

**Department of the Arts, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**

**M.F.A. and Ph.D. in Electronic Arts  
Graduate Student Handbook  
2016-2017**

## **Electronic Arts Graduate Student Handbook**

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# MFA in Integrated Electronic Arts

## MFA Program Description

Rensselaer's Arts Department is generally considered to be the first integrated electronic arts program within a research university in the United States. The M.F.A. is a 60 credit degree dedicated to art practice, production, and electronic arts theory in a uniquely situated technological environment. The program is an “art school” in an “integrated artistic and technological environment.” The curriculum, which stresses creative studio-based work, includes coursework in computer music, video art, image processing techniques, performance, and critical analysis. The technical and artistic environment at Rensselaer provides opportunities for individual, collaborative, and community-based projects.

The program prepares students for careers in the fine and performing arts, media industry, and academia. Graduates of the program are professional artists and composers, performers, educators, multimedia designers and developers, video producers and editors, special effects specialists and directors, computer animation specialists, interactive arts software developers, multimedia studio directors, and sound designers.

Rensselaer's MFA program is unique in its focus on the full range of theory and practice of multidisciplinary electronic arts. It emphasizes students' own work and collaborative efforts and “dialogues” with internationally prominent visiting artists, curators, theorists, and historians.

## MFA Curriculum

2-year program (Fall start only)  
60 Credit Hours Total

**Electronic Arts MFA Requirements** (see below for expanded descriptions of each requirement in bulleted list):

- 60 credit hours beyond the Bachelor's degree. Individual requirements can be waived, in exceptional circumstances, by the Department without decreasing the total number of credits for the degree. No more than six credits hours of graduate work can be transferred toward the degree.
- Courses must have suffix numbers 4000-6999, with the further limitation that no more than 15 credits of 4000-4990 courses are to be allowed.
- Three history or theory courses at the 4000 (four credits) or 6000 (three credits) level, one of which must be Electronic Arts Overview (Arts 6110).
- Demonstration of competency in two Qualifying Reviews, judged by Arts Faculty during end of semester critiques.

- Enrollment in two semesters of Graduate Student Critique (ARTS 6080) in the fall or spring semester as offered.
- A minimum of 2 and a maximum of 9 credits of Masters Thesis (ARTS 6990) in the second year of residency, with a minimum of 1 thesis credit per semester.
- Arts Graduate Student Critiques (Crits) and Exhibition. Students are required to participate in Crits and the Arts Graduate Student Exhibition held at the end of each semester, with the exception of the semester in which students present and defend their thesis. Attendance at Crits is required for all students in residence. Students in residence may be excused from attendance at Crits and Exhibition due to special circumstances by the Department Head.

### **Exams and Thesis:**

#### **Two Qualifying Reviews:**

The first Qualifying Review will identify the technical and creative areas to be addressed in the second review. The Arts Department faculty must agree that the student's work shows competency and artistic merit in interdisciplinary media in order for the student to progress toward his or her final thesis.

**Completion of the Thesis Proposal and the Defense of the Proposal** to the student's Master's committee.

**The Master's Thesis** is composed of a public presentation of the thesis arts practice and the thesis text.

**The Master's Thesis Defense:** The student must defend the thesis in a Defense, conducted by the student's thesis committee.

#### **Electronic Arts Overview (ARTS 6110) in the first year**

This seminar aims to provide an historical context for understanding and analyzing practices and theories of contemporary electronic art. The curriculum is a mix of field surveys, readings of primary sources in aesthetic, media and critical theory, and examination of contemporary topics and controversies. The seminar is also intended to support the development and articulation of the student's creative practice, thereby providing conceptual foundations for the written component of the MFA thesis.

#### **Two additional history or theory courses offered either within the Arts Department or in another Rensselaer department**

History and theory courses are those that have reading, research, and writing as the work produced for the course. A studio course may qualify for a history or theory course if reading, research, and writing are a significant component of the work produced for the course and at least one substantial research paper must be required that includes footnotes and bibliography. History and Theory courses will be reviewed and selected with the assistance of either the

academic or thesis advisor for their appropriateness in regards to student's research and development.

### **Graduate Student Critique (ARTS 6080)**

Development and completion of individual creative projects with a focus on studio production, method, and process. Students are expected to foster an environment in which informed peer critique can take place.

### **Master's Thesis (ARTS 6990) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of residency**

Students need to enroll in Thesis credits that total from 2 to 9 credits. These credits support active participation in research under the supervision of a faculty thesis advisor, leading to a master's project, presentation and thesis. Details on thesis requirements can be found below in: “MFA Thesis: Project, Presentation, Paper, and Oral Defense” and “Graduate Qualifying Reviews” sections (located under MFA Exams and Evaluations Section below).

### **Demonstration of competency in interdisciplinary electronic arts**

Please see Graduate Qualifying Reviews section.

### **Participation in end of semester critiques**

All MFA students are required to participate in end of the semester critiques (“Crits”) with the exception of students in their final semester *who have already presented and successfully defended their thesis prior to the semester critiques*. Failure to participate will affect the student’s academic standing.

### **Public Presentation or Performance**

All MFA students are required to present or perform publicly each semester. All MFA students participate in the end of semester MFA show, whether or not they have presented their work elsewhere during the semester.

### **Independent Study Credits**

With the permission of the Instructor, your Advisor, and the Graduate Program Director in the Arts Department, Independent Study credits may supplement your curriculum by providing you with individualized self-directed research opportunities in areas where no formal courses are offered. You may work with faculty within the Arts Department or the Institute at large. These studies could also be used to supplement an existing class that is offered, but at a level that is inappropriate to you—such as an undergraduate course which you normally would not be eligible to receive credit for, or a graduate course within another discipline that you would benefit from, but are not qualified or able to complete all the coursework for. In most cases, Independent Studies will not be approved in areas where a substantially similar existing course is being offered.

The “Readings/Independent Study Registration Form for GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY” is required from the Registrar to enroll in Independent Study credits found at: <http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=20>.

Follow these three steps to determine how your independent research will apply to your Plan of Study and how to complete the form:

***1) Consult with the Instructor for an Independent Study:***

Meet with the Instructor you wish to study with, in order to propose your research, determine the work that you will complete, and the number of credits you will receive for successfully completing your work. It is entirely optional for the faculty member to accept the proposal. Remember that Independent Studies are just that: independently directed research. Do not expect that the faculty member will prepare and conduct an individualized course just for you, but that you will be carrying out your own specialized research under their guidance and demonstrating your progress to them.

Write a paragraph or two detailing the proposed study topic; frequency or nature of meetings and advising; the proposed final project (paper, presentation, art work etc.); and how it will be evaluated. Include how you hope the Independent Study credits will be applied to your curricular requirements. Certain courses in your curriculum will have different writing or production requirements and these requirements need to be agreed to by the Instructor. If the Independent Study is intended to satisfy either your theory or professional development requirements, the Instructor and Advisor must approve it. Attach the description to the permission form for Independent Studies, have the Instructor agree to the proposal and sign the permission form.

***2) Consult with Advisor:***

In consultation with your Advisor, determine your Plan of Study how the Independent Study will be applied to your curriculum (the Plan of Study must be completed every semester); whether it will be eligible to fulfill theory or other course requirements or whether it will be a general elective. Since you might change advisors during your degree program, it will benefit you to be very clear about what requirements the course will be applied towards in your proposal. Have your advisor read the proposal and sign the permission form.

***3) Consult with GPD:***

Give the proposal and the signed permission form to the Graduate Program Director in the Arts for their signature. Then deliver the original form to the registrar with a copy going to Jennifer Mumby, HASS Student Services Administrator.

**Registration (The Student Information System – “SIS”)**

All full-time continuing students must register during the period specified each semester by the Registrar. New, part-time, or re-admitted students must register before the first day of classes. Graduate students may not register after the tenth class day of the term. Registration is done on line through the Rensselaer Student Information Services (SIS) website (<http://sis.rpi.edu>). Refer to the Office of Graduate Education website for information on SIS.

A student's registration is not complete until he or she has paid or arranged for payment of university fees. If special arrangements for payment are necessary, they need to be made through the Bursar's Office.

Full-time continuing students who miss registration must pay \$50 and register before the first day of classes each term. All students who fail to register before the start of classes will be charged \$25 to cover additional processing costs. For full-time continuing students, this charge is added to the \$50 fee. Defer to the Registrar and Office of Graduate Education for any changes in the fees or charges.

The full-time load for a graduate student normally is 12 to 15 credit hours each semester. A student who wishes to register for more than 15 credit hours must have the permission of his or her department and the approval of the Graduate School.

Graduate Teaching Assistants are required to take a minimum of 9 credits per semester. Research Assistants are required to take a minimum of 12 credits per semester. However, unless credits are being transferred, 15 credits must be taken each semester in order to complete the 60-credit degree within the 2 year time limit.

### **The Student Information System or SIS (<http://sis.rpi.edu>)**

Students at Rensselaer register in priority order. Students with more earned credit hours will register first. Registration needs to be completed online. When the date and time on your registration Time Ticket arrives, you can register at any time and from anywhere you can get to <http://sis.rpi.edu>. When you finish, you can print your schedule, and you are registered!

While registration is almost paperless, you will need special forms and signatures to register for select courses (such as independent studies, courses restricted to majors in another field, courses that require a pre-requisite that a student does not have, and for some limited enrollment courses). These forms are located at: <http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=20> or at: <http://registrar.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=29>

### **Incomplete Grades**

The grade “I” (incomplete course work) is only given when a student has been unable to complete the required course work due to illness or other extenuating circumstances, such as a personal emergency beyond the student’s control. The “I” grade is given only after the contract form, Authorization for Grade of Incomplete, has been completed and signed by both the instructor and the student and received by the Registrar. The Incomplete Form is located in the Instructor menu of SIS.

The “I” grade must be completed within one semester. If facilities (i.e., laboratory) are required to complete the outstanding work but are not available during the next semester, then one year is the maximum time limit, subject to approval by the instructor. The grade of “I” is considered a penalty grade in the calculation of the term GPA. Until the grade of “I” is changed, it is calculated as if it were “F.”

### **Transferring Credit**

Credit for graduate work completed at other accredited institutions prior to matriculation at Rensselaer may be offered in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree at Rensselaer when the work is appropriate to the student’s program. No more than six credit hours may be transferred toward the master's degree.



## Waiving Requirements

Individual course requirements can be waived, in exceptional circumstances, by the department, without decreasing the total number of credits required for the degree.

## MFA Advising

### Academic Advisor

Academic Advisors are assigned to incoming students based on the interests they express in their applications and availability of instructor. To register for courses, students will need to meet with their Academic or Thesis Advisor before each Fall and Spring semester of their residency. Please note the official dates for consultation given on the Institute's Academic Calendar.

### Thesis Advisor

A Thesis Advisor is an advisor that will work with the student individually towards completion of their MFA. Thesis Advisors need to be selected in the candidate's second semester, or when he or she completes their Second Qualifying Review successfully. Finding the right Thesis Advisor is critical to the completion of your graduate degree. Therefore, it is essential for all graduate students to get to know the faculty. The "Nomination of Master's Thesis Committee, Provisional Thesis Title & Degree Designation" form confirming a faculty member as the Thesis Advisor and including names of the committee members, must be completed and delivered to the Student Services Administrator, Jennifer Mumby, who will send the nomination to the Office of Graduate Education for approval. The form is available at: (<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=20>)

All 2<sup>nd</sup> year students need to have their Thesis Advisor on file with the Arts GPD and OGE. If a student is unsuccessful in forming a relationship with a Thesis Advisor, one will be appointed by the GPD with the approval of the Arts Department Head.

### Plan of Study (POS)

The Graduate Program is flexible and affords each student an opportunity to plan a course of study suited to his or her own objectives. To assure a coherent program in accordance with the student's maturing capacities and aims, each student is to maintain, with the Academic or Thesis Advisor's assistance, a Plan of Study for the degree for which he or she is studying.

**An updated Plan of Study must be submitted each semester.** Also, the Office of Graduate Education needs a current completed POS on file *for any administrative action* including registration in independent study courses, late add, drop, changes of status, etc. If there are any significant changes in the student's plans or status, a revised Plan of Study must be updated on file.

Download the "Graduate Plan of Study" form from the Office of Graduate Education website and prepare it electronically (<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=20>). The form needs to be completed, signed, and submitted before the student's second full-time semester and updated every successive semester.

The “Graduate Plan of Study” form requires the signature of the student’s Advisor and the Graduate Program Director. When completed, the student needs to deliver the original form to Jennifer Mumby, Student Services Administrator in HASS who will work with you to deliver the original to the Office of the Registrar with copies going to the Advisor, the GPD, the HASS Graduate Office and the Office of Graduate Education.

### **Committee Selection**

An MFA Thesis committee is made up of 4 members:

- 1) A Thesis Advisor, who must be an Arts Faculty member, will also act as the chair of the thesis defense
- 2) 2 additional faculty members from the Arts Department
- 3) 1 outside member, who may be from another department at RPI, from another university, from an independent arts organization, or an independent professional artist or curator.

The choice of the Thesis Advisor is vital and students need to consider their options carefully. The overall planning of the thesis presentation, oral defense, and the paper will be made in consultation with the advisor, and students need to meet regularly with her or him for feedback while planning and executing the project and the paper. Upon entering the program, students are encouraged seek out individual faculty to discuss their work and potential thesis project. Students are urged to find committee members who have perspectives that can guide the student’s thesis project and paper artistically, technically and theoretically. If the student is unsuccessful in forming a relationship with a Thesis Advisor, one will be appointed by the GPD with approval of the Department Head.

Committee member selection needs to be discussed and approved by the student’s Thesis Advisor and the GPD. Outside committee members are often chosen because their artwork is representative of a direction in which the student hopes to examine in the thesis work, or because they may serve as career “gatekeepers” who may help the student move their work from the academy to a larger audience. With this in mind, it is a good idea to take advantage of the many opportunities to see and hear visiting artists and curators who are engaged with the Arts Department, EMPAC, and various local galleries in the area. If you come across someone whom you think would be a good outside member of your committee, introduce yourself and try to make a personal connection.

The “Nomination of Master’s Thesis Committee, Provisional Thesis Title & Degree Designation” form, confirms a faculty member as the Thesis Advisor, and including names of the committee members. The form must be completed and on file in the Arts Department, the HASS Graduate Office, and the Office of Graduate Education for all 2<sup>nd</sup> year MFA students engaged in thesis credits.

## MFA Reviews and Evaluations

### Graduate Qualifying Reviews

The Graduate Qualifying Reviews are a two-phase qualifying process that MFA students must pass before enrolling in “Master’s Thesis” credits.

Due to the wide range of student backgrounds and the many possibilities for study offered in the MFA program, everyone’s path will be different, and it is impossible to offer an exact “checklist” of how one would demonstrate “competency” in the electronic arts.

The main criterion for success will be the agreement of the faculty that the student’s body of work represents a thoughtful and informed execution and articulation of integrated electronic arts practice. A secondary criterion is the demonstration of facility with standard technological tools and concepts for visual and sonic arts. A third criterion is the ability to present and introduce the work, and to converse with others about the technical, artistic, theoretical and conceptual issues pertaining to the work.

Each student will undergo two reviews. The Qualifying Reviews will take place at the end-of-the-semester critiques in the fall and spring semesters (first and second semesters). In most cases, if the student plans to complete the degree in two years, the Second Review will be at the end of the spring semester of the first year.

### 1st Qualifying Review

As part of the end of fall semester critiques during the first year of graduate work, tenure track and clinical faculty will fill out a standard evaluation form for each new student. Students are graded with **Pass**, **Conditional Pass**, or **Fail**.

A **Pass** grade means that the student can continue with their plan of study and can expect to advance to thesis work after the Second Qualifying Review, provided they continue their progress.

A **Fail** grade means that the faculty feels the student’s work is not at an appropriate level for the MFA program, and the student cannot continue in the program.

A **Conditional Pass** means that the faculty has some significant concerns about the student’s progress or some aspect of their work. In this case, specific conditions will be laid out for the advancement to thesis work. These may include specific classes to be taken, evidence of acquisition of specific technical skills, or a development of particular aspects of the student’s creative work. In the case of a Conditional Pass, the Graduate Program Director will discuss the specific conditions set by the faculty with both the student and the student’s advisor. Together, the student and advisor will devise a plan of study addressing the student’s academic goals and the recommendations of the Review. The conditions imposed by a Conditional Pass must be met before the student may enroll in thesis work.

The Review forms, recommendations, requirements, and final plan will be entered into the student’s file. Starting the second semester of graduate work, the student’s curriculum will

address the recommendations and requirements of the Review process. Work and progress not seen to be of graduate quality will result in warning, loss of funding, or dismissal from the program.

### **2<sup>nd</sup>, or Final Qualifying Review**

When the student and advisor think it is time to proceed to independent thesis work, the student will declare to the Graduate Program Director that performance in the upcoming end-of-the-semester critique will be used for his/her Final Qualifying Review.

The presentation and discussion of the work in the critique will be a demonstration of the student's readiness to pursue Master's Thesis work. Tenure-track and clinical faculty will document on the departmental forms the evaluation of the student's performance in the Final Qualifying Review and will vote as to whether the student is ready to commence with thesis work. Any requirements resulting from a Conditional Pass in the First Qualifying Review must be satisfied at the time of the Second Qualifying Review.

The Graduate Program Director and the student's advisor will evaluate the results of the vote, as well as the contract from the student's First Qualifying Review. The student will either pass, be given a conditional pass, or fail.

### **Advancement to Candidacy**

**Pass:** Permission to pursue independent "Master's Thesis" credits.

**Conditional Pass:** Students who have been found to do acceptable work, but who are deficient in specific areas must ameliorate those deficiencies in order to be in good standing. An additional Qualifying Review will be required.

**Fail:** Loss of funding or expulsion at the discretion of the department. Disciplinary action will occur.

### **The MFA Thesis**

#### **The MFA Thesis: Project, Presentation, Paper, and Oral Defense**

The MFA thesis includes three primary components:

- 1) a significant artistic project which is presented publicly and documented using appropriate media
- 2) a thesis paper which describes the project and places it in an historical and cultural context
- 3) an oral defense of both the project and the paper

#### **The Thesis Project**

Since the work in the MFA program can involve a wide variety of media and artistic orientations, there is no set formula for what constitutes a thesis project. Some examples of the sorts of projects which are of appropriate scale for a thesis might include a solo gallery exhibition of visual or installation work, a full concert of musical compositions, a site specific

installation, an evening of single channel video work, or an on-going media intervention. The nature and scope of the work really depends upon the individual artist and is ultimately negotiated with and approved by the thesis advisor.

Whatever form the thesis project takes, there must be a public presentation of the project, and appropriate documentation of the presentation must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Education along with your written thesis paper. Again, the nature of the documentation may vary from project to project and must be approved by your thesis advisor. Generally, documentation will be in the form of video or audio recordings on DVD or CD, but if other options seem more appropriate to the thesis project, the student needs to discuss these options with their advisor.

Consult the OGE “Submitting Your Thesis” Website:

<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=31>

Here you will find Master’s degree Checklists and the Thesis Preparation Guides, such as writing style information and format requirements:

<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/grad/docs/ThesisManual.pdf>

Students are encouraged to make an appointment with the Office of Graduate Education to conduct a preliminary review of a complete draft of their thesis before final submission. For questions and/or more information, please contact the OGE at 518.276.6488.

### **Research and Arts Practice involving Animal or Human Subjects**

All Arts graduate students who plan to work with animal or human subjects in their research and art practice, be it on or off campus, must initially contact the head of the Institute Review Board (IRB) and Institute Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) with a brief proposal outlining their proposed project(s). Upon review of the proposal by the heads of the committees, the student may be asked to submit a more in depth proposal for review by the respective committees. This review may take up to two to three months depending on the workload of the committees. If such a review is deemed necessary, no work may commence on any projects until the proposal is approved. Heads of IRB and IACUC are available to assist in the completion of all proposals. An Arts faculty mentor will be assigned to advise with the completion of said proposals.

The IRB has the responsibility and authority to review, approve, disapprove, or require changes in research activities involving human subjects. This policy applies to all faculty, staff, and student projects, regardless of whether the project is funded externally, internally, or receives no funding support. For further information:

<http://research.rpi.edu/compliance/irb>

Rensselaer—under the guidance of the IACUC—is responsible, under federal law, for the appropriate performance of all research and teaching activities that involve the use of *vertebrate animals* (mammals, fish, birds, amphibians and reptiles). For further information:

<http://research.rpi.edu/compliance/IACUC>

Even if the student is working with animal or human materials off campus, a letter from the respective committees must be obtained and submitted with the student’s dissertation stating that a Rensselaer review (IRB or IACUC) was not necessary. Letters of invitation must also be submitted from hosting institutions for off-campus research.

## **MFA Graduate Student & Advisor Administrative Timeline**

### **Every Semester**

- Grads & Advisors meet 3x semester
  - Prior to the Add Deadline
    - Draft/Revise **Plan of Study** and submit
    - Fall Course Registration (see \* below)
  - Consultation Week/Middle of semester progress
    - Spring Course Registration (see \* below)
    - **Independent Study** Forms (for courses not offered on SIS)
      - Draft written Expectations - Summary of agreement between Instructor and grad student – and submit
  - End of Semester
    - Revise **Plan of Study** and submit
    - Review progress & discuss future research
- Advisors Report progress of graduate students to GPD

\*Course Registration: You must enroll in 15 credits total per semester in order to complete the program within the 2 year time-frame. You also need to be fully enrolled for your scholarship. There is a grace period where you can change your enrollment, your registrations **MUST** be finalized by the add deadline.

The maximum # of allowed credits per semester is 15. Under no circumstances should a student dip below these minimums as funding and student status is attached to full-time registration. The Office of Graduate Education will **not** approve requests for LATE ADDS or LATE DROPS.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Year Fall**

- Attend Institute Graduate Student Orientation
  - Grads must register via SIS
- Attend TA Training, if applicable
  - Grads must register via SIS
- Attend Departmental Graduate Student Orientation
- Employment Verification forms (I-9, W-4, IT 2104)
- Studio/Office Allocations
- Registration in course work
- Graduate Show, following last day of classes
- Crits/Ph.D. Presentations; 1st Qualifying Reviews for 1st year MFA's

### **1<sup>st</sup> Year Spring**

- Registration in course work
- EMPAC PRESENTATION PROPOSALS DUE AT END OF SEMESTER
- Crits/Ph.D. Presentations; 2nd Qualifying Reviews for 1st year MFA's

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Year Fall**

- Registration in course work
- MFA's: Complete and submit the Nomination of Master's Thesis Committee, Provisional Thesis Title & Degree Designation:

f <http://www.rpi.edu/dept/grad/docs/Nomination%20MS%20Comm%20Form%202016.pdf>

- Outline of thesis paper, 2-3 page bibliography, and 1 page presentation plan to committee

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Year Spring**

- Registration in course work
- Registration for Master's Thesis with Advisor (2-9 credits – cannot exceed 9 in total)
- **Nomination of Master's Thesis Committee** – Institute Deadline
- Schedule/confirm your thesis show and defense date, time and room location in coordination with your thesis advisor and committee member's availability
- JAN. - Detailed thesis plan to thesis advisor
- FEB. Draft of thesis paper to thesis advisor
- May graduates need to schedule their presentations by early March at the latest.
- Be aware of deadlines for submission of thesis to OGE and give leadtime if possible.
- · MFA graduates Master's Thesis Checklist:  
<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/grad/docs/Masters%20Checklist%20Revision-%20July%202016.pdf> – YOU WILL NOT BE CLEARED FOR GRADUATION UNTIL EVERYTHING ON THIS LIST IS COMPLETED.

### **Administrative Forms**

- Please submit all administrative forms, **highlighted in red (above)**, to the Graduate Student Services Administrator.
- All forms must be signed and dated in **BLACK INK ONLY**.
- Plans of Study must be **TYPED**.
- Institute deadlines are listed on the RPI Academic Calendar:  
<http://www.rpi.edu/academics/calendar/>
- Independent Study Form: [http://www.rpi.edu/dept/srfs/grindependent\\_study.pdf](http://www.rpi.edu/dept/srfs/grindependent_study.pdf)
- Degree Application and Registrar's "Graduating Students Checklist":  
<http://registrar.rpi.edu/update.do?artcenterkey=11>
- All Necessary forms can be found on the Following Office of Graduate Education pages:
- Current Students:  
<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=2>
- Forms:  
<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=20>
- Submit Your Thesis:  
<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=31>
- Office of Registrar's Forms:  
<http://registrar.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=29>

# Ph.D. in Electronic Arts

## Ph.D. Program Description

The Ph.D. in Electronic Arts is an interdisciplinary arts degree that integrates arts practice with theoretical and historical research. The program features an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to the arts with a focus on the use of electronic media in artistic creation and performance. The core of the curriculum focuses on the student's personal creative practice, informed by theoretical and creative coursework, individual attention from advisors, and culminates in a dissertation and the creation of a practice-based presentation (e.g., a gallery show, performance). One of the first programs of its kind, this Ph.D. program expands traditions of arts pedagogy through interdisciplinary research in contemporary media theory, practice, and production.

The Arts PhD is “practice-based,” entailing an independent investigation aiming to gain new knowledge in part by means of practice. In the doctoral thesis, this original contribution to knowledge can be substantiated through art works in various forms and is made publicly available through performances, installations, or exhibitions. The textual component of the thesis must contain a detailed report on the research process as well as analysis of its position in the field and critical reflection.

The exact division between writing and practice is determined in consultation with the advisor and formally recorded at the 2<sup>nd</sup> year review. The division is meant to ensure a substantial commitment to both parts of the research process, while leaving flexibility to individual candidates to pursue a variety of projects with differing emphasis and relation between writing and practice.

In accordance with Rensselaer academic regulations, “Rensselaer awards the doctor's degree in recognition of high achievement in scholarship and independent investigation. The Doctor of Philosophy degree, under the auspices of the Graduate School, is awarded when the dissertation is directed toward making an original contribution to fundamental knowledge in a particular field or in an interdisciplinary field. A dissertation that is scholarly, creative, original, and publishable may deal also with the relation of a discipline to educational problems and objectives within the field.” (<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?artcenterkey=128>)

## Ph.D. Curriculum

### Summary of Electronic Arts Ph.D. Requirements:

- A minimum of 48 credit hours beyond the Master's degree, which is at least 72 credit hours beyond a Bachelor's degree. Individual requirements can be waived, in exceptional circumstances, by the department Head without decreasing the total number of credits for the degree. No more than six credits hours of graduate work can be transferred toward the degree.
- At least two-thirds of the total credit hours, excluding dissertation credits, must contain the suffix numbers 6000-7990, with the further limitation that no more than 21 credit hours of



4000-4999 courses.

- One or two research methods courses.

Research Methods (ARTS 6570) must be taken the first semester in the program, which integrates theoretical and historical research methods with arts practice. Students may also be directed by their advisor and committee members to take another research methods course in a discipline appropriate for their research.

- Arts Graduate Colloquium (ARTS 6900).

Students are required to take the Colloquium each semester until the semester they take their Qualifying Examination and enroll dissertation credits. Their continued participation in the Colloquium is recommended, but not required, during rest of their tenure while they are in residence. It is also recommended that after they pass their Qualifying Exam, they give least one presentation of their research at the Colloquium.

- Students must take a minimum of 12 credits of Dissertation Research Credits (ARTS 9990).

- Arts Graduate Student Critiques (Crits) and Exhibition.

Students are required to participate and present in Crits and the Arts Graduate Student Exhibition held at the end of each semester, with the exception of the semester in which they take their Qualifying or Candidacy Exams, and after they have passed their Candidacy Exam. Attendance at Crits is required for all students in residence. Students in residence may be excused from attendance at Crits and Exhibition/Performance due to special circumstances by the Department Head.

Cleanup after shows and installations needs to be done promptly at the completion of the event. Please contact FIXX (ext. 2000) for assistance in moving heavy items.

## **Exams and Dissertation**

There are three stages to degree completion: the Qualifying Exam (also referred to as the “Qualifying Event”); the Dissertation Proposal (“Candidacy Exam” in the Rensselaer Graduate Handbook); and the Dissertation Defense, which is the defense of the dissertation text and the public presentation of the dissertation arts practice, such as a performance or gallery show.

**The Qualifying Exam** is an exam tailored to the student’s areas of creative practice and research and is intended to formally determine their ability to pursue research leading to a doctoral degree, which is developed and administered by the student’s doctoral committee and must be passed within two years of entry into the degree program.

**Completion of the Dissertation Proposal and the Defense of the Proposal** to the student’s doctoral committee is the Candidacy Exam. After completing this stage, the student is considered “all but dissertation” (ABD).

**The Dissertation** is composed of a public presentation of the dissertation arts practice and the

dissertation text.

**The Dissertation Defense:** The candidate must defend the Dissertation in a public examination, the Dissertation Defense, conducted by the student's doctoral committee.

In the normal four-year progress towards the degree, the Qualifying Exam is completed in the second year, advancement to candidacy is attained by the end of the second year or beginning of the third year and the Dissertation and Defense are completed in the fourth year.

**Independent Study Credits:**

With the permission of the Instructor, your Advisor, and the Graduate Program Director in the Arts Department, Independent Study credits may supplement your curriculum by providing you individualized self-directed research opportunities in areas where no formal courses are offered. You may work with faculty within the Department or the Institute at large. These studies could also be used to supplement an existing class that is offered, but at a level that is inappropriate to you—such as an undergraduate course which you normally would not be eligible to receive credit for, or a graduate course within another discipline that you would benefit from, but are not qualified or able to complete all the coursework for. In most cases, Independent Studies will not be approved in areas where a substantially similar existing course is being offered.

The “Readings/Independent Study Registration Form for GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY” available for download at: <http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=20> is required from the Registrar to enroll in Independent Study credits.

Follow these three steps to determine how the research will apply to your Plan of Study and to complete the form:

***1) Consult with the Instructor for an Independent Study:***

Meet with the Instructor you wish to study with, in order to propose your research, determine the work that you will complete, and the number of credits you will receive for successfully completing that work. It is entirely optional for the faculty member to accept the proposal. Remember that Independent Studies are just that: independently directed research. Do not expect that the faculty member will prepare and conduct an individualized course just for you, but that you will be carrying out your own specialized research under their guidance and demonstrating your progress to them.

Write a paragraph or two detailing the proposed study topic; frequency or nature of meetings and advising; the proposed final project (paper, presentation, art work etc.); and how it will be evaluated. Include how you hope the Independent Study credits will be applied to your curricular requirements. Certain courses in your curriculum will have different writing or production requirements and these requirements need to be agreed to by the Instructor. If the Independent Study is intended to satisfy either your theory or professional development requirements, the Instructor and Advisor must approve it. Attach the description to the permission form for Independent Studies, have the Instructor agree to the proposal and sign the permission form.

**2) Consult with Advisor:**

In consultation with your Advisor, determine on your Plan of Study form how the Independent study will be applied to your curriculum; whether it will be eligible to fulfill theory or other course requirements or whether it will be a general elective. Since you might change advisors during your degree program, it will benefit you to be very clear about what requirements the course will be applied towards in your proposal. Have your advisor read the proposal and sign the permission form.

**3) Consult with GPD:**

Give the proposal and the signed permission form to the Graduate Program Director in the Arts for their signature. Then deliver the original from to the registrar with a copy going to Jennifer Mumby, HASS Student Services Administrator.

**Registration (The Student Information System – “SIS”)**

All full-time continuing students need to register during the period specified each semester by the Registrar. New, part-time, or re-admitted students need to register before the first day of classes. Graduate students may not register after the tenth class day of the term. Registration is done on line through the Rensselaer Student Information Services (SIS) website (<http://sis.rpi.edu>). Refer to the Office of Graduate Education website for information on SIS.

A student’s registration is not complete until he or she has paid or arranged for payment of university fees. If special arrangements for payment are necessary, the arrangements need to be made through the Bursar’s Office.

Full-time continuing students who miss registration must pay \$50 and register before the first day of classes each term. All students who fail to register before the start of classes will be charged \$25 to cover additional processing costs. For full-time continuing students, this charge is added to the \$50 fee. Refer to the Registrar and Office of Graduate Education for any changes in the fees or charges.

The full-time load for a graduate student normally is 12 to 15 credit hours each term. A student who wishes to register for more than 15 credit hours must have the permission of his or her department and the approval of the Graduate School.

Graduate teaching assistants are not required to take more than 9 credits per semester. However, at their own discretion and with Department Head and Graduate School approval, graduate assistants may take up to fifteen credits per semester.

***The Student Information System or SIS* (<http://sis.rpi.edu>)**

Students at Rensselaer register in priority order. Students with more earned credit hours will register first. Registration needs to be completed online. When the date and time on your registration Time Ticket arrives, you can register at any time and from anywhere you can get to <http://sis.rpi.edu>. When you finish, you can print your schedule, and you are registered! While registration is almost paperless, you will need special forms and signatures to register for select courses (such as independent studies, courses restricted to majors in another field, courses that require a pre-requisite that a student does not have, and for some limited enrollment

courses). These forms are located at: <http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=20> or at: <http://registrar.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=29>

### **Incomplete Grades**

The grade “I” (incomplete course work) is only given when a student has been unable to complete the required course work due to illness or other extenuating circumstances, such as a personal emergency beyond the student’s control. The “I” grade is given only after the contract form, Authorization for Grade of Incomplete, has been completed and signed by both the instructor and the student and received by the Registrar. The Incomplete Form is located in the Instructor menu of SIS.

The “I” grade must be completed within one semester. If facilities (i.e., laboratory) are required to complete the outstanding work but are not available during the next semester, then one year is the maximum time limit, subject to approval by the instructor. The grade of “I” is considered a penalty grade in the calculation of the term GPA. Until the grade of “I” is changed, it is calculated as if it were the grade of “F.”

### **Transferring Credit**

Credit for graduate work completed at other accredited institutions prior to matriculation at Rensselaer may be offered in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree at Rensselaer when the work is appropriate to the student's program. Not more than six credit hours may be transferred toward the Ph.D. degree in Electronic Arts.

### **Waiving Requirements**

Individual course requirements can be waived, in exceptional circumstances, by the department, without decreasing the total number of credits required for the degree.

## **Ph.D. Advising**

### **Academic Advisor**

Academic Advisors are assigned to incoming students based on the interests they express in their applications and availability of the instructor. To register for courses, students will need to meet with their Academic or Thesis Advisor before each Fall and Spring semester of their residency. Please note the official dates for consultation given on the Institute’s Academic Calendar.

### **Primary Advisor**

As soon as the student has chosen a dissertation area, he or she needs to discuss with potential faculty and the GPD their wishes for a Primary Advisor who will become your thesis advisor and Chair of your Doctoral Committee, once your Committee has been accepted by the OGE. The Primary Advisor must hold a Ph.D., or have equivalent experience in advising the Ph.D. dissertation process demonstrated through their work on prior Ph.D. committees or other professional experience. Discuss with the GPD and interested faculty the potential advisor pool, as well as other factors including known leave or sabbatical conflicts, research, service or advising loads.

If you find that you want to work closely with a tenured or tenure-track faculty member in the Arts Department who does not hold an earned doctorate or equivalent experience, it may be possible to structure your committee with two co-advisors, one of which must have an earned doctorate. In this case, the GPD, Department Head and the Office of Graduate Education will need to approve the specific co-advisor arrangement. If the student is not successful in forming a relationship for advisement, a Primary Advisor will be appointed at the beginning of the student's second year by the GPD, with approval of the Head.

### **Plan of Study (POS)**

The Graduate Program is flexible and affords each student an opportunity to plan a course of study suited to his or her own objectives. To assure a coherent program in accordance with the student's maturing capacities and aims, each student is to maintain, with the Academic or Thesis Advisor's assistance, a Plan of Study for the degree for which he or she is studying.

**An updated Plan of Study must be submitted each semester.** Also, the Office of Graduate Education needs a current completed POS on file *for any administrative action* including registration in independent study courses, late add, drop, changes of status, etc. If there are any significant changes in the student's plans or status, a revised Plan of Study must be updated on file.

Download the "Graduate Plan of Study" form from the Office of Graduate Education website and prepare it electronically (<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=20>). The form needs to be completed, signed, and submitted before the student's second full-time semester and updated every successive semester.

The "Graduate Plan of Study" form requires the signature of the student's Advisor and the Graduate Program Director. When completed, the student needs to deliver the original form to Jennifer Mumby, the HASS Student Services Administrator, who will work with you to deliver the original to the Office of the Registrar with copies going to the Advisor, the GPD, the HASS Graduate Office and the Office of Graduate Education.

### **Doctoral Committee**

The Primary Advisor consults with the student, Department Head and GPD regarding the nomination of a Doctoral Committee. The Primary Advisor needs to consult with the GPD and the Department Head about potential Doctoral Committee members for the student, and related issues including the current advising load of potential committee members. The Principal Advisor needs to meet with the student, advise them of potential Committee Members, and discuss the process of advancing to Candidacy.

The Doctoral Committee includes four members: the student's Primary Advisor as Chair, two tenured, or tenure track faculty members of the Arts Department, and an "Outside Member." The GPD, in consultation with the student and the student's Primary Adviser, nominates the Outside Member.

A non-tenured track Rensselaer faculty member may also be approved by the GPD, Department Head and the Office of Graduate Education as one of these four faculty committee members. A

fifth member may be added to fulfill the outside-department member requirement. Such members may be from outside the university, or from Rensselaer faculty membership serving outside the Arts Department. Committee members need to represent the principal areas included in the student's Plan of Study. The student's Doctoral Committee assumes responsibility for the plan, for the student's candidacy and final examinations.

The "Nomination of Doctoral Committee, Provisional Thesis Title & Degree Designation" form located on the Office of Graduate Education website (see URL below) is needed to formally request the appointment of the student's Doctoral Committee. The nomination form must be filled out electronically by the student, signed by all members of the Doctoral Committee and delivered to Jennifer Mumby, the HASS Student Services Administrator.

<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=31>

The Nomination Form requires students to provide a "provisional title" for the dissertation and a brief outline of their proposed investigation. The student needs to complete their portion of the form, meet with and discuss their research interests with prospective members of their Committee, and ask them to join the Committee. The Primary Advisor, GPD, and potential Committee members need to communicate about the formation of the student's Doctoral Committee. If difficulties arise in this process, a Committee will be appointed by the GPD with approval of the Department Head.

The Outside Member of the committee is expected to be a recognized authority on the subject of the student's research area. Whenever possible, the Outside Member shall be from outside the Institute, but in all cases this person must come from outside the ARTS program. If the Outside Member of the committee is outside of the Institute, the student and Primary Advisor must provide the GPD and OGE with information about the Outside Member, including a current CV and a brief outline of the particular expertise they have relevant to the student's research area. The Dean of Graduate Education may also request additional information about any of the members of the committee to determine their specific qualifications relevant to your research area.

Once the Committee Nomination form is completed and signed, it needs to be submitted to the GPD who will add a letter of nomination for the outside member. The GPD then gives the form to the Arts Department Head for her or his signature. The completed form and information for the appointment of the outside member of the committee is then sent to Jennifer Mumby, HASS Student Services Administrator.

Working with your Primary Advisor, you will need to fill out a Plan of Study and keep it updated as you register for dissertation research credits and progress through the program. Described in detail in the Advising section of this Handbook, the Plan of Study is an essential tool for assuring that you meet the course requirements for the degree and that you take the courses you need in order to advance your work on the dissertation.

### **Doctoral Student Yearly Review (DSYR)**

Each year the student and Primary Advisor or co-advisors must meet and complete the "Doctoral Student Yearly Review" (DSYR) provided by the OGE. The DSYR provides a regular timetable

and a convenient format for discussing and assessing degree progress. It is a student-development based instrument that provides both the advisor and the student a reliable means to help assess their individual efforts and effectiveness in developing and maintaining a plan for meeting the student's educational goals and the Institute's degree requirements. The Office of Graduate Education believes that the DSYR can serve the advisor and the doctoral student well as an assessment tool not only on this occasion, but also in their ongoing discussions of matters related to degree progress and attainment.

### **Research and Arts Practice involving Animal or Human Subjects**

All Arts graduate students who plan to work with animal or human subjects in their artwork, be it on or off campus, must initially contact the head of the IRB (Institute Review Board) and IACUC (Institute Animal Care and Use Committee) with a brief project proposal outlining their proposed project(s). Upon review of the proposal description by the heads of the committees, the student may be asked to submit a full proposal for review by the respective committees. This review can take up to 2-3 months if the committees are overwhelmed. If a review is deemed necessary, no work may commence on any projects until the proposal is approved. Heads of IRB and IACUC are available to assist in the completion of all proposals. An Arts faculty mentor will be assigned to also advise and consult with the completion of said proposals.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has the responsibility and authority to review, approve, disapprove, or require changes in research activities involving human subjects. This policy applies to all faculty, staff, and student projects, regardless of whether the project is funded externally, internally, or receives no funding support.

<http://research.rpi.edu/compliance/irb>

Rensselaer – under the guidance of The Institute Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)- is responsible, under federal law, for the appropriate performance of all research and teaching activities that involve the use of *vertebrate animals* - mammals, fish, birds, amphibians and reptiles.

<http://research.rpi.edu/compliance/IACUC>

Even if the student is working with animal or human materials off campus, a letter from the respective committees must be obtained and submitted with the student's dissertation stating that a Rensselaer review (IRB or IACUC) was not necessary. Letters of invitation must also be submitted from hosting institutions for off-campus research.

## **Ph.D. Exams and Evaluations**

### **Planning for Advancement to Candidacy and Dissertation Defense**

Your progress towards the Ph.D. can be individualized and flexible. In general, since all students enter with an MA or MFA degree, it ought to take four years to complete the degree. In most cases, the Institute promotes this progress by providing you with four years of funding. However, it may be possible to complete the degree in less time, or to extend the time if external funding is available.

You will pass three stages as you progress to degree completion: the Qualifying Exam,

Dissertation Proposal, and the Dissertation Defense. In addition, you will demonstrate your arts practice in a public event (such as a performance or gallery show). You must pass a Qualifying Exam within 2 years of the date you begin your degree program (the “Qualifying Event”). In order to advance to candidacy you must complete and defend your Dissertation Proposal with your doctoral committee. The dissertation proposal defense is sometimes called the “Candidacy Exam” (dissertation proposal) in the Rensselaer Graduate Handbook, and after completing this stage you are considered “all but dissertation” (ABD). In the normal four-year progress towards the degree, you would complete your Qualifying Exam in your second year, advance to Candidacy by the end of the second year or beginning of the third year of residency, and complete your dissertation and oral defense in your fourth year.

While scheduling most of the work for the degree is quite flexible, this changes dramatically during your final semester, in which you complete and defend your dissertation. For that process, there are very specific deadlines for filing for “degree completion,” submitting your dissertation to your committee, defending your dissertation, and submitting the final version to your Advisor and the Office of Graduate Education. These deadlines are set each year by the Institute, are non-negotiable, and will change slightly with the academic calendar from year to year.

Throughout your doctoral process it is recommended that you refer to the website of the Office of Graduate Education for the most current regulations, deadlines, and announcements concerning all aspects of the degree process, and this is especially recommended in regards to degree completion. All current forms for the Graduate Program are available online at the OGE: <http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=20>

### **Qualifying Exam Preparation**

The student must pass a Qualifying Exam, which is an exam tailored to the student’s areas of creative practice and research and is intended to formally determine their ability to pursue research leading to a doctoral degree. The period after the exam has been successfully passed (ABD, or “all but dissertation”) is one of intensive research and writing for the completion of the Dissertation.

The Qualifying Exam will be developed and administered by the student’s doctoral committee. In accordance with Rensselaer academic regulations, the student may take the exam when: coursework nears completion; the doctoral committee has been established and approved; the doctoral committee approves the student taking the exam. In the case of the Department of the Arts, this includes the student’s presentations at fall and spring critiques, as well as an overall assessment by the Advisor and committee.

### **Preparation**

#### **The Bibliography**

Students will create a bibliography of their research area for the Qualifying Exam under advisement of the doctoral committee, with input from Arts Department faculty and based on work developed in the Research Methods course.

The bibliography will be a list of books, articles, and other published materials, and also key art works and related practices that cumulatively specify the student’s area of research and the



parameters of his or her creative discourse. The bibliography establishes a foundation for the disciplinary boundaries of the Qualifying Exam. It will also serve as a basis for what will be the dissertation's literature review. The latter will be an examination of key texts and sources related to the dissertation research. The bibliography needs to be formatted according to *The Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines.

After receiving a draft bibliography, the doctoral committee, lead by the Primary Advisor, will develop questions for the written portion of the exam. They may also offer feedback as to ways the bibliography can be expanded for the exam.

### **The Qualifying Exam**

The Qualifying Examination has two components: written and oral. The exam is intended to establish the Candidate's overall knowledge of the key works, practices, as well as the historical and theoretical literature, in their chosen field of research. The student's Primary Advisor determines the scope and number of questions on the exam, with input from the doctoral committee. For instance, some exams may consist of only a single, comprehensive question; others may offer a choice of multiple options among a set of questions.

The schedule and length (word count) of the written exam needs to be discussed by the committee and the student. The schedule and length (word count) will be determined as is appropriate to their field of investigation, the academic calendar, and the schedules of the student and the committee. Exams have aimed at a 15,000-20,000-word count (total). The Primary Advisor and committee will decide the length of time the candidate will have to complete the written portion of the Qualifying Exam. However, it is expected that the candidate be able to complete the exam in four to six weeks. The written component of the exam and final bibliography are due a minimum of two weeks before date of the Oral Exam.

The oral component consists of a two-hour exam with the candidate and the entire doctoral committee present. Committee members will ask questions intended to establish the candidate's ability to discuss the content of the written exam and related issues in his or her field of research.

### **Examination results**

After the candidate's oral examination, the Primary Advisor and Doctoral Committee will convene to discuss whether the student has passed or failed their examination. The committee can also issue a conditional pass, in which case the committee must determine the specific conditions that the student needs to resolve in order to pass the examination. The candidate has *one month* to resubmit the revised (and perhaps expanded) Qualifying Exam text according to the committee's conditions.

### **Dissertation Credits**

The student can proceed to dissertation research credits in the semester in which he or she takes the Qualifying Exam.

### **Dissertation Proposal**

After completing the Qualifying Exam, the student will work on a Dissertation Proposal with their Primary Advisor and Committee. By Institute regulation, the student must proceed to

Candidacy within two years of the Qualifying Event but we recommend that this happen by the end of the second year or beginning of the third year of candidacy. Once the Proposal has been approved by the Committee, it needs to be placed in the student's file. Approval of this proposal marks the student's advancement to Candidacy, or ABD ("all but dissertation").

This Proposal will include a timeline for dissertation research, writing, defense and degree completion, and an annotated outline of the Dissertation, working bibliography and optional appendix material. The dissertation proposal is an extremely important step in the completion of the doctoral degree. It establishes a creative and conceptual framework for the dissertation text and practice. The proposal will aid the student and committee to stay on track for degree completion, and to serve as a basis for applications to Institute assistance programs such as the HASS Fellowship Award.

### **Dissertation Proposal Defense**

The Candidate's completed Dissertation Proposal needs to be submitted to the committee and a Dissertation Proposal Defense scheduled with all members. At the defense the research questions proposed, research methodology, structure of the writing, relationship to practice, and other issues pertinent to the work will be discussed. Candidates will either be required to revise their proposal or it will be passed, allowing the student to advance to Candidacy. By Institute regulation, the student must proceed to Candidacy within two years of the Qualifying Event but we recommend that this happen by the end of the second year or beginning of the third year of candidacy.

The student must bring a Record of the Candidacy Exam Form to the Dissertation Proposal Defense, and have filled out the personal information required for the form. This is available at: <http://www.rpi.edu/dept/grad/docs/Candidacy%20Exam%20Form-RCR.pdf>. After the defense, the Chair of the doctoral committee will indicate on the form if the student passed the exam and all committee members must sign it. This form will then be given to the GPD, who also signs the form and it will then be forwarded to Jennifer Mumby, HASS Student Services Administrator.

### **Dissertation and Final Examination (Defense)**

In accordance with Rensselaer academic regulations: "The doctoral dissertation demonstrates the candidate's capacity for independent work. It embodies the results of an original investigation in the candidate's principal field of study on a subject approved by the student's doctoral committee. Only work meeting the highest standards of integrity will be accepted for degree requirements at Rensselaer. Academic integrity is a requirement of continued good academic standing and for the awarding of a graduate degree. The field of the dissertation needs to be chosen as soon as possible after entry upon doctoral study."

The PhD in Electronic Arts is practice-based degree composed of a creative investigation in arts practice that results in an original contribution to the dissertation's field, or fields, of study. The dissertation is composed of two parts: 1) artwork that is presented publically and 2) a text that describes and situates the work or works within discourses relevant to the subject of inquiry, such as aesthetic, intellectual, historical, or technical fields.

The grammatical conventions of the dissertation's text need to be in accordance with *The Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines. But the overall dissertation formatting needs to follow the guideline "A Preparation Guide for Dissertation and Theses" for Rensselaer's required format specifications, which is available on the Office of Graduate Education's Web site at:

Refer to the OGE website for, "Tips for Thesis and Dissertation Submission"

<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/grad/docs/Submission%20tips.pdf> and video

<https://connect.mms.rpi.edu/p259vv5abqd/>

Refer to the Rensselaer Writing Guide for Thesis and Dissertation for style information and format requirements: <http://www.rpi.edu/dept/grad/docs/ThesisManual.pdf>

Also the Dissertation Checklist:

<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/grad/docs/Dissertation%20Checklist%20Revision-%20July%202016.pdf>

In accordance with Rensselaer academic regulations: "When the dissertation is completed, the candidate must defend it in a public examination conducted by his or her doctoral committee, which passes on its acceptability." As noted above, the final examination/defense is to be held by the date listed in the academic calendar for the year. The latest date for submitting the dissertation to the candidate's advisor, as well as the latest dates for submission of the dissertation to the Graduate School, is specified in the Institute's official Academic Calendar each year.

Each member of the doctoral committee must be presented with an unbound copy of the dissertation at least two weeks before the defense/final examination is scheduled. The committee must sign the cover page of the student's dissertation in BLACK INK. Similar to the process of the Candidacy Exam, a Record of the Dissertation Exam form must be filled out and signed by the committee members and then it is submitted to Jennifer Mumby, HASS Student Services Administrator.

<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/grad/docs/Record%20of%20Dissertation%20Exam%20Form%202016.pdf>

The final version of the dissertation, which is the version revised according to any requests for modifications by the committee at the defense, is presented to the candidate's Dissertation Adviser at least one month before the end of the term in which it is expected that the degree will be awarded. Each member of the doctoral committee must be presented with an unbound copy of the dissertation at least two weeks before the final examination is scheduled. The latest date for getting the dissertation to the candidate's advisor, as well as the latest dates for dissertation defense and for submission of the dissertation to the Graduate School is specified in the Institute's official Academic Calendar each year.

The dissertation must be approved through the defense process by a minimum of three members of the faculty committee. Once formed, changes or replacements on the committee will occur only if a member is unable to serve or if a student's dissertation topic changes, requiring a new dissertation advisor and/or modification in the committee. In cases other than these, approval for changes in committee membership rests with the Dean of the Graduate School.

**Dissertation Submission**

“After passing the final examination, and having received final approval from the Dissertation Advisor regarding the final version of the dissertation, the student must submit the dissertation. This must be done “no later than the date specified in the academic calendar for the semester in which the degree is expected to be awarded.” “The candidate must provide the Office of Graduate Education with the Record of Dissertation Exam form and supporting documents outlined on the Dissertation Checklist. The Record of Dissertation Exam form, approving both content and format, must include original signatures from all doctoral committee members. Upon receipt of the required materials, the candidate is then required to upload an electronic copy of the dissertation and submit the required fee via the ETD Administrator Web site in order for the official review to begin by the Office of Graduate Education. The Office of Graduate Education must review and approve the dissertation before the degree can be awarded.”

Refer to the Academic Information and Regulations section of the Rensselaer Catalogue for information on Publication of Dissertation.

## Ph.D. Graduate Student & Advisor Administrative Timeline

(for Grads entering with a Master's Degree)

### Every Semester

- Grads & Advisors meet 3x semester
  - Prior to the Add Deadline
    - Draft/Revise **Plan of Study** and submit
    - Fall Course Registration (see \* below)
  - Consultation Week/Middle of semester progress
    - Spring Course Registration (see \* below)
    - **Independent Study** Forms (for courses not offered on SIS)
      - Draft written Expectations - Summary of agreement between Instructor and grad student – and submit
  - End of Semester
    - Revise **Plan of Study** and submit
    - Review progress & discuss future research
- Advisors Report progress of graduate students to GPD

\*Course Registration: Register for minimum # of required credits (9 credits for TA's, 12 credits for RA, Fellowship, or Self-Funded) PRIOR TO the Add Deadline listed on the RPI Academic Calendar. The maximum # of allowed credits per semester is 15. Under no circumstances should a student dip below these minimums as funding and student status is attached to full-time registration. The Office of Graduate Education will **not** approve requests for LATE ADDS or LATE DROPS.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Year Fall

- Attend Institute Graduate Student Orientation
  - Grads must register via SIS
- Attend TA Training, if applicable
  - Grads must register via SIS
- Attend Departmental Graduate Student Orientation
- Employment Verification forms (I-9, W-4, IT 2104)
- Studio/Office Allocations
- Registration in course work

### 1<sup>st</sup> Year Spring

- Registration in course work
- Doctoral Student Yearly Review

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Fall

- Registration in course work
- **Nomination of Doctoral Committee** – must be approved PRIOR to Qualifying Exam
- Receive Qualifying exam questions from committee, Schedule Qualifying Exam defense:
  - Availability of Committee Members
  - Date & Time
  - Reserve Room with staff member responsible for booking rooms
- **Responsible Conduct of Research** training - <https://www.citiprogram.org/>

- Must be completed PRIOR to Qualifying Exam and Dissertation Defense.
- Meet with your advisor and choose the Content Series and Learner Group/Course appropriate for your discipline and/or research area (Biomedical Sciences, Social & Behavioral Research, Physical Sciences, Arts & Humanities, or Engineering)
- Instructions are provided on the back of the Candidacy Exam form
- Once training is complete, you will receive notification from the CITI Program and instructions on how to print the certificate, which must be included with the signed Candidacy Exam form

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Year Spring**

- Registration in course work
- Candidacy Exam (Dissertation Proposal Defense).
  - The Dissertation Proposal examination must be passed within two years of the date at which the department has formally determined the student is qualified to conduct research (i.e. qualifying or field exams, or the department equivalent)
  - **Record of Candidacy Exam** – bring this form to the Candidacy Exam
- Doctoral Student Yearly Review

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Year Fall**

- Registration in course work or dissertation credits.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Year Spring**

- Registration in course work or dissertation credits.
- Doctoral Student Yearly Review

### **4<sup>th</sup> Year Fall**

- Registration in course work and/or Registration for Dissertation with Chair of Dissertation Committee

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### **4<sup>th</sup> Year Spring**

- Registration in course work and/or Registration for Dissertation with Chair of Dissertation Committee
- Doctoral Student Yearly Review

### **5<sup>th</sup> Year Fall**

- Registration for Dissertation with Chair of Dissertation Committee
- Time to Degree Deadline
  - Grads entering without an M.S. degree are allowed 7 years to complete their dissertation
  - If extenuating circumstances arise that prevent a grad from completing their dissertation within 7 years, a formal letter, requesting an extension of time-to-degree limit and justification for this, must be submitted by the Graduate Program Director (in collaboration with the Advisor) to the Office of Graduate Education.
- Schedule Dissertation Defense
  - Availability of Committee Members

- Date & Time
- Reserve Room with staff member responsible for booking rooms
- Tech needs – contact HASS Tech Support

### **5<sup>th</sup> Year Spring OR Semester of Intended Graduation**

- Registration for Dissertation with Chair of Dissertation Committee
- **Doctoral Dissertation Checklist**
  - All items on this list must be completed in order to graduate with Ph.D.
- **Degree Application** Deadline (Ph.D.) – Institute Deadline
- Dissertations due to Advisors – Institute Deadline
- Contact the Office of Graduate Education for formatting review of Dissertation
- Dissertation Defense – Institute Deadline
  - **Record of Dissertation Exam Form** – bring this form to the dissertation defense
- Dissertations due to the Office of Graduate Education – Institute Deadline

### **Administrative Forms**

- Please submit all administrative forms, **highlighted in red (above)**, to the Graduate Student Services Administrator.
- All forms must be signed and dated in **BLACK INK ONLY**.
- Plans of Study must be **TYPED**.
- Institute deadlines are listed on the RPI Academic Calendar:  
<http://www.rpi.edu/academics/calendar/>
- Independent Study Form: [http://www.rpi.edu/dept/srfs/grindependent\\_study.pdf](http://www.rpi.edu/dept/srfs/grindependent_study.pdf)
- Degree Application and Registrar's "Graduating Students Checklist":  
<http://registrar.rpi.edu/update.do?artcenterkey=11>
- All Necessary forms can be found on the Following Office of Graduate Education pages:
- Current Students:  
<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=2>
- Forms:  
<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=20>
- Submit Your Thesis:  
<http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=31>
- Office of Registrar's Forms:  
<http://registrar.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=29>

## Departmental Studios, Labs, Equipment Room and Facilities

### Graduate Studios

The Arts Department will work with the School of HASS to provide each student with a private or shared studio or workspace appropriate to their needs. Everything will be done to work out the best solution within the resources available.

Graduate Studios must be used for active research/art-making purposes only. Students who are not “in residence” will not hold studio or office spaces in the building. People who have useable spaces that are clearly being used for storage or are inactive will need to relocate contents off campus or to uninhabitable spaces in the building, subject to availability and appropriateness of storing the materials. We must follow Institute rules for safe use of electrical tools, fire, and environmental safety hazards, egress and cleanliness. Graduate studios may be inspected periodically for fire and safety violations or other issues.

Students must vacate their studio within one month of their thesis/dissertation being submitted to the Office of Graduate Education. Any extension beyond that will need to be arranged through the Graduate Program Director and Arts Department Head. Any student belongings left in studios beyond this point will be thrown out or boxed and stored for a period of no longer than one month.

Cleanup after shows and installations needs to be done promptly at the completion of the event. Please contact FIXX (ext. 2000) for assistance in moving heavy items.

### iEAR Studios

The Integrated Electronic Arts (iEAR) Studios provide equipment, engineering and facilities support for the various programs of the ARTS department. For up-to-date info on iEAR Studio facilities, please reference the iEAR Studios web page: <http://arts.rpi.edu/pl/iear-studios-facilities>

For current studio rules and regulations please refer to the most recent copy of “*Rensselaer iEAR Studios Handbook and Regulations 2012.*”

### Office Resources

Graduate students in the Ph.D. program have the following limited access to office-related assistance:

#### *Photocopying:*

Students can use their RCS ID and password to gain access to the photocopier, located on the 1st floor of West Hall. A certain amount of copying is anticipated for coursework and program-related activities. Excessive amounts of copying can be tracked and will be billed to students unless suitable explanation is provided. Assistance with copying can be provided by the department secretary.



*Faxing:*

Students are allowed to use the office fax machine for program-related purposes, such as faxing registration forms to the Registrar, sending documents to out-of-town faculty, submitting fellowship applications or correspondence that is necessary to a student's personal art practice commitments. International and long distance faxes are approved on a case-by-case basis with the department secretary.

*Keys:*

Students are issued keys to non-card access rooms, such as the mailroom. Loss or non-return of issued key will result in a substantial replacement fee.

*ID Cards:*

Your Rensselaer ID card can be used to gain access to all spaces that have a card access system, either proximity (West Hall) or magnetic strip (DCC and Sage Lab). Access to studio doors and West Hall outside doors via cards is 24/7. ID cards are obtained at the ID Desk, on the 1st Floor of the Student Union. Contact HASS Information Services for assistance with card access: <http://hassinfo.rpi.edu/card-access-request-form/>

*Mail:*

Students are issued a mailbox in the mailroom on the 1st floor of West Hall. Students need to check their box regularly, as important documents from the department and Institute will be placed here rather than sent to a home address. Students may have packages shipped to their department address with prior permission of the office coordinator if they feel a package is “at risk” being shipped to their home address or will require a signature. All pseudonyms and corporate identities need to be registered with the Beth Dennis, Arts Administrative Specialist. Items sent to you need to be labeled as follows:

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute  
Name of Receiver  
Arts Department  
110 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
West Hall, Room 107  
Troy, NY 12180

## Communication and Contact Information

### Contact Information:

Students are responsible for providing their current address and telephone number to Jennifer Mumby, the HASS Student Services Administrator and Beth Dennis, the Arts Administrative Specialist. This includes notifying them of contact information changes in a timely fashion. The department and staff will not be held responsible for any negative repercussions caused by its inability to contact you in a timely fashion.

### EMAIL:

99% OF DEPARTMENTAL, INSTITUTE, AND PROGRAM CORRESPONDENCE IS SENT VIA EMAIL. IT WILL BE SENT ONLY TO YOUR OFFICIAL RPI ADDRESS. IF YOU PREFER TO USE A DIFFERENT ADDRESS YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO HAVE YOUR RPI ADDRESS FORWARDED TO A DIFFERENT LOCATION. YOU WILL NEED TO CHECK YOUR EMAIL AT LEAST DAILY. THE DEPARTMENT AND STAFF WILL NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR INFORMATION NOT RECEIVED OR READ IN A TIMELY FASHION NOR ANY NEGATIVE REPERCUSSIONS THIS MAY HAVE ON YOUR ACADEMIC STANDING. EMAIL accounts are activated at the Voorhees Computing Center, Help Desk. Photo ID is required for activation.

### Arts Department Email List Serves

- [iearmfa-l@lists.rpi.edu](mailto:iearmfa-l@lists.rpi.edu): sends to all MFA students no faculty are on this list
- [iearphd-l@lists.rpi.edu](mailto:iearphd-l@lists.rpi.edu): sends to all Ph.D. students no faculty are on this list
- [iearfac-l@lists.rpi.edu](mailto:iearfac-l@lists.rpi.edu): sends to all tenure track & clinical faculty
- [iearteach-l@lists.rpi.edu](mailto:iearteach-l@lists.rpi.edu): sends to all faculty and adjuncts
- [iearadmin-l@lists.rpi.edu](mailto:iearadmin-l@lists.rpi.edu): sends to all administrative staff
- [engine-l@lists.rpi.edu](mailto:engine-l@lists.rpi.edu): sends to all engineering staff
- [iearcom-l@lists.rpi.edu](mailto:iearcom-l@lists.rpi.edu): sends to all the above lists plus any others (alumni, for instance) who request to be on this list

### OTHER OFFICES ON-CAMPUS

#### Office of Graduate Education (1516 Peoples Avenue)

The Office of Graduate Education at Rensselaer through their website, provides current graduate students with the administrative, academic, and curricular guidance they need to progress through their courses and programs. Please do not contact the OGE directly without discussion with the GPD about your issues.

Website: <http://gradoffice.rpi.edu/setup.do>

Telephone: (518)276-6488

Who's Who?

- Dr. Stanley Dunn, Vice Provost & Dean of Graduate Education
- Dennis Gornic, Associate Dean of Graduate Education and Ombudsman

### Student Records and Financial Services (Academy Hall)

The mission of the Student Records and Financial Services office is to maintain accurate student academic and financial records and preserve the confidentiality, security and ethical handling of those records. They are a client-centered service-oriented unit, performing duties for students, alumni, faculty and staff.

*Who's Who?*

- **Bursar:** Responsible for billing, payment and student loans. All inquiries regarding tuition billing and payment need to be directed to the Bursar.  
Website: <http://finance.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=33>  
Telephone: (518)276-6610
- **Registrar:** Responsible for registration, transcripts, degree clearance, and course scheduling.  
Website: <http://srf.s.rpi.edu>  
Telephone: (518)276-6231

**The School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (Sage Lab)**

The School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences is home to a broad range of academic disciplines which both complement the science and technology offerings at Rensselaer and provide challenging and innovative major fields of study. There are five academic departments within HASS: Arts, Cognitive Science, Economics, Communication and Media, and Science and Technology Studies.

Website: [www.hass.rpi.edu](http://www.hass.rpi.edu)

Telephone: (518)276-6575

*Who's Who?*

- Mary Simoni, Dean of HASS
- Mike Kalsher, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
- Nancy Campbell, Associate Dean for Research & Graduate Studies
- Robert Nideffer, Head, Arts
- Beth Dennis, Administrative Specialist, Arts
- Jennifer Mumby, Student Services Administrator
- Dean Button, Program & Research Development
- Kim Osburn, Manager of Administrative Services
- Ethan Coppenrath, Manager of Information Services
- Mark Maiellaro, Applications Support Analyst
- Jay McGlothlin, Sr. Systems Programmer
- Greg Palmer, Media Engineer
- John Grady, A/V Technician
- Caitlin Watts, HASS Business Manager.
- Tim Austin, Business Administrator

**EMPAC - Experimental Media & Performing Arts Center**

The Experimental Media & Performing Arts Center advances interdisciplinary artistic production at the intersection of technology, media and performing arts. Its commissions and long-term, project-based artist residencies enable artists to develop work that otherwise would be impossible. EMPAC supports complex, adventurous projects – utilizing existing or yet-to-be-

developed tools and technology in a reciprocal relationship with artist-driven content and craftsmanship, and with a high degree of rigor and inspiration – from inception to completion.

Website: <http://www.empac.rpi.edu/>

Telephone: (518) 276-4135

Who's Who?

- Johannes Goebel, Director
- Argeo Ascani, Curator, Music
- Victoria Brooks, Curator, Time Based Visual Art
- Ashley Ferro-Murray, Associate Curator, Theater & Dance

### **Rensselaer Student Health Center – medical and counseling services**

The Student Health Center is a comprehensive, nationally accredited physician directed program providing outpatient ambulatory health care. Services include medical, gynecology, and allergy clinics, counseling services, and health education and wellness programs. Specialty consultation and referrals are available.

The Health Center consists of three parts: the outpatient medical services, counseling services, and health education. All are located in Suite 3200 of Academy Hall.

Web site: <http://studenthealth.rpi.edu/>

Telephone, Medical appointments: (518) 276-6287

Telephone, Counseling appointments: (518) 276-6479

### **Rensselaer Department of Public Safety:**

Emergencies: 276-6611

Non-emergencies: 276-6656

#### **Off-campus useful numbers:**

24-hour nurse: 866-315-8756

Sexual Assault: 271-3257

Suicide Prevention: 800-273-8255

### **LOCAL OFF-CAMPUS ARTS SPACES/VENUES**

- The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College: <http://tang.skidmore.edu>
- MASS MoCA: [www.massmoca.org](http://www.massmoca.org)
- The Contemporary Artist's Center (CAC): [www.thecac.org](http://www.thecac.org)
- The Sanctuary for Independent Media: [www.thesanctuaryforindependentmedia.org](http://www.thesanctuaryforindependentmedia.org)
- The Fulton Street Gallery: [www.fultonstreetgallery.org](http://www.fultonstreetgallery.org)
- The Arts Center of the Capital Region: [www.artscenteronline.org](http://www.artscenteronline.org)
- Albany International Airport: <http://www.albanyairport.com/3/gallery/current.html>
- Albany Center Galleries: [www.albanycentergalleries.org](http://www.albanycentergalleries.org)
- Gasholder: there is no specific website for this but you can read about it here - <http://rpinfo.rpi.edu/regional-troy.html>
- Opalka Gallery: <http://www.sage.edu/sca/opalkagallery/about.html>
- Massry Center for the Arts: [http://www.strose.edu/academics/schoolofartsandhumanities/massry\\_center\\_for\\_the\\_arts](http://www.strose.edu/academics/schoolofartsandhumanities/massry_center_for_the_arts)