analysis/implementation; interpretation/significance), its organization (i.e., visual design and layout for both aesthetic appeal and informativeness), and its delivery (i.e., professional language; ability to articulate both what they did and why they did it in a clear and effective spoken presentation; ability to respond to questions effectively). While not recommended, students choosing to present work that was done as part of a team must take extra care to ensure that their poster adequately communicates the student's individual efforts and contributions.

The evaluation committee will provide written feedback to students completing the Plan B Poster Presentation. If a student fails the poster evaluation, he or she will be provided comments that include a rationale and explanation for why the student failed. The student may present a revised version of the poster that corrects areas of the poster or presentation that were deemed insufficient by the committee in the first attempt, in the following Fall or Spring semester. Students may ONLY attempt the poster presentation twice. In cases where the more modest revisions or extensions of the work are required by the Committee, a conditional pass ('satisfactory pending revisions') may be assigned; in these cases, the Chair of the evaluation committee will communicate the required revisions to the student via email along with a deadline. Once the revisions have been completed, the student will communicate said revisions along with a cover letter that outlines how the required revisions were implemented, via email to the Chair of the evaluation committee. Assuming the revised work was deemed satisfactory by the evaluation committee, a 'pass' grade will be awarded.

#### **D. PLAN OF STUDY**

Each M.A. student in the Department of Media and Information must file a Plan of Study. The form may be obtained in the M.A. Office or online at <http://gradstudies.mi.msu.edu/academics/requirements-resources/>. The plan of study is intended as a guide for the student to follow in successfully completing the degree requirements and to ensure that the academic program is appropriate for the student's needs. Incoming M.A. students must meet with their advisor during their first week in the program and develop a Plan of Study. M.A. students are required to complete and submit their plan of study to the M.A. Office by the end of the 2nd week of their first semester of enrollment, where it will be filed with the student's other academic records. Failure to submit a completed and properly signed form by this deadline will result in an academic hold being placed on the student's record. This hold will prevent a student from enrolling in future classes until the Plan of Study form has been received by the M.A. Office.

Modifications to the plan of study must be approved by the student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. Modifications are treated as submitting an entirely new plan of study. If a student changes concentrations, then his/her core requirements, required electives, and prerequisites may also change. The student is responsible for prerequisites on record, which are appropriate to the new course of study chosen. The M.A. Office has forms to request a change of concentration.

Violation of the rules and procedures regarding the M.A. program may result in the student being dis-enrolled; such action would require a majority vote of the M.A. Committee and constitute a recommendation to the department chair.

Please note: It is the student's responsibility to fulfill all of the requirements for the degree in accordance with this manual and any changes that are announced. If a waiver is requested, it is the student's responsibility to be sure that the waiver is properly signed and in the student file. Students are strongly advised to keep the student copy of all documents related to the requirement categories, or monitor progress in those requirements. Faculty advisors should be used to help in academic and career planning, and to clarify requirements if necessary, but

not to count credits in the various requirement categories, or monitor progress in those requirements. This is the responsibility of the student and must be in compliance at the “final certification” for the degree.

To create the plan of study a student should become familiar with the content of:

- Provisional prerequisites specified in the letter of acceptance (if any). A 400-level course specified in the admission letter will count toward the required 30 credits (but lower level courses will not).
- This Handbook, also available online on <http://gradstudies.mi.msu.edu/academics/requirements-resources/>.
- The form for the Plan of Study in the chosen course of study.
- The University’s current [Schedule of Courses](http://schedule.msu.edu) (<http://schedule.msu.edu>) and [Academic Handbook](http://www.reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/) (<http://www.reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/>), which lists course offerings for the upcoming semesters, and explains various academic rules and procedures, including registration procedures.
- The University’s current [Graduate Studies](https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/ProgramDetail.asp?Program=6317) catalog (<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/ProgramDetail.asp?Program=6317>), which lists all graduate-level courses in the University and describes University, College, and Department requirements for the M.A. degree.

Students should also:

- At least tentatively, choose between Plan "A" and Plan "B."
- Select from course listings of the Department and the University courses, which seem most relevant.
- Arrange courses in a semester-by-semester schedule and enter it on the Plan of Study form.

### III. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

#### A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN MEDIA AND INFORMATION

A minimum of 30 credits is required for the master’s degree in Media and Information under either Plan A or Plan B.

##### 1. Media and Information Management MA

1. Select a Minimum of 5 Courses from Below (15 credits):

MI	803	Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods	3
MI	820	Theories of Media & Information	3
MI	830	Foundations of Serious Games	3
MI	831	Theories of Games & Interaction Design	3
MI	839	Game & Film Design Studio I	3
MI	841	Understanding Users	3
MI	844	Interaction Design	3

MI	845	Interactive Usability & Accessibility: Design & Evaluation	3
MI	846	Game & Film Design Studio II	3
MI	850	Media & Information Policy	3
MI	851	Understanding & Managing Social Media	3
MI	852	Media & Information Economics	3
MI	861	Media & Information Technologies in Organizations	3
MI	862	Managing Digital Enterprises	3
MI	875	Information & Communication Technology for Development	3
MI	877	Global Media & Communication	3

4. Additional elective course work at the 400-level or above to meet the 30 credits required for the degree. The course work must be approved by the student's Academic Advisor and at least 16 credits in the degree must be at the 800-level or above. Only 1 credit from Thesis or Project may count towards the 16 credit limit.

***Additional Requirements for Plan A***

MI	899	Master's Thesis Research	4 to 6
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***Additional Requirements for Plan B***

1. One of the following:

MI	898	Master's Project	4 to 6
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or

Completion of a Poster and associated oral examination.

**Optional Information Policy and Society Cognate**

Students may organize their coursework so as to complete the following *Information, Policy and Society Cognate* (9 credits):

a. Both of the following courses (6 credits):

MI	803	Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods	3
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MI	820	Theories of Media & Information	3
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b. One of the following courses (3 credits):

MI	850	Telecommunication and Information Policy	3
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MI	852	Economic Structure of Telecommunication Industries	3
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**B. SPECIALIZATION REQUIREMENTS**

**1. Specialization in Management of Information Technology**

Students must apply to the department in writing, fill out a plan of study, and complete TC 861 prior to admission to the specialization. A Specialization in Management of Information Technology is available to, but not required of, any student enrolled in the Master of Arts degree in Media and Information. Before the option will be awarded, students must complete all degree requirements in the Master of Arts degree in Media and Information.

**2. Requirements for the Graduate Specialization in Management of Information Technology**

1. All of the following courses (6 credits):

ACC	821	Enterprise Database Systems	3
MI	862	Managing Digital Enterprises	3
2. Two courses selected from the following (6 credits):			
ACC	822	Information Systems Project Management	3
ACC	823	Advanced Enterprise Database Systems	3
ACC	825	Object-Oriented Business Information Systems	3
ACC	826	Enterprise Information Systems	3
ACC	843	Value Chain ACC & Analytics	3
ACC	890	Independent Study	3
ITM	881	Network Analytics	3
MKT	829	MKT Tech & Analytics	3

Upon completion of all degree requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Media and Information, the student should contact the Department of Media and Information and request certification for the completion of the specialization. After the Chairperson of the Department and the Dean of the College of Communication Arts and Sciences approve the certification, the Office of the Registrar will enter on the student's academic record the name of the specialization and the date that it was completed. This certification will appear on the student's transcript.

## C. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

### 1. 800-Level Requirement

A minimum of 16 credits must be taken at the 800 level or above in the Department of Media and Information courses. Unless joint-listed, other Departments' courses do not count in the 16 credits, but can be part of the 30-credit requirement. **Only ONE thesis or M.A. project credit is allowed to be counted toward the 16-credit requirement.**

### 2. Independent Study

TC 890 (Independent Study) is an arranged study under a faculty member that permits the student to follow an individualized investigation into some particular topic or subject area selected by the student. Students are limited to no more than a total of 6 credits in Media and Information independent study (TC 890) and internship (TC 893) courses, combined. TC 890 credits are not intended to be substitutes for regular course content and **cannot** be used to substitute for undergraduate courses included in provisional requirements, which themselves do not carry graduate credit. Students desiring TC 890 and TC 893 credit must fill out a special Department form during the term preceding the intended registration for this course. M.A. students may not enroll for TC 490 (undergraduate Independent Study). Independent Study forms are available in the M.A. Office or online at <http://www.reg.msu.edu/read/pdf/indestudyapp.pdf>.

If human subjects are involved, students are expected to follow IRB guidelines. (<http://hrpp.msu.edu/>)

### 3. M.A. Internship

The arrangements for the internship should be handled by the student in consultation with the student's advisor. The internship project must be approved by the Department of Media and Information. M.A. Internships count as TC 893 credits under the departmental limit of 6 credits of such coursework. The course work is graded on a

Pass/No Pass basis. M.A. Internship forms are available in the MA Office or online: <http://www.reg.msu.edu/read/pdf/indestudyapp.pdf>.

If human subjects are involved, students are expected to follow IRB guidelines (see: <http://hrpp.msu.edu/>).

#### **4. Special Topics**

The Department and College often offer courses on topics that vary from semester to semester. These courses will appear in the [Schedule of Courses](#) as TC 891 and CAS 892. Notification of the courses may also be publicized through posters and e-mail, so students are advised to be attentive to such communications.

#### **5. Courses Below the 800 Level**

M.A. students can receive graduate credit for 400-level courses, except - as noted above – for TC 490, which is not available to graduate students.

Graduate credit for 300 level courses requires approval by the Dean of the College of Communication Arts and Sciences, which you should seek by a written petition submitted through your Academic Advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies and Department Chairperson. In this case, the following policy pertains:

- a. No TC 300 level courses may be taken for graduate credit by Media and Information students.
- b. 300 level courses outside the Department will be approved for graduate credit if
  - (1) there is a demonstrated need for the course in the student's program;
  - (2) the student has not had a previous course in the field which includes the course in question;
  - (3) the student has previously taken no more than one 300 level course for graduate credit.

#### **6. Department Prerequisite Courses**

Specific prerequisite courses may be assigned at the time of admission to the program, in which case they would be listed in the letter of admission to the M.A. program. Since many of the courses contain material necessary for adequate preparation for required courses, students must take them first, as early in the program as possible. The department fully expects that students with remaining prerequisite requirements will be enrolled in these courses if they are currently being offered. If a student is not completing outstanding prerequisites, he/she will not be allowed to register.

#### **7. Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training**

The College of Communication Arts and Sciences supports the federal requirements for training set forth in the Competes Act and by the Graduate School, which teaches the responsible conduct in research, scholarship, and creative activities, which is fundamental to the integrity of every graduate program. As a graduate student you will be required to complete the appropriate training. You can find resources to help fulfill these requirements here: <https://comartsci.msu.edu/responsible-conduct-research-rcr>

## **8. English Language Requirement**

All international students are required to report to the [MSU English Language Center](#) (ELC) immediately upon their arrival on campus for assessment of their English language ability. The ELC may require students to take remedial course work in English language writing, speaking, and oral comprehension. The number of courses an international student will be allowed to take outside the ELC depends on their ELC course performance.

## **9. Waiver of Prerequisite Requirements**

Students who do not have the academic equivalent of an assigned prerequisite course, but who believe that they have equivalent competence through professional practice or individual study may seek a waiver. Students do not receive credit for any course that is waived. Waivers may take place in two formats:

- a. Students may take an examination that covers the prerequisite course material. A person who teaches the course will be designated by either the Director of Graduate Studies or the Department Chairperson to administer the examination. The designated faculty member will determine whether the student passes and attach a copy of the exam to the completed waiver form.
- b. A student who believes he/she has sufficient experience or knowledge to waive a prerequisite course may petition the M.A. Committee to reconsider its recommendation. That petition should be made in writing and contain supplemental information and/or materials the student believes were not available at the time of application.

All petitions and examinations to waive prerequisite course requirements must be made within the first two semesters of enrollment. A waiver form (accompanied by the appropriate documentation) must be signed by the student's Academic Advisor, by the faculty member who administers the course, the Director of Graduate Studies, and by the Chairperson of the Department and placed in the student's file. Waiver forms are available in the M.A. Office or online: [Waiver Request Form](#).

## **10. Duration of the Program**

The maximum time for completing the program is five calendar years from the date of first enrollment. There is no minimum time for completing the degree. A student may petition the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies of the College for an extension if it appears likely that the degree can be completed within a short period of time after the five years have elapsed.

## **11. Provisional Status**

Students admitted to provisional status are so identified in their acceptance letter. All requirements listed in the admission letter must be completed in order to have the provisional status removed.

## **12. Dual Enrollment Status**

Dual enrollment provides an opportunity for academically talented undergraduate students to enroll in graduate courses and conduct research toward a graduate degree while completing the last two years of their bachelor's degree(s) programs.

To be considered for dual enrollment, the student must first file an Application for Admission to Graduate Study, as indicated under Application Procedure in this section of the catalog and be admitted into a graduate program. Subsequent to the admission to a graduate program in regular status, the student must complete a Request for Dual Enrollment Status form, available from the Office of the Registrar. A student who is accepted for dual enrollment can be admitted to both the undergraduate and graduate degree program upon reaching junior standing.

Within the first semester of dual enrollment, the student's graduate degree program advisor must be identified and the appropriate graduate degree guidance committee established. The advisor and committee assist the student in developing a program of study for the graduate degree. Admission to graduate study must be approved before work to apply toward a graduate degree program is undertaken. Credits completed prior to admission to graduate study *cannot* be applied toward a graduate degree program.

A student will be classified as an undergraduate until the minimum number of credits required for a first bachelor's degree is completed. When the student is classified as a graduate student, eligibility begins for graduate assistantships, other forms of graduate student financial aid, or those services and prerogatives normally reserved for graduate students.

A student pays undergraduate tuition up to the total number of credits required for a first bachelor's degree(s) in his/her major(s), at which point graduate tuition is applicable and students are eligible for graduate fellowships and assistantships. If approved by the graduate program, a maximum of nine credits, at the 400-level or higher, from the undergraduate degree program can be applied toward the requirements for the graduate degree program for credits completed after admission to graduate study.

In semesters when the student is dually enrolled, federal financial aid designated for the first bachelor's degree (Federal Pell Grant and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)) will be determined based upon the number of undergraduate credits only. Awards will be manually adjusted as necessary once the student is registered. A student is not eligible for financial aid as a graduate student until the semester after the minimum number of credits required for the first bachelor's degree have been earned.

### **13. M.A. Admissions**

Prospective students must submit the following information:

- A Graduate School application;
- Official and original transcripts and degree certification documents from all colleges attended;
  - Note 1: Applicants must have completed the minimum of a 4 year bachelors program;
  - Note 2: For applicants submitting materials from China, please see detailed information in item 3 further below;
- Official GRE test scores on the General Test;
  - Note 3: The Department of Media and Information desires scores at least in the 50th percentile;
- TOEFL test scores for international students;
  - Note 4: The Department of Media and Information requires a minimum of 91 IBT with no subscores below 22; or a 237 CBT with no subscores below 22; or a 580 PBT with no subscores below 55. Reported scores must not be older than 2 years at the time a completed application has been submitted;
- Three letters of recommendation;
- A *Personal Statement* and an *Academic Statement of Goals for Graduate Study and Professional Career*
  - Note 5: An academic statement should include the concentration the student wishes to apply for
- *\*International students only\** [Statement of Financial Proof](#)

Admission to the M.A. program is determined by an evaluation of the complete application package. Students whose grade-point averages were below 3.25 in the last two years of their undergraduate work must present evidence of special merit through professional experience or extracurricular activities. Students without adequate background in media and information through courses or professional experience will be required to enroll in appropriate undergraduate coursework. An applicant's file cannot be evaluated until all materials have arrived. The deadline for receipt of application and all materials is **April 1 for the fall semester** and **October 1 for the spring semester**. To apply to our program please follow the following steps:

1. Complete the Graduate School Application ([online interactive application](#)). The associated \$50 fee can be paid by credit card, check (US Funds), or money order;
2. Upload the following materials to the [Applicant Portal](#):
  - Email addresses for your three recommenders  
Note: An email will be sent out to your recommenders providing them the information on where to go to submit their letters electronically. So please be sure to list accurate information. The department will only accept letters submitted via the online system. The department will not accept letters submitted through any other format.
  - Academic Statement of Goals for Graduate Study and Professional Career;
  - Personal Statement;
  - Resume or Curriculum Vitae;  
*\*International students only\** [Statement of Financial Proof](#)
3. Send the following materials to:
  - Attn: Director of M.A. Studies  
Department of Media and Information  
404 Wilson Road, Room 409  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI 48824  
United States of America
  - One set of official and original (i.e. no scans, photocopies, or other duplication of) transcripts and degree certification documents for all university work;
    - Please note that the Department of Media and Information will only accept official transcripts in printed form. All other materials should be reported electronically through the Applicant Portal or reported via the 'Educational Testing Service' (ETS; <http://www.ets.org>) to Michigan State University. Supporting materials that should be submitted electronically through the Applicant Portal but sent in print form will not be accepted by the Department of Media and Information.
4. **Note for applicants submitting transcripts from Chinese institutions:**  
During the application process, applicants submit certified copies (sealed and stamped by institutions) of all post-secondary transcripts, graduation certificates and degrees directly to the department. MSU requires these documents in the original language (Chinese) as well as an official English translation. Effective spring 2015, Michigan State University will require all incoming ADMITTED students pursuing degrees or who have earned degrees from universities in China to submit a verification report (English version) through the China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC) for their final bachelor degree transcripts and bachelor degree. Please refer to the CDGDC website for more information: <http://www.chinadegrees.cn/en/>.
5. Report the following directly to Michigan State University Office of Admissions:
  - Official GRE Scores
    - Please use the university code of 1465; there is no need to use a department code.
  - *\*International students only\** Official TOEFL Scores
    - Please use the University code of 1465; there is no need to use a department code.

Graduate assistantships and financial aid awards will be based on merit.

**\*\*International students should be aware that in addition to their TOEFL scores meeting the minimum standards set by the Department of Media and Information, all admitted International students are required to take the English Language test provided by Michigan State University upon arrival. International students are required to take this test prior to enrolling for courses, and placement into courses will be done so according to the test results. The department requires a minimum score of 85 in each one of the sub-categories. If a student does not pass the test, s/he will be required to take a semester of English Language courses at their expense, and may not be able to enroll for any additional academic courses. Once the student has successfully completed the English Language courses, their status will be switched from provisional to regular. More information about the ELC test is available on [www.elc.msu.edu](http://www.elc.msu.edu). Up-to-date information on tuition and fees is available on <http://www.ctlr.msu.edu/COSTudentAccounts/TuitionCalculator.aspx>.**

## **D. MAKING PROGRESS**

### **1. Year-by-Year Synopsis**

In year one, students complete a plan of study and take all of their basic courses and prerequisite courses. In year two they complete take advanced courses and complete their Plan A or Plan B exit requirements.

### **2. Timeline and Checklist**

The following are suggested completion dates for important milestones in the M.A. program. All forms may be found online at <http://gradstudies.mi.msu.edu/academics/requirements-resources/>:

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Week</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Form</b>
1	1	Attend Orientation Select Concentration	Plan of Study Advisor Transfer
1	2	Complete Plan of Study	<a href="#">M&amp;I M.A. Plan of Study</a> Including Specialization, Certificate, and Cognate options
2	15	Complete Prerequisite Courses	
3	1	Select Thesis/Project Chair	
3	1	Complete Thesis/Project Proposal	<a href="#">Project Proposal</a> <a href="#">Thesis Proposal Approval</a>
4	1	Complete Poster Proposal	Poster Proposal
4	12	Oral Defense of Thesis/Project/Poster	<a href="#">Thesis Oral Defense Results</a>
4	1	Apply to graduate	<a href="#">Application for Graduation</a>
4	15	Final Thesis submission	Final Thesis Approval

### **3. Final Certification for the Degree**

By a date announced in the calendar of the [Schedule of Courses](#) each semester, the Registrar needs--from the Director of Graduate Studies--a list of all certified candidates who expect to graduate that semester. By this date, Plan "B" students should have passed their oral examinations, and Plan "A" students should have submitted approved copies of their theses to their thesis advisors. To graduate a student must have a 3.0 grade point average in courses taken for graduate credit.

Students should submit an "[Application for Graduation](http://www.reg.msu.edu/StuForms/GradApp/GradApp.asp)" by the first week of the semester the student expects to complete his/her degree requirements. This form can be found online at the Office of the Registrar's website at <http://www.reg.msu.edu/StuForms/GradApp/GradApp.asp>.

A student who does not complete the requirements for graduation during the semester in which he/she applied for must reapply for graduation for the appropriate semester that he/she will complete the degree requirements.

Students must be registered for at least one credit during the semester in which they complete their degree requirements, e.g., complete their required courses and either secure approval for their thesis or pass their project / poster oral examination. Even if they have previously registered for all of their 30 credits, they must register for one more credit in their final semester. Consequently, it is prudent for Plan "B" students to save at least one of their courses for the semester in which they take their oral exam, and for Plan "A" students who expect to complete their theses after their last semester of classes to reserve at least one credit of TC 899 for the semester in which they expect to defend the thesis.

Assuming that other requirements are met, compliance with the deadline will enable the Plan "A" degree to be granted at the end of the semester when the official copies are submitted to the Graduate School. Should these copies be submitted after the deadline but before the end of the semester, the degree can be granted at the close of the following semester without the student needing to enroll for that following semester. (The student will, however, need to apply for a diploma at the beginning of that following semester.) If approval of the thesis should be withheld that semester, he/she will need to enroll for an additional credit of TC 899 during a subsequent semester when it is likely that the approval will be granted. Plan "B" students who are taking their oral examinations for a second time may meet the registration requirements by enrolling for one credit of TC 890 (Independent Study).

MSU only accepts electronic theses and dissertations submitted via ProQuest. The instructions for electronic submissions are available from <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>.

The target date for the FINAL APPROVAL of an electronic Thesis to the Graduate School for graduating the semester of that submission is FIVE working days prior to the first day of classes for the next semester (see future target dates below). Be aware that a submission via ProQuest does not mean that the document has been ACCEPTED. The review process is interactive and final approval can take anywhere from a few hours to weeks, depending upon the extent of the necessary revisions and how diligent the author is when making the necessary revisions.

Graduation on the semester of the electronic submission is only guaranteed if the document is APPROVED on or before the target date for that semester. Deadline dates for final approval of an electronic thesis to the Graduate School are around the middle of the final month of an academic semester, but precise dates can be found at <https://grad.msu.edu/etd/etd-deadline-dates>.

#### **4. Exit Survey**

A new short online exit survey for all students graduating with a Plan A or Plan B masters was introduced May 9th of 2011. Only students who have applied for graduation will have access to the survey. The survey asks questions about educational experiences in MSU graduate programs, as well as about immediate professional plans. The Graduate School uses data from this survey when reviewing graduate programs and to guide decisions about services and initiatives for graduate students.

The identity of all respondents will be kept confidential and only aggregate (group) information will be made available to faculty and administrators. The students will receive an e-mail message from the Dean of the graduate school with a link to the survey. However, students do not need to wait for that e-mail message to complete the survey after applying for graduation. It takes about 5-10 minutes to complete the online survey. Below are the instructions for completing the survey and they are also available from <https://www.egr.msu.edu/masters/survey/>:

- Access the following website:
  - <https://www.egr.msu.edu/masters/survey/>
- Enter your MSU NetID (Login Name) and Password
- Complete all the items on the survey. When finished, click Submit.

Note: If you cannot open this survey, please contact Katey Smagur by email at [exitsurvey@grd.msu.edu](mailto:exitsurvey@grd.msu.edu), and include your name, student ID #, degree level (MA/MS), and semester of graduation. You will then be notified when you are able to complete the survey.

## IV. SELECTION OF THESIS ADVISOR

### A. Student-Advisor Relationships

Students should begin assessing their “fit” with potential Thesis or Project Advisors during orientation. Shared backgrounds and culture should be considered as well as shared academic interests. Students planning a thesis or a Plan B project should select their thesis/project advisor at the beginning of their second year, but no later than the end of their third semester. The thesis/project proposal form is submitted at that time to formalize the selection of the thesis advisor.

The thesis/project chair is expected to form a mentoring relationship with the student consistent with the Guidelines for Graduate Student Advising and Mentoring Relationships (<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/researchintegrity/guidelines.pdf> ) and along the Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities (<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/researchintegrity/guidelines.pdf>). The advisor may intervene to suggest an alternative if a student can no longer work with his/her chair or if the chair leaves the department prior to completion. If a change in chair becomes necessary, the student must file a new proposal form signed off by all three committee members.

Should students wish to change their advisor at any time they should so indicate by sending a written, signed notification to the Director of Graduate studies after consulting with the intended new advisor. The Director will then inform the former advisor of the change.

### B. How to Get an M.A. Thesis Started

The first step is to produce an acceptable thesis proposal, a process that should begin in the first year. Many thesis topics emerge from disciplinary course work as students discover interesting issues in course readings or wish to expand their treatment of a research paper. From the outset of their programs, all graduate students should be alert for potential thesis topics and discuss them with their instructors. When a student thinks he or she has a promising original topic, they are encouraged to discuss them with their Academic Advisor or with a faculty within the Department who may be interested in participating in the thesis work.

The best way to discover an original topic is to read deeply into an area of research that interests you. Online resources such as ProQuest (using the peer reviewed search option), Web of Science, and Google Scholar are excellent starting points, working with key words of topics that interest you or that you have become familiar

with in your coursework. Your professors are also excellent sources of topics, but it is best to approach them after you have defined a general interest area, having done some preliminary reading. The discussion sections of papers are particularly helpful since they often identify unanswered questions and make suggestions for further research.

“Original” covers a lot of ground, though. Ideally, you would come up with a new theory or method, but that is best left to Ph.D. candidates with years to spend. If you are doing an empirical thesis, you might propose a new variable for an existing theory, or integrate variables from competing ones. Old theories or established methods applied to unique new contexts are another possibility. If your thesis is interpretive and critical rather than empirical, you might look for a new context in which to apply and extend an existing thesis, or further propound a thesis in an already established context. Policy researchers might apply an existing doctrine of law to a new area or critique the application of a doctrine in a current context. But not every idea that is new to you is original. Original contributions are not made by simple replications of previous studies or by papers that merely summarize existing interpretative or policy frameworks. Original thinking and analysis, new both to you and to the community of scholars in your field, is expected.

Once an original topic has been identified, the student chooses the Thesis Advisor and two other faculty members to form the Thesis Committee. The Academic Advisor is not generally a member of the Thesis Committee if other members of the faculty are more appropriate to the topic and method. With a general topic in mind, the student asks the faculty members if they are willing to serve and for their advice about further development of the topic. They will also provide advice about the originality of the topic and the feasibility of examining it. Sometimes the faculty will have suggested topics of their own as well. Usually the members are from the Department of Media and Information faculty, but a committee member could be selected from another department. Media and Information faculty interests and research are listed online at: [mi.msu.edu](http://mi.msu.edu).

When a prospective Thesis Committee agrees that the student has a viable thesis topic, the student should write and submit a proposal to that committee. The content of the thesis proposal is specified by the Thesis Committee. It typically consists of a research statement that includes both the research question(s) and the motivation guiding the thesis, a review of relevant literature and a deduced theoretical foundation, a proposed theoretical model, the envisioned research and data analysis methods, and the implications of the thesis for both theory and practice. It is important to have a detailed proposal, so as to avoid any potential subsequent disagreement among members of the group (i.e. the student and the three advisors). Generally, a proposal of 5-10 pages will be sufficient, but this is something that students should discuss with their thesis advisors. Once the proposal is deemed by the chairperson of the committee to be “ready,” it is sent to the other members of the committee and an oral examination date in defense of the proposal is scheduled, with at least 2 weeks’ lead time for the committee to review the work. At the examination, the student is expected to give a brief presentation about the thesis. The committee members will ask questions, and either approve the proposal, approve with required revisions, or reject the proposal; in the latter case, the process is initiated again from the start.

An example of a thesis proposal for MIM could include the following:

1. A clear statement of the scholarly problem or question to be answered by the thesis.
2. A review of the relevant literature from the candidate's areas of concentration. The review should establish that the thesis question has not already been satisfactorily answered, and explain how the published literature is related to the question.
3. A justification for the thesis that establishes that the question is worth answering.
4. An explanation of the approaches that will be used to answer the question,
5. If research involving human subjects (including interviews) is contemplated, the prospectus must include a section describing steps to be taken to comply with university policies and guidelines set forth by the Human Research Protection Program (IRB). For these policies, see <http://hrpp.msu.edu/>.

Once the student has written the proposal the Thesis Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies must sign a thesis proposal form to which the thesis proposal is attached.

The Thesis Proposal Form is available at the M.A. office or online.

## C. M.A. PROJECT OR THESIS PLANNING

### 1. Thesis or Project?

M.A. graduate students have the choice between Plan A (thesis) or Plan B (project).

Here is a comparison of the two options:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Thesis</b>	<b>Project</b>
# Credits	4 to 6	4 to 6
# MSU faculty committee members	3	2
Minimum # committee members from MI Department faculty	1	2
Needs IRB approval if it includes research on human subjects	yes	yes
Must meet grad school thesis requirements	yes	no
For stronger production emphasis		X
For stronger research emphasis	X	
Major focus on the written component	X	
Prepares student for Ph.D. studies	X	
Course number	899	898

### 2. Time Frame

The normal expectation is that the M.A. thesis or project will take 2 semesters to complete.

### 3. Projects

A project is usually centered on a media production. A written component is required, and it must be high quality and meet committee approval. However the expectation of time spent would include a majority of time creating the media work, with a minority of time writing the project report. If the project includes research involving human subjects, then university regulations require that IRB approval be obtained prior to conducting that research. Students whose focus is primarily on production would normally choose the project option. The media product is the primary showpiece, supported by paper about the project.

### 4. What Should My Project Be About?

Your project (or thesis) is the culmination of your M.A. work. It should incorporate what you have learned throughout the program. It should be different, better, more substantial than what you could have created before you entered the program. The thesis/project is your primary portfolio piece, the project you spent the most time and best showcases your abilities.

Your choice of topic and decision whether to do a project or thesis should take into account your career goals. If there is a particular industry and industry role you are preparing for, make sure your project will be an impressive showpiece of your abilities related that career choice.

If you are just pursuing the M.A. for fun and learning, then pick any project you wish. The thesis/project can also be a rare opportunity to work on what you most care about rather than what a client wants. Balance your personal interests and career goals and choose accordingly.

If you hope to go on to pursue a Ph.D., make sure your thesis incorporates design research or social effects research in meaningful ways

## 5. Creative Thesis

Students who want to focus primarily on research should choose the more formal thesis option. Students hoping to go on for a Ph.D. may also benefit from choosing the thesis option.

A media thesis includes a written component which is turned in to the graduate office and follows their requirements including deadlines, formatting, and IRB and committee approvals. Students whose focus of their work is more on research and writing than on production should choose the thesis option. The Thesis is the more academic of the two options. The expectation of time allocation on a thesis would normally range from about equal time on the written and media components, to more time spent on the research and writing.

Some students may choose to conduct a thesis project, which is more oriented toward research than toward production. To qualify as a media thesis (relating to digital media arts and technology), the research should focus on aspects or impacts of media production. For example, a student may want to study audience reactions to interactive narratives, or on ways of encouraging student participation in online courses.

## 6. Many Different Approaches Are Possible

Five possible approaches to conceptualizing a project or thesis are described below. These are listed to help stimulate students' thinking about what is possible. The list is not exclusive, it is not intended to rule out other creative approaches.



## **a. Design from the Inside-Out** (needs of content, self, or technology drive production decisions)

### **(1) Content driven thesis/project**

Content-driven projects start with a particular theme of great interest to the student, such as documentary about a musician or a controversial social topic. Deep proponents of design research would advocate that some preproduction research may be conducted to understand the audience, but often no pre-production design research is conducted. The primary research component of a content-driven project is likely to be content research.

Competitive analysis systematically examining similar productions on the same or closely related topics helps the student get ideas about techniques that work well and also help show areas where the student project could innovate.

Often at the end of the production project, a small survey is conducted either of media creation experts assessing the quality of the project or of target audience members assessing their reaction to the product.

### **(2) Self-expression thesis/project**

A self-expression thesis or project is not oriented toward an audience. The creator looks inward, at the medium itself and theories of design to express feelings or ideas or self. Secondary research on aesthetics and perhaps critical theory may help inform the design. Competitive research on similar creations may also be helpful. Audience research may not be conducted at all.

### **(3) Exploration/experimentation thesis/project**

Sometimes a student may choose to explore the potential of a new medium, or explore a particular aspect of an existing medium to solve a particular problem or meet a particular goal. For example, a student might start with the problem, how might QuickTime VR be used to improve graduate teaching about the canine skeleton. Or, how might radio frequency tags, hand held PDAs, and Flash be incorporated into a museum experience? Or, can I create a 3D interface which is better for navigation than a typical 2D menu system? Technology (hardware or software) may be the starting point for a project or thesis concept.

Preproduction research on users such as persona analysis or observational ethnography may be conducted to help make design decisions. Mid production usability testing may occur. Post production user testing may be conducted to see how the media product impacts or is used by users. Typically a project will focus on pre and mid-production research or else on post-production research, but for the sake of time, usually not all three.

## **b. Design from the Outside-In**

(Deep understanding needs of client or customers drive production decisions, goal is to delight a narrow target audience)

### **(1) Client goals and needs thesis/project**

A project may be driven first by the needs of a client – helping a professor develop a hybrid course; working for a client to develop a communication tool or a training video. The client plays a central role in defining the project concept and parameters.

The student will likely conduct design research to understand users more specifically, perhaps including persona analysis and/or ethnography, and/or focus groups. Rapid prototyping and assessing potential user reactions may also occur. The focus of user-directed projects tends to be on pre and mid production research.

## **(2) Customer goals and needs thesis/project**

The most extreme form of user-centered design of a project begins with a general concept. Competitive analysis of similar products is conducted. Secondary research on target users is sought. Persona analysis and/or ethnographic or focus group research clarifies customer needs and goals. The main research focus is pre-production research (hence, the label “design from the outside in”).

## **7. Administrative Milestones**

### **a. Brainstorm a general topic and choose a chairperson**

Students should decide upon a general project concept and what kind of project they want to conduct. Normally this happens through brainstorming with the faculty member or members of the student’s choosing. As the topic and approach are narrowed, the student formally seeks out a committee chairperson (i.e. the Thesis / Project Advisor) whom they want to work with and who wants to work with them.

### **b. Refine and expand the concept, draft proposal**

The committee chairperson and student refine the thesis concept. Usually the student conducts competitive analysis and some secondary research. A proposal is drafted. Typically the proposal describes the project’s rationale, planning, design research, design, and production process.

### **c. Formalize full committee, obtain proposal approval**

At this point the student completes formation of the committee – two MSU faculty members for a project, and three for a thesis. With a thesis proposal the committee chairperson and student have together decided is “ready,” the student approaches other committee members with the proposal, invites them to serve on the committee, and the chair and student together request feedback on the proposal. If required, changes are made. If no changes are needed, the committee signs off, approving the proposal.

### **d. Complete the project or thesis**

With guidance from the chairperson, the student proceeds with production, research, and writing. The other committee members may be involved, if they have particular skill areas the student needs on the project. But the primary relationship is between chair and student.

### **e. Submit, present, and defend the project/thesis**

When the written component and production are deemed by the chairperson to be “ready,” they are sent to other members of the committee and a defense is scheduled, with at least two weeks’ time for committee members to review the work. Normally the student gives a brief presentation about the project at the defense. The committee members and others in attendance ask questions. The committee then confers to decide whether the project should be accepted as is, accepted with revisions, or rejected. They also decide upon a grade for the project.

## 8. Stages in a Project

(this will vary from project to project, confer with your chairperson)

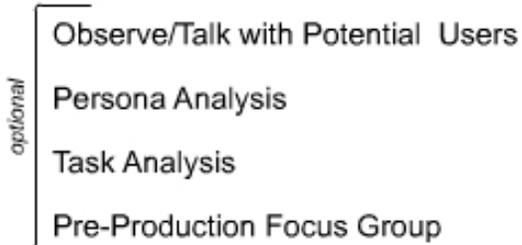
The stages involved in a project depend very much on the nature of the project. The stages listed below include most of the possible stages. No project is expected to include all of these stages. Typically if there is a research component, it will focus on 1) pre-production research and/or 2) mid-production testing and/or 3) post-production research.

### Pre-Production

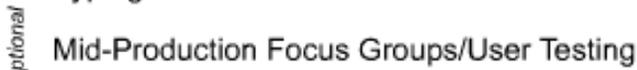
Competitive Analysis

Content Research

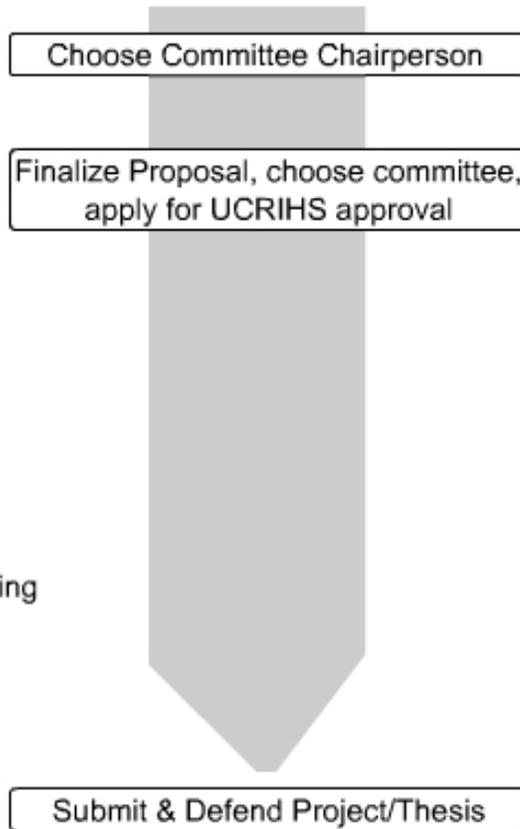
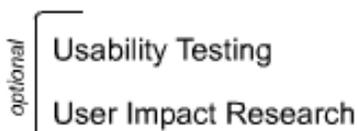
Secondary Research



### Prototyping



### Production



## 9. Example Components of a Project Proposal

(this will vary from project to project, confer with your chairperson)

1. Introduction to Project Concept and Project Goals
2. Secondary Research and/or Competitive Analysis
3. Content Research (if applicable)
4. Production Plans
5. Research Plans (if any)
6. Yardstick (how will you gauge the success of your work?)

## 10. Example Chapters of the Written Component of a Project

(this will vary from project to project, confer with your chairperson)

1. Introduction to Problem Concept and Target Audience
2. Secondary Research and/or Competitive Analysis
3. Content Research (if applicable)

4. Pre-Production Research (if any)
5. Description of Production Process and Outcome
6. Mid-Production Research (if any)
7. Post Production Research (if any)
8. Conclusions and recommendations
9. References

## **11. Example Chapters of a Creative Research Thesis**

(this will vary from project to project, confer with your chairperson)

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Methods
4. Results
5. Conclusions

## **V. FORMATION OF THE GUIDANCE COMMITTEE**

The guidance committee for the project/thesis will be formed in consultation with the student's thesis/project advisor at the time the student's project/thesis proposal is submitted for approval to the Director of Graduate Studies. Guidelines for the composition of the committee are found in the preceding section. The composition of the committee may be changed by resubmitting the thesis/project approval form.

## **VI. THESIS DEFENSE AND FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION**

The graduate student will present the results of the thesis/dissertation in a seminar open to the community. To ensure fairness in the examination procedure and maintenance of academic standards, the dean of the college or the chair/director of the academic unit may appoint an outside member to the examining committee. The outside member of the committee will read and critique the thesis, will participate in the oral part of the exam, and will submit a report to the dean of the college and/or the chair/director of the academic unit. Guidelines for the nature and scope of the thesis may be found in Section V, where the parameters of acceptable thesis proposals are discussed. Grading policies are covered in the following section. A list of recent theses may be obtained from the MSU Graduate School.

## **VII. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

### **A. ANNUAL EVALUATION PROCEDURES**

The student's Academic Advisor will review at least once a year the graduate student's progress as well as plans for work in the coming year (GSRR 2.4.8). The review will also include those aspects of the students' performance, which pertain to professionalism and scholarly integrity. A report on the results of this review will be signed by the advisor and by the graduate student. This report will be filed with the M.A. Studies office and will be placed in the graduate student's file, together with any response that the graduate student may attach to the report.

Upon request, the Director of Graduate studies will meet with each graduate student to review all aspects of the annual progress report. At this occasion, the graduate student has the opportunity to discuss with the Director any aspects of his or her studies that seem relevant for successful completion of the graduate program, including problems that may hinder progress, and any appeal of the Academic Advisor's evaluation (see above). Recommendations based on this review will be communicated in writing to the Academic Advisor and the graduate student within two weeks of the meeting, and that report will be placed in the graduate student's file.

## **B. RETENTION IN THE PROGRAM**

### **1. Acceptable Academic Standing**

The MSU grading scale is 4.0, 3.5, 3.0, 2.5, 2.0, 1.5, 1.0 and 0.0. Credit is awarded at a minimum of 2.0 for graduate students. However, when a student receives a grade below 3.0 in more than two courses taken for graduate credit at MSU, he/she is automatically removed from candidacy for that degree. A graduate student who has been withdrawn under this regulation is required to wait a minimum of one calendar year from date of the withdrawal before being eligible to apply for readmission to a graduate program in the College of Communication Arts and Sciences. The student may be readmitted contingent upon repeating one of the three courses in which a grade below a 3.0 was earned, and earning a 3.0 or better grade in the course. The course to be repeated may be specified by the department. Following readmission, any additional grade below 3.0 in any course numbered 400 or higher will result in permanent dismissal. All courses taken at the 400 level or higher are to be considered as graduate courses and will be subject to the "Grades Below 3.0 Rule". There is a special situation in the case of the graduate student who has been given graduate credit for a course at the 300 level. When this situation arises, we treat such a course as a graduate course, and any grade received below 3.0 will be held against the student and counted as part of the "Grades Below 3.0 Rule".

Graduate students taking courses below the 400 level are doing so because these courses are prerequisites to other courses in the program, or for remedial purposes. Since a grade of 2.0 is considered "satisfactory" in the undergraduate grading system, the graduate student should not have a grade of 2.0 or 2.5 used against him/her. Grades below 2.0 are "unsatisfactory" and will be considered as falling within the "Grades Below 3.0 Rule". This means that the students can accumulate grades of 2.0 or 2.5 in any courses taken below the 400 level without risking dismissal.

When a graduate student receives a grade, which falls below the acceptable standard, he/she is issued a warning letter from the Office of the Dean. Upon receipt of this letter the student should consult with his/her Academic Advisor with respect to the progress the student is making.

### **2. Repeating a course for which the Grade was Lower than 3.0**

To repeat a course for which the grade was lower than a 3.0, approval is required by the instructor of the course, the student's Academic Advisor, the Chairperson of the Department of Media and Information, and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies of the College of Communication Arts and Sciences. Only one such course may be repeated during your program. Earning a 3.0 or higher the second time you take the course does not eliminate the first earned grade as one of the two grades below 3.0 discussed in the preceding section but will change your graduate course grade average.

## **C. STUDENT RECORDS**

A public file is maintained for each student in the office of the graduate program coordinator. The public file includes copies of the student's annual evaluations, and copies of written correspondence directed to the student pursuant to the provisions of this handbook. Students have a right to view their files in the graduate program coordinator's office during the hours that person is present. They may request copies of their files, a nominal fee may be charged to defray copying expenses. Students may challenge the accuracy of the information in their file in a letter addressed to the director of M.A. studies, who will discuss the problem with the student. Henceforth, the letter will be placed in the student's file.

## D. GRADING FOR QUALIFYING EXAMS

### 1. M.A. Thesis Oral Exam

Note: The student receives a numerical grade for TC899 credits, but the credits are not awarded until the student passes the oral exam.

The student may:

1. **Pass** the examination without reservation by demonstrating mastery of core course content as it relates to the topic of the thesis.
2. **Pass** the examination **conditionally** and subject to revisions stipulated by the Committee. In this case, final evaluation is deferred until the Committee has received the updated Thesis manuscript along with a cover letter that outlines how the required revisions were implemented.
3. **Fail** the examination. In the event of a fail, the student may retake the exam in a subsequent semester provided that the 5-year time limit on the degree is not exceeded. The final outcome on the retake is an unreserved pass or fail. If the student fails the exam a second time, the student will be dropped from the program. A person who has failed the exam will receive a feedback sheet, but graders are not identified.

### 2. M.A. Project Oral Exam

Note: The student receives a numerical grade for TC898 credits, but the credits are not awarded until the student passes the oral exam.

The student may:

1. **Pass** the examination without reservation by demonstrating mastery of design concepts as they relate to the project.
2. **Pass** the examination **conditionally** and subject to revisions stipulated by the Committee. In this case, final evaluation is deferred until the Committee has received the updated Project manuscript along with a cover letter that outlines how the required revisions were implemented.
3. **Fail** the examination. In the event of a fail, the student may retake the exam in a subsequent semester provided that the 5-year time limit on the degree is not exceeded. The final outcome on the retake is an unreserved pass or fail. If the student fails the exam a second time, the student will be dropped from the program. A person who has failed the exam will receive a feedback sheet, but graders are not identified. After failing the examination, a student **may not** change to Plan "A" (the thesis option).

### 3. M.A. Poster Oral Exam

The student may:

1. **Pass** the examination without reservation by demonstrating mastery of design concepts as they relate to the poster.
2. **Pass** the examination **conditionally** and subject to revisions stipulated by the Committee. In this case, final evaluation is deferred until the Committee has received a document, which includes the requested updates/revisions, along with a cover letter that outlines how the required revisions were implemented.
3. **Fail** the examination. In the event of a fail, the student may retake the exam in a subsequent semester provided that the 5-year time limit on the degree is not exceeded. The final outcome on the retake is an unreserved pass or fail. If the student fails the exam a second time, the student will be dropped from the program. A person who has failed the exam will receive a feedback sheet, but graders are not identified. After failing the examination, a student **may not** change to Plan “A” (the thesis option).

## VIII. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: INTEGRITY AND SAFETY IN RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

### A. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism means presenting, as one's own, the words, creative work or opinions of someone else. You commit plagiarism if you submit as your own work:

1. Part or all of an assignment copied from another person's manuscript or notes, spoken words, sounds, or images.
2. Part or all of an assignment copied or paraphrased from a source, such as a book, magazine, journal, Web page, or creative product.
3. The sequence of ideas, arrangement of ideas or images, or pattern of thought of someone else, even though you express them in your own words, sounds or images. Plagiarism occurs when such a sequence of ideas is transferred from a source without the process of digestion, integration and reorganization in the writer's mind, and without acknowledgement.
4. A paper written for you by someone else.
5. An entire work or substantive part of a work that you submitted for another course to a second course without the permission of BOTH of the instructors involved.

You are an accomplice in plagiarism and equally guilty if you:

1. Allow your paper or creative project, in outline or finished form, to be copied and submitted as the work of another.
2. Prepare an assignment for another student and allow it to be submitted as his or her work.
3. Keep or contribute materials to a group project with the clear intent that these be copied and submitted as the work of anyone other than the author. (The student who knows that his or her work is being copied is presumed to consent to its being copied.)

The penalties described in the Academic Rights and Responsibilities shall apply.

You can avoid plagiarism by:

1. Clearly identifying anything you copy directly from another source (e.g., by using quotation marks).
2. Citing or otherwise acknowledging all ideas that are not your own, including anything that you copy directly or that you paraphrase, modify or “sample.”
3. Including appropriate acknowledgments or citations throughout the body of your work, as opposed to merely listing general sources at the end.
4. Never “downloading” anything from the Internet into your work product without acknowledging the source.
  - a. Consulting the helpful hints at <https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy.html>
5. Asking your instructor to register your course at Turnitin.com: <http://www.turnitin.com/>
6. You should also familiarize yourself with the Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities, found on the Graduate School webpage at: <https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/researchintegrity/guidelines.pdf>, and reprinted below from Michigan State University, *Research Integrity*, Vol. 7 No. 2 Spring 2004

## **B. GUIDELINES FOR INTEGRITY IN RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

The conduct of research and creative activities by faculty, staff, and students is central to the mission of Michigan State University (see Note 1, below) and is an institutional priority. Faculty, staff, and students work in a rich and competitive environment for the common purpose of learning, creating new knowledge, and disseminating information and ideas for the benefit of their peers and the general public. The stature and reputation of MSU as a research university are based on the commitment of its faculty, staff, and students to excellence in scholarly and creative activities and to the highest standards of professional integrity. As a partner in scholarly endeavors, MSU is committed to creating an environment that promotes ethical conduct and integrity in research and creative activities.

Innovative ideas and advances in research and creative activities have the potential to generate professional and public recognition and, in some instances, commercial interest, and financial gain. In rare cases, such benefits may become motivating factors to violate professional ethics. Pressures to publish, to obtain research grants, or to complete academic requirements may also lead to an erosion of professional integrity.

Breaches in professional ethics range from questionable research practices to misconduct. (see Note 2) The primary responsibility for adhering to professional standards lies with the individual scholar. It is, however, also the responsibility of advisors and of the disciplinary community at large. Passive acceptance of improper practices lowers inhibitions to violate professional ethics.

Integrity in research and creative activities is based not only on sound disciplinary practice but also on a commitment to basic personal values such as fairness, equity, honesty, and respect. These guidelines are intended to promote high professional standards by everyone- faculty, staff, and students alike.

### **1. Key Principles**

Integrity in research and creative activities embodies a range of practices that includes:

- Honesty in proposing, performing, and reporting research
- Recognition of prior work
- Confidentiality in peer review

- Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest
- Compliance with institutional and sponsor requirements
- Protection of human subjects and humane care of animals in the conduct of research
- Collegiality in scholarly interactions and sharing of resources
- Adherence to fair and open relationships between senior scholars and their coworkers

***Honesty in proposing, performing, and reporting research.*** The foundation underlying all research is uncompromising honesty in presenting one's own ideas in research proposals, in performing one's research, and in reporting one's data. Detailed and accurate records of primary data must be kept as unalterable documentation of one's research and must be available for scrutiny and critique. It is expected that researchers will always be truthful and explicit in disclosing what was done, how it was done, and what results were obtained. To this end, research aims, methods, and outcomes must be described in sufficient detail such that others can judge the quality of what is reported and can reproduce the data. Results from valid observations and tests that run counter to expectations must be reported along with supportive data.

***Recognition of prior work.*** Research proposals, original research, and creative endeavors often build on one's own work and also on the work of others. Both published and unpublished work must always be properly credited. Reporting the work of others as if it were one's own is plagiarism. Graduate advisors and members of guidance committees have a unique role in guiding the independent research and creative activities of students. Information learned through private discussions or committee meetings should be respected as proprietary and accorded the same protection granted to information obtained in any peer-review process.

***Confidentiality in peer review.*** Critical and impartial review by respected disciplinary peers is the foundation for important decisions in the evaluation of internal and external funding requests, allocation of resources, publication of research results, granting of awards, and in other scholarly decisions. The peer-review process involves the sharing of information for scholarly assessment on behalf of the larger disciplinary community. The integrity of this process depends on confidentiality until the information is released to the public. Therefore, the contents of research proposals, of manuscripts submitted for publication, and of other scholarly documents under review should be considered privileged information not to be shared with others, including students and staff, without explicit permission by the authority requesting the review. Ideas and results learned through the peer-review process should not be made use of prior to their presentation in a public forum or their release through publication.

***Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest.*** There is real or perceived conflict of interest when a researcher has material or personal interest that could compromise the integrity of the scholarship. It is, therefore, imperative that potential conflicts of interest be considered and acted upon appropriately by the researcher. Some federal sponsors require the University to implement formal conflict of interest policies. It is the responsibility of all researchers to be aware of and comply with such requirements.

***Compliance with institutional and sponsor requirements.*** Investigators are granted broad freedoms in making decisions concerning their research. These decisions are, however, still guided, and in some cases limited, by the laws, regulations, and procedures that have been established by the University and sponsors of research to protect the integrity of the research process and the uses of the information developed for the common good. Although the legal agreement underlying the funding of a sponsored project is a matter between the sponsor and the University, the primary responsibility for management of a sponsored project rests with the principal investigator and his or her academic unit.

***Protection of human subjects and humane care of animals in the conduct of research.*** Research techniques should not violate established professional ethics or federal and state requirements pertaining to the health, safety, privacy, and protection of human beings, or to the welfare of animal subjects. Whereas it is the

responsibility of faculty to assist students and staff in complying with such requirements, it is the responsibility of all researchers to be aware of and to comply with such requirements.

***Collegiality in scholarly interactions and sharing of resources.*** Collegiality in scholarly interactions, including open communications and sharing of resources, facilitates progress in research and creative activities for the good of the community. At the same time, it has to be understood that scholars who first report important findings are both recognized for their discovery and afforded intellectual property rights that permit discretion in the use and sharing of their discoveries and inventions. Balancing openness and protecting the intellectual property rights of individuals and the institution will always be a challenge for the community. Once the results of research or creative activities have been published or otherwise communicated to the public, scholars are expected to share materials and information on methodologies with their colleagues according to the tradition of their discipline.

Faculty advisors have a particular responsibility to respect and protect the intellectual property rights of their advisees. A clear understanding must be reached during the course of the project on who will be entitled to continue what part of the overall research program after the advisee leaves for an independent position. Faculty advisors should also strive to protect junior scholars from abuses by others who have gained knowledge of the junior scholar's results during the mentoring process, for example, as members of guidance committees.

***Adherence to fair and open relationships between senior scholars and their co-workers.*** The relationship between senior scholars and their coworkers should be based on mutual respect, trust, honesty, fairness in the assignment of effort and credit, open communications, and accountability. The principles that will be used to establish authorship and ordering of authors on presentations of results must be communicated early and clearly to all coworkers. These principles should be determined objectively according to the standards of the discipline, with the understanding that such standards may not be the same as those used to assign credit for contributions to intellectual property. It is the responsibility of the faculty to protect the freedom to publish results of research and creative activities. The University has affirmed the right of its scholars for first publication except for "exigencies of national defense". (see Note 3) It is also the responsibility of the faculty to recognize and balance their dual roles as investigators and advisors in interacting with graduate students of their group, especially when a student's efforts do not contribute directly to the completion of his or her degree requirements.

## **2. Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities**

Federal (see Note 4) and University (see Note 2) policies define misconduct to include fabrication (making up data and recording or reporting them), falsification (manipulating research materials, equipment or processes, or changing or omitting data such that the research is not accurately represented in the record), and plagiarism (appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit). Serious or continuing non-compliance with government regulations pertaining to research may constitute misconduct as well. University policy also defines retaliation against whistle blowers as misconduct. Misconduct does not include honest errors or honest differences of opinion in the interpretation or judgment of data.

The University views misconduct to be the most egregious violation of standards of integrity and as grounds for disciplinary action, including the termination of employment of faculty and staff, dismissal of students, and revocation of degrees. It is the responsibility of faculty, staff, and students alike to understand the University's policy on misconduct in research and creative activities (see Note 2), to report perceived acts of misconduct of which they have direct knowledge to the University Intellectual Integrity Officer, and to protect the rights and privacy of individuals making such reports in good faith.

### 3. Resources

“Guidelines on Authorship”, Endorsed by the University Research Council, January 15, 1998 (<http://www.msu.edu/unit/vprgs/authorshipguidelines.htm>)

“Integrity in Scientific Research: Creating an Environment that Promotes Responsible Conduct”, National Academies Press, Washington, D.C., 2002, 216 pp (<http://www.nap.edu/books/0309084792/html>)

“Research Data: Management, Control, and Access Guidelines”, Endorsed by the University Research Council, February 7, 2001 ([http://www.msu.edu/unit/vprgs/research\\_data.htm](http://www.msu.edu/unit/vprgs/research_data.htm))

### Notes

1. Michigan State University “Mission Statement” approved by the Board of Trustees on , 2008, (<http://president.msu.edu/advancing-msu/msu-mission-statement.html>)
2. MSU Faculty Handbook, Chapter VI, “Research and Creative Endeavor-Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities” (<http://www.hr.msu.edu/HRsite/Documents/Faculty/Handbooks/Faculty/ResearchCreativeEndeavor/vi-miscon-toc.htm>)
3. MSU Faculty Handbook, Chapter VI, “Research and Creative Endeavor-Sponsored Research and Creative Endeavor” (<https://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/facacadhandbooks/facultyhandbook/misconductproc/>).
4. Office of Science and Technology Policy, “Notice of Final Policy”, 65 CFR 76260.

## C. ETHICAL TREATMENT OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

Students are required to obtain a faculty sponsor and seek the approval of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects prior to beginning any research or creative projects involving human beings (this includes any internships or independent studies). They must also register as investigators with IRB and take an on-line certification course. Additionally, students should consult their advisors before undertaking *any* creative or research project to determine if IRB clearance is required. Such clearances may take 1-7 weeks, or more, to obtain and are specifically required for theses and projects. Directions and application forms are available at <http://hrpp.msu.edu/>.

## IX. STUDENT CONDUCT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

### A. STUDENT CONDUCT

Students, faculty and staff are expected to exhibit intellectual curiosity, good cheer, cooperation, and professional demeanor toward each other at all times. They should treat each other with mutual consideration while recognizing the differences between individuals and cultures that we in Media and Information all celebrate. (<http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/default.pdf>).

### B. GRIEVANCES

Grievances, and conflicts of interest between students and their advisors, students and other faculty, students and staff, or between students will be referred first to the Director of Graduate Studies for resolution. Requests for conflict resolution may be made in person during the Director's office hours or via email. All such requests will be handled in confidence. Appeals of the Director's decisions may be made to the Chair of Media and Information and from there to the Dean of the College of Communication Arts and Sciences and/or to the university ombudsman, as appropriate, for referral to the appropriate grievance committees.

At the departmental level, the procedures are described in Article 9 of the departmental bylaws (as adopted by department faculty on December 13, 2013). The Department follows University guidelines and procedures for addressing grievances as described in the [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibility Conflicts](#) and by the Office of the MSU Ombudsman (<https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/grievance-procedures/index.html>).

### *Office of the University Ombudsperson*

Conflicts, disagreements, and issues sometimes arise during the course of a graduate program. If you find yourself in this situation and have exhausted the internal resources for resolving the issue, you may contact the Office of the University Ombudsperson.

The Office of the University Ombudsperson provides assistance to students, faculty, and staff in resolving University-related concerns. Such concerns include: student-faculty conflicts; communication problems; concerns about the university climate; and questions about what options are available for handling a problem according to Michigan State University policy. The University Ombudsperson also provides information about available resources and student/faculty rights and responsibilities. The office operates as a confidential, independent, and neutral resource. It does not provide notice to the University - that is, it does not speak or hear for the University.

Contact the Ombudsperson at any point during an issue when a confidential conversation or source of information may be needed. The Ombudsperson will listen to your concerns, give you information about university policies, help you evaluate the situation, and assist you in making plans to resolve the conflict.

Contact information:

Office of the University Ombudsperson  
129 N. Kedzie Hall  
(517) 353-8830  
[ombud@msu.edu](mailto:ombud@msu.edu)  
<https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/>

## **X. WORK RELATED POLICIES**

Teaching assistants are referred to the current [Graduate Employee's Union Handbook](#) (<http://geuatmsu.org/about/geu-contract/>) and to [Graduate Student's Rights and Responsibilities](#) (<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/gsrr/GSRR.pdf>) GSRR 4.2.1 – 4.2.8 for work-related policies and details of their health care plan. Copies of the contract and related health care policy may be obtained in CAS 409.

Research and teaching assistantships are awarded based on merit and departmental research and teaching needs. They are renewable on a semester-by-semester basis depending upon performance, departmental needs, and the

availability of funds. The student's faculty supervisor provides a written evaluation each semester. M.A. students are eligible for assistantships for two years following their acceptance in the program. The term of eligibility may be extended on a case-by-case basis, but to no more than three years, based on performance and departmental needs. Assistantships may be terminated at any time and pay reduced for gross negligence, such as failure to perform assigned duties or, for teaching assistants, any dereliction of the Code of Teaching Responsibility. Faculty supervisors may require students to keep time cards and/or maintain regular office hours, at their option.

Teaching and research assistants are expected to report for duty at least one week prior to the beginning of classes and to remain on duty until at least the day after final grades are submitted each semester. Half-time teaching assistants are expected to devote an average of 20 hours per week to their duties across the entire term of their appointment, up to a total of 360 hours per semester. Sick leave requires documentation from a licensed physician and assistants are responsible for arranging, in advance, with their faculty supervisors for the completion of their duties while on sick leave. Permission for late arrival or early departure or for temporary leave (such as to attend a professional conference) must be obtained in writing, in advance, from the student's faculty supervisor who will forward the request to the Chair for approval.

Outside work for pay is permitted as long as it does not interfere with the student's regularly assigned assistantship duties or academic progress.

Teaching and research assistants will have shared office spaces and access to telephones in CAS 409 for placing and receiving local calls. Mailboxes are provided. All students are required to have their own computers. Students are expected to furnish their own office supplies and reimburse the department for photocopying, except as directly related to their teaching or research responsibilities.

All international teaching assistants are required to take and pass the SPEAK test at the minimum required level of 50 prior to the semester in which they are assigned as a teaching assistant (see Academic Programs for the minimum all-University standard of English proficiency).

## **XI. UNIVERSITY RESOURCES**

A number of professionally-oriented resources are available to graduate students. A sampling is listed below:

### **A. ON-CAMPUS**

The following services of the University use students in volunteer and part-time paid capacities and as graduate assistants. They may also provide opportunities for observation and some kinds of research:

**BEHAVIOR, INFORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGY LAB (BITLAB).** The BITLab brings together a group of social science / technology researchers. Collectively, we conduct research at the intersection of behavior, information, and technology. The Lab is located in room 251 of the Communication Arts and Sciences building.

**GAMES FOR ENTERTAINMENT AND LEARNING LAB (GEL Lab).** The mission of the Games for Entertainment and Learning (GEL) Lab at Michigan State University is to design innovative prototypes, techniques, and complete games for entertainment and learning and to advance state of the art knowledge about social and individual effects of digital games. The GEL Lab is an association of game research and design faculty and students at Michigan State University, primarily in the College of Communication Arts and

Sciences. The lab does externally funded research and development work and employs several graduate and undergraduate students.

QUELLO CENTER FOR TELECOMUNICATION MANAGEMENT AND LAW - This organization, named for an MSU graduate who served for 23 years as an FCC Commissioner and Chairman of the Commission, conducts research and conferences on telecommunication matters. Students may become involved in these activities.

#### Radio and Television Stations

WDBM-FM                      Student operated radio station  
[www.impact89fm.org](http://www.impact89fm.org)

WKAR-AM-FM                Public radio stations  
[www.wkar.org](http://www.wkar.org)

WKAR-TV                     Public television station  
[www.wkar.org](http://www.wkar.org)

WDBM-FM and WLFT-AM, The campus radio network - is managed and operated entirely by students (mainly volunteer). It consists of a carrier current service to all residential hall complexes; the network station WMSN and two dormitory satellites. The main offices and studios are located at in the basement of Holden Hall. Students interested in doing volunteer work at the station and network should apply at the office M-F, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

ASCOT - (Associated Students for Career Orientation in Telecommunication) was established by students in 1983 to help one another in careers, opportunities, planning and positions. With faculty advice, ASCOT maintains contact with many firms and organizations in telecommunication and related fields. It sponsors a variety of programs, speakers, workshops and field events on diverse contemporary telecommunication areas and issues such as digital media, information technology, communication, networks, multichannel services, broadcasting, audio and image production, management, marketing, sales, finance and innovative technical developments.

MSU Counseling and Psychiatric Services – (<https://caps.msu.edu/>) – MSU Counseling & Psychiatric Services, CAPS, is the new place on campus for students seeking help for a wide range of concerns, including depression, anxiety, stress management, homesickness, adjustment or acculturation, relationships, gender identity and sexual orientation (LBGTQ) concerns, substance abuse, trauma, eating or body image concerns, and other personal mental health concerns. CAPS combines the services of the former MSU Counseling Center and former Olin Psychiatry Clinic to provide improved access for students. Additional services will be available in the Neighborhood Engagement Centers, and the MSU Union building.

My SSP App – (<https://appadvice.com/app/my-ssp/1112006222>) – Serving the entire MSU student population, the My SSP app initially was available to international students last fall and was found to be highly effective, providing assistance with the option of getting help in their native languages.

MSU Graduate Student Life and Wellness – (<https://grad.msu.edu/wellness>) – Whether you're pursuing a masters, doctoral or graduate professional degree, graduate school can be one of the most exciting, challenging, and rewarding experiences you undertake in your life. To help you navigate your way, the Office of Graduate Student Life & Wellness and this website act as a handbook to graduate student life and wellness at Michigan State University. Here you will find the tools, resources, and programs to not only help you succeed, but have a great experience overall.

## **B. OFF CAMPUS**

Many local and regional employers seek interns in the fields of HCI and MIM.

Cable television systems in East Lansing and Meridian Township have offered opportunities for student involvement, particularly with the access channels which are available for messages originated by the community, including WELM (351-0214), HOM-TV (349-1232).

At the local commercial stations, there are sometimes employment opportunities for qualified individuals, e.g. radio announcers, television reporters, and production staff.

**EAST LANSING AND MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP CABLE COMMISSIONS** - These public policy advisory commissions welcome students who live in the respective communities (not on campus) to serve as Commissioners. They particularly value knowledge in the telecommunication area. Applications are available at the City and Township Halls.

## XII. DEPARTMENT CONTACT INFORMATION

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