



COLLEGE OF VISUAL ARTS AND DESIGN

Department of Design

Master of Arts (MA) in Design with a Concentration in Innovation Studies

The Master of Arts in Design with a Concentration in Innovation Studies (MA-DES-IS) exists to immerse graduate students who have not studied or practiced design in a series of learning experiences that will help them build and apply knowledge regarding design theories, methodologies and practices as a means to identify and test solutions for real-world social, technological, environmental and economic problems. This 36-credit hour program of study is unique to UNT, to graduate education in the state of Texas, and in this part of the U.S. The students who enroll in it represent a very diverse array of academic fields, professions and life experiences. Students are challenged to work across disciplinary boundaries as they engage in design processes guided by select UNT CVAD Department of Design faculty. Some course projects within this curriculum may be taught all or in part by faculty from outside the CVAD Department of Design where knowledge or research interests complement or catalyze design processes.

MA-DES-IS Coursework

The projects that comprise the MA program coursework will be guided by design decision-making processes and methods that will challenge MA students to:

- build empathy for the socially and economically informed value systems of the specific groups of people their completed projects will affect;
- work together in a phased, or iterative, manner to invent innovative solutions to the situations they are challenged to improve;
- work holistically as a means to make given situations better, meaning that they will learn to define their objectives in terms of desired results rather than according to what will “fix” a finitely defined given problem.

In short, students enrolled in the MA program will learn to iteratively generate innovative ideas and then apply and test these ideas in a variety of real-world



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situations in and around the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan environment. Doing this will imbue them with knowledge and skill sets that a large array of employers now seek as they attempt to create and market goods and services that will give them real competitive advantage, especially in light of the recent worldwide economic downturn. The MA-DES-IS has also been designed to prepare its graduates to be much more well-prepared to enter master's and doctoral degree programs in graduate programs in areas such as Anthropology, Information Technology, Decision Sciences, Merchandising, Marketing and Logistics, Journalism, Business Management and Information Science.

Required Academic Background

It is expected that applicants to the MA in Design program hold an accredited Bachelor's degree (minimum 120 semester credit hours). These applicants must also have earned a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 (3.5 is preferred).

Application Deadlines

*February 1 for **fall** or **summer** admission;*
*October 1 for **spring** admission*

These deadlines ensure adequate processing time and that enough qualified faculty are available for the application review process. Applications that are not complete for review by the faculty prior to the deadline for the intended semester of admission may be held for review the following semester. The faculty strongly suggests that all MA-DES-IS students begin their coursework in the fall semester to ensure proper course sequencing.

Application Procedures

The process of applying to the MA in Design is two-fold. An applicant must apply to both the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies and to the Department of Design, as detailed in Steps 1 and 2 below:



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***Application Step One:
Application to the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies
(phone 940.565.2636)***

Send the following items to:

The University of North Texas
Graduate Admissions
1155 Union Circle, # 305459
Denton, TX 76203
gradsch@unt.edu

a | Completed application form and any fee required. Applications are available from the Graduate School or its website at www.tsgs.unt.edu. (The printed application form is available by contacting the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies School directly and is significantly shorter and much easier to complete than the online version.)

b | Official transcripts that document the successful completion of a Bachelor's Degree from an accredited institution of higher learning.

c | Graduate Record Examination (GRE) test scores. There are no minimum scores to be achieved on the GRE for entry into the MA in Design program; *however*, the faculty in the Department of Design consider an applicant's scores on the GRE as another indicator of potential success in this program, and therefore suggest that the test should not be taken lightly. For information regarding locations of testing centers and testing dates, etc., visit the GRE website at www.gre.org. This is a very helpful website that contains study guides and sample test questions.

It takes the UNT Office of Graduate Admissions in the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies *approximately two to four weeks* to process the application materials it receives in response to Application Step One, requirements a–c. If they assert that the application materials they receive on behalf of a particular MA-DES-IS candidate meet the minimum university requirements, the applicant's materials are forwarded to the Department of Design where they will then be reviewed by the faculty along with the materials submitted by the



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applicant directly to the Department (please refer to *Application Step Two*, which immediately follows this paragraph).

***Application Step Two:
Application to the Department of Design
(phone 940.565.3621)***

Send the following items to:

The University of North Texas
College of Visual Arts and Design
Department of Design
1155 Union Circle, # 305100
Denton, TX 76203
design@unt.edu

a | Either a portfolio of your work or two to three samples of your writing. If you choose to submit a portfolio of your work, please provide a CD or DVD that contains a minimum of 10 depictions of artifacts, projects or research endeavors you have completed, or a web URL that contains these. If you choose to submit samples of your writing, include at least one recent research paper along with one to two other samples of professional or scholarly writing.

b | A letter/statement of intent. Please articulate what you hope to achieve by completing the requirements to earn a MA-DES-IS. This document must be between 500 and 800 words.

c | At least two (2) letters of recommendation. These should be from former professors/instructors, professional supervisors or colleagues, or clients with whom you have worked closely. Each letter should address why you would be a viable candidate for the MA-DES-IS program. No specific recommendation form is required, but these letters must be submitted directly to the department by the reference, and they should be written on their scholarly or professional letterhead.



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d | A *professional résumé*. Should list all of the applicant's relevant work experience, affiliations, etc.

Once all required admission materials are received, the faculty will review your application and use it as the basis to formulate an official admission decision.

Program Structures and Components

With each course counting as 3 credit hours, each candidate must successfully complete a minimum of 36 semester hours to earn the MA-DES-IS degree. All courses taken to satisfy the curricular objectives of this degree must be numbered 5000-level or higher. The basic program structure is as follows:

Major Required Studies

21 credit hours

Interdisciplinary Elective Studies

9 credit hours

Practicum Courses (Interdisciplinary Team-Based, Independent Study)

6 credit hours

For more information regarding the individual courses that constitute the MA-DES-IS curriculum, please contact Professor Michael R. Gibson at michael.gibson@unt.edu.

Major Professor

The major professor is the faculty member who guides the graduate student's studies in the program and who supervises the student's MA-DES-IS Practicum in Innovation Studies research project and who chairs his/her Colloquium committee (more information about this is presented in the section titled *MA-DES-IS Practicum and Colloquium*). The student chooses the major professor in consultation with the MA-DES-IS faculty, but the decision



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depends heavily upon the student's area of focus within the program and consent from the professor.

Degree Plan

The degree plan is an outline of the student's course of study. It lists courses already completed, as well as courses that remain to be taken in order for the student to graduate. The degree plan must be filed with the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies through the Department of Design office. This plan is completed in consultation with the major professor after completion of the first semester in the program, but prior to completion of 24 credit hours of graduate work toward the MA-DES-IS.

MA-DES-IS Practicum and Colloquium

Each student in the MA-DES-IS program must complete 6 credits in the *Practicum in Innovation Studies*, which entails working on an interdisciplinary team to complete a two-semester-long project. Each team must identify a single contemporary social, technological, economic or environmental problem and then utilize design thinking processes to attempt to resolve it. The documentation and critical defense of this endeavor is presented in a Colloquium attended by the Major Professors of each student on a particular team, and by a faculty member from a discipline outside of design who possesses knowledge relative to the problem a given team has formulated and addressed. The Colloquium presentations from each team must reveal a high level of conceptual thinking, the exploration and testing of multiple hypotheses, and the implementation of innovative solutions.

An MA-DES-IS student must have completed at least 24 hours of graduate coursework that satisfies the MA-DES-IS degree plan before enrolling in the Practicum in Innovation Studies. Completion and certification of the MA-DES-IS is also required to achieve this objective.



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Department of Design Suggested Admissions Timeline

Since admission to Graduate School involves submission of materials not only from the applicant, but testing services (official GRE scores), other colleges and universities (official transcripts), and outside professionals (letters of recommendation), the application process is very time consuming. More time than expected should be allotted to make the departmental application deadline. The following are suggested dates to keep applicants on track:

January 1 (for entry in the fall of summer semester);

September 1 (for entry in the spring semester):

Date by which you should submit graduate application form, official printed transcripts, and application fee to the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies. (On average, the Graduate School takes one full month to fully process an application and forward it to the department for review by the faculty in the Design Department.)

January 15 (for entry in the fall of summer semester);

September 15 (for entry in the spring semester):

Date by which you should have taken the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) so that the official scores will be received by UNT in time to be included with your application. (The Analytical Writing section is hand-graded, so receipt of scores usually takes a minimum of 2 weeks.)

February 1 (for entry in the fall of summer semester);

October 1 (for entry in the spring semester):

Department of Design Application Deadline. All required materials must be in your file for review by Department of Design faculty by this date. This includes your writing samples, portfolio (if you choose to submit one), letters of recommendation, statement of intent, resumé and the forwarded application packet from the Graduate School.

March 1 (for entry in the fall of summer semester);

November 1 (for entry in the spring semester):

Date by which you will likely hear from the Department of Design regarding your admission status.



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April 1 (for entry in the fall or summer semester);

December 1 (for entry in the spring semester):

Date by which those who have been accepted into the program should respond in writing regarding their intent to enroll in the MA-DES-IS program.

Should your application not be complete by the Departmental deadline and/or by the time the faculty collect the applications to review them, your application may be postponed for entry in a later semester. You will be contacted concerning what materials need to be submitted to complete your application within 3 to 5 weeks of the Departmental office receiving your materials.