Master of Fine Arts in Media Arts and Technology

Procedures for Capstone Project and Thesis Options

Table of Contents

I. The Thesis and Capstone Project
   Differences Between a Thesis and Capstone Project .................................................. 3
   Choosing Between a Thesis and Capstone Project ........................................................ 4

II. Capstone Project Option
   Summary: ....................................................................................................................... 4
   Procedure for Capstone Project ...................................................................................... 4
   1. Project course: ........................................................................................................... 4
   2. Continuous Registration Fee .................................................................................... 5
   3. Project Committee ..................................................................................................... 5
   4. Project Proposal: ........................................................................................................ 5
   5. Schedule a Proposal Presentation ............................................................................. 6
   6. Project Execution ....................................................................................................... 6
   7. Project Presentation ................................................................................................... 6
   8. After the Presentation ............................................................................................... 6

III. Thesis Option
   Summary: ........................................................................................................................ 6
   Procedure for Thesis ....................................................................................................... 7
   1. Thesis course ............................................................................................................. 7
   2. Continuous Registration Fee .................................................................................... 7
   3. Thesis Committee ..................................................................................................... 7
   4. Thesis Proposal ......................................................................................................... 8
   5. Schedule a Proposal Presentation ............................................................................. 8
   8. Thesis Execution ....................................................................................................... 8
   10. After Defense ......................................................................................................... 8

IV. Capstone Project Forms
   Appendix A1: Capstone Project Committee Agreement Form ......................................... 11
   Appendix A2: Project Proposal Approval Form .............................................................. 13
APPENDIX A3: PROJECT APPROVAL FORM .............................................................. 15

V. THESIS FORMS ........................................................................................................... 17

APPENDIX B1: THESIS COMMITTEE AGREEMENT FORM ........................................... 18
APPENDIX B2: THESIS PROPOSAL APPROVAL FORM ................................................. 20
APPENDIX B3: THESIS APPROVAL FORM .................................................................... 22
I. Thesis and Capstone Project

Differences between a thesis and capstone project

A capstone project and a thesis are similar in a number of ways. They both represent endeavors of scholarship and creative work of the highest quality. They epitomize a culmination of years of study in your academic discipline and may prove to be a catalyst that guides or directs your future research or professional work. In most cases, the project and thesis both involve a review of relevant literature or professional works, as well as research in some form within a specialized area of the discipline.

The project and thesis differ primarily in focus and the approaches implemented when carrying out the work. Generally, a capstone project focuses on questions or issues of practical-professional significance, such as developing a method, technique, or evaluation approach. It can be a creative work such as a film, non-fiction manuscript, media promotion campaign, exhibit, interactive design, or innovative work that blends disciplines such as design, cinematography, photography, writing, and storytelling. For such creative works, students often begin by defining a clear problem or issue to be addressed. They conduct research, define research methods, analyze data, and draw conclusions but these are done for the specific purpose of developing the creative work (e.g., film, exhibit, manuscript, campaign, design, etc.). At its completion, the project may be comprised of written documents and various combinations of physical and digital media artifacts (sound, images, motion images, applications, film, exhibits, applications, etc.).

A thesis, on the other hand, is an academically focused research project with potentially broad implications. Generally, at its completion, the thesis is a written document that provides an answer(s) to a specific question(s), which, in turn, adds some form of new knowledge to influence or contribute to the media arts and technology field. The approach to completing a thesis mainly involves: stating research question(s), conducting a review of literature, defining methods to address the question(s), collecting and analyzing data, and determining results and conclusions.
Choosing Between a Thesis and Capstone Project

If you are thinking about pursuing a career in the Media Arts and Technology profession (e.g., design, cinematography, interactive design and media, photography, writing, storytelling, technology, etc.) or in higher education in Media Arts and Technology, a capstone project provides students with an in-depth opportunity to explore new forms of creativity, design, and production. You will gain unique experience in producing physical and/or digital media materials for informational, entertainment, business, or a host of other professional purposes. The work you produce may help you to focus on a specific topic area that you may ultimately pursue in your professional work.

If you are thinking about pursuing a doctoral (Ph.D.) degree or a research position, completing a thesis will likely give you a thorough understanding of the academic research process required for doctoral studies and scientific research in general. It may also help you to focus on a specific research area if you pursue doctoral studies.

II. CAPSTONE PROJECT OPTION

Summary: To begin a CAPSTONE PROJECT, students identify a project director and an additional faculty member to serve as the committee. The committee will work with the student in developing a project proposal. Students make a formal presentation of their proposal to the committee and once the proposal is approved, students begin work on the project itself. After the project is complete, students make a formal, public presentation of their work for final approval. Throughout the Capstone Project, students are required to complete three forms: 1) Capstone Project Committee Agreement, 2) Capstone Project Proposal Approval Form, and 3) Capstone Project Approval form. Forms can be obtained in the MEDIA office, 544 College Hall.

Procedure for Capstone Project

1. Project course: Students register for Project course (MDIA 700) typically in the last semester of coursework (3-credits). They receive an IP (in progress) grade for MDIA
700 until the Project is complete, at which time they receive a P (passing) grade and the M.F.A. degree is issued. Students register for MDIA 700 only once.

2. Continuous Registration Fee: When students have completed all courses except MDIA 700 (and are not enrolled in any other courses except MDIA 700), they should register for GRAS 700 (Continuous Registration Fee). This keeps the student’s status Active and "signals" the Registrar's office that the student is still completing the Project. Students need to register this way each Fall and Spring semester until the Project is complete. No continuing registration is required during the Summer semester. Students must request registration by sending an email to the Graduate School Office (Linda Rendulic, rendulic@duq.edu) and the MEDIA Department Graduate Director.

3. Project Committee: Students identify a MEDIA Department faculty member to serve as project director who is their primary advisor for the project. To identify an appropriate director, students should meet with various faculty members to discuss their Capstone Project ideas and ascertain if individual faculty have the relevant interests and expertise to advise the project. When students identify a potential director, the faculty member should be asked and agree to serve as their director. Students need to also identify another faculty member to serve on the committee (Reader) who reads-reviews and evaluates the work. The Reader, too, should have interests and expertise in the project topic. Obtain an agreement from these faculty to serve in this capacity by completing the Capstone Project Committee Agreement form. The committee will work with the student to develop a proposal and to ultimately complete the project.

4. Project Proposal: The project should be completed over at least two semesters. By the end of the first semester, students should have completed a project proposal. Students should consult the project director about the format of the proposal. Typically, the proposal is a comprehensive written document the defines the subject matter, goals, and timeline for completion of the intended project. It includes: 1) a title page with the project title and the names of the student, project director, and reader; 2) detailed description of the project (need or rationale for the work, subject
matter, theme of the work, intended audience, etc.) ; 3) a review of relevant literature, professional works, or research that would support or give validity to why this project is relevant and important; 4) proposed methodology or approaches (steps / procedures) to be followed in completing the project; 5) specific timeline of major tasks and when they will be completed and; 6) bibliography.

5. Schedule a Proposal Presentation. Students reserve a 90-minute time - presenting to the committee for 15 minutes and answering questions for the remaining 45 minutes. Presentations are public. When the committee approves the proposal, complete the Capstone Project Proposal Approval Form.

6. Project Execution: After the proposal is approved, the student executes and completes the project within a maximum of two years. Students should consult with the committee regularly during production and submit the completed project to the committee for review.

7. Project Presentation: In consultation with the committee, students schedule a formal presentation of their work. It is important that students submit the completed project to their committee at least two weeks prior to the presentation. Presentation formats will vary. Project director and students should determine the format (e.g., formal talk, film viewing, exhibit, etc.). Students should allocate adequate time (i.e., 90 minutes) for the Presentation of the work as well as time for questions and feedback.

8. After the Presentation: Students incorporate suggestions for revisions and finalize the project. They should submit the finalize project to the committee well in advance of any department or university graduation deadlines. When the committee approves the project, committee members and the student complete the Capstone Project Approval form. The Project Director should notify the MEDIA Graduate Director to update the MDIA 700 in-progress “IP” grade to “P” passing.

III. THESIS OPTION

Summary: To begin a THESIS, students identify a thesis director and two additional faculty members to serve on the committee. The committee will work with the student in
developing a proposal. Students make a formal presentation of their proposal to the committee and once the proposal is approved, students may collect data, and complete writing the thesis. After the thesis is complete, students make a formal defense-presentation of their thesis for final approval. When students complete a thesis, it is submitted to the Library. To meet the deadline for submission, students should consult the University deadlines available online on the Duquesne Academic Calendar (https://duq.edu/academics/academic-calendar). Throughout the thesis, students are required to complete three forms: 1) Thesis Committee Agreement, 2) Thesis Proposal Approval Form, and 3) Thesis Approval form. Forms can be obtained in the MEDIA office, 544 College Hall.

Procedure for Thesis

1. Thesis course: Students register for Thesis-Project course (MDIA 700) typically in last semester of coursework (3-credits). They receive an IP (in progress) grade for MDIA 700 until the thesis is complete, at which time they receive a P (passing) grade and the M.F.A. degree is issued. Students register for MDIA 700 only once.

2. Continuous Registration Fee: When students have completed all courses except MDIA 700 (and are not enrolled in any other courses except MDIA 700), they should register for GRAS 700 (Continuous Registration Fee). This keeps the student’s status Active and "signals" the Registrar’s office that the student is still completing the Thesis. Students need to register this way each Fall and Spring semester until the Thesis is complete. No continuing registration is required during the Summer semester. Students must request registration by sending an email to the Graduate School Office (Linda Rendulic, rendulic@duq.edu) and the MEDIA Department Graduate Director.

3. Thesis Committee: Students identify a MEDIA Department faculty member to serve as thesis director who is their primary advisor for the thesis. To identify an appropriate director, students should meet with various faculty members to discuss their thesis ideas and ascertain if individual faculty have relevant interests and
expertise to advise the thesis. When students identify a director, the faculty member should be asked and agree to serve as their director. Students need to also identify two additional faculty members who serve as committee members to read and evaluate the thesis. Committee members, too, should have interests and expertise in the thesis topic. Obtain an agreement from these faculty to serve in this capacity by completing the Thesis Committee Agreement form. The committee will work with the student to develop a thesis proposal and to ultimately complete the thesis.

4. Thesis Proposal: The thesis should be completed over at least two semesters. By the end of the first semester, students should have completed a thesis proposal with introduction, literature review, and methods sections. Students submit the completed proposal to the committee two weeks prior to the proposal presentation date.

5. Schedule a Proposal Presentation. Students reserve a 90-minute time, presenting to the committee for 15 minutes and answering questions for the remaining 45 minutes. Presentations are public.

6. When the committee approves the proposal, complete the Thesis Proposal Approval form.

7. If applicable, submit IRB documents when proposal is approved.

8. Thesis Execution: After the proposal is approved, students collect data and complete writing the thesis with the results and conclusion sections.

9. Thesis Presentation-Defense: Students submit the completed thesis to the committee two weeks prior to the final thesis defense. Reserve 90-minutes for the defense, presenting to the committee for 15 minutes and answering questions for the remaining 45 minutes. Defense presentations are public.

10. After Defense: Students incorporate suggestions for revisions and finalize the thesis. Because the thesis must be submitted to the Library, students should submit it to the committee director at least two weeks before the thesis deadline specified on Duquesne Academic Calendar. Upon completion of the thesis and with committee approval, complete the Thesis Approval form.
11. Students make at least two professionally binder copies: One for the department, and one for the university.

12. The committee director should notify the MEDIA Graduate Director to update the MDIA 700 in-progress “IP” grade to “P” passing.
IV. Capstone Project Forms
Appendix A1: Capstone Project Committee Agreement Form
(The Form is on the next page)
The MFA Project committee consists of at least two faculty members who support the student’s work, a project director who is the primary advisor and another faculty member who serves on the committee. Obtain agreement from these faculty to serve in this capacity by completing this form. Once the committee is formed and approved, return this form to the MEDIA office. A copy will be kept in the MEDIA office and a copy will be given to the Department Chairperson and the Graduate Director.

**STUDENT INFORMATION**

Student Name: 

MFA Track: 

Signature: 

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

Working Title: 

Intended Submittal date: 

**PROJECT COMMITTEE**

Project Director: 

Signature: 

Date: 

Committee Member: 

Signature: 

Date: 

Additional Committee Member (optional): 

Signature: 

Department Chairperson Approval: 

Signature: 

Date:
Appendix A2: Project Proposal Approval Form
(The Form is on the next page)
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts
MEDIA
CAPSTONE PROJECT PROPOSAL APPROVAL FORM

Name: ________________________________________________

MFA Track: ____________________________________________

Project Title: __________________________________________

Date: _________________________________________________

APPROVED ____________________________________________

[Type name and title of Advisor | Director]

APPROVED ____________________________________________

[Type name and title of Reader]

APPROVED ____________________________________________

James Vota, Chair,
Department of MEDIA

APPROVED ____________________________________________

Kristine L. Blair, Ph.D., Dean,
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Attached proposal to this form, including a description of the finished project with a projected timeline for its completion. Return form to the MEDIA office. A copy will be kept in the MEDIA office and a copy will be given to the Department Chairperson and the Graduate Director.
Appendix A3: Project Approval Form
(The Form is on the next page)
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts
MEDIA
CAPSTONE PROJECT APPROVAL FORM

(To be signed at the completion of the capstone project defense.)

PROJECT TITLE

ALL CAPS, DOUBLE SPACED

By

Your Name

Approved Month Day, and Year of Defense

________________________________
Name of Faculty
(Faculty Advisor/Director)

________________________________
Name of Faculty
(Committee Member/Reader)

________________________________
Kristine L. Blair, Ph.D.
Dean, McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

________________________________
James Vota
Chair, MEDIA Department

Form to be signed when student has completed and presented his/her work and is ready for graduation. Ensure that a copy of this form is returned to the MEDIA office. A copy will be kept in the MEDIA office and a copy will be given to the Department Chairperson and the Graduate Director.
V. Thesis Forms
Appendix B1: Thesis Committee Agreement Form
(The Form is on the next page)
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts
MEDIA

THESIS COMMITTEE AGREEMENT

The MFA Thesis committee consists of at least three faculty members who support the student’s work, a project director who is the primary advisor and two faculty members who serve on the committee. Obtain agreement from these faculty to serve in this capacity by completing this form. Once the committee is formed and approved, return this form to the MEDIA office. A copy will be kept in the MEDIA office and a copy will be given to the Department Chairperson and the Graduate Director.

STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Name: 
MFA Track: 
Signature: 

THESIS INFORMATION

Working Title: 
Intended Submittal date: 

THESIS COMMITTEE

Thesis Director: 
Signature: Date: 
Committee Member: 
Signature: Date: 
Committee Member: 
Signature: 

Department Chairperson Approval:
Signature: Date: 
Appendix B2: Thesis Proposal Approval Form
(The Form is on the next page)
Name: 
MFA Track: 
Thesis Title: 

Date 

APPROVED ____________________________________________  
[type name and title of Director] 

APPROVED ____________________________________________  
[type name and title of First Reader] 

APPROVED ____________________________________________  
[type name and title of Second Reader] 

APPROVED ____________________________________________  
James Vota, Chair,  
Department of MEDIA 

APPROVED ____________________________________________  
Kristine L. Blair, Ph.D., Dean,  
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts  

Attached proposal to this form. Return form to the MEDIA office. A copy will be kept in the MEDIA office and a copy will be given to the Department Chairperson and the Graduate Director.
Appendix B3: Thesis Approval Form
(The Form is on the next page)
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts
MEDIA
THESIS APPROVAL FORM

PROJECT TITLE

ALL CAPS, DOUBLE SPACED

By
Your Name
Approved Month Day, and Year of Defense

________________________________
Name of Professor
(Faculty Advisor)

________________________________
Name of Professor
(Committee Member)

________________________________
Name of Professor
(Committee Member)

Kristine L. Blair, Ph.D.
Dean, McAnulty College and Graduate
School of Liberal Arts

James Vota
Chair, MEDIA Department

Form to be signed when student has completed and presented his/her work and is ready for graduation. Ensure that a copy of this forms is returned to the MEDIA office. A copy will be kept in the MEDIA office and a copy will be given to the Department Chairperson and the Graduate Director.