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.

REQUIRED ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

It is also 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 grade point average of 3.0 (3.5 is preferred) on a 4.0 scale.

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 MFA in Design is two-fold. An applicant must apply to both the Office of International Admissions and to the Department of Design, as detailed in Steps 1 and 2 below:

APPLICATION STEP 1 - Application to the UNT Office of International Admissions (phone 940-565-2442)

Send the following items to: University of North Texas
International Admissions
1155 Union Circle, #311067
Denton, TX 76203-5017 U.S.A.

international@unt.edu
1. **Completed application form, application fee, official transcripts of all colleges attended, proof of English proficiency, and proof of funding.** Please see the Office of International Admissions website for detailed information regarding these required materials. Application forms and a complete list of required materials are available from [www.international.unt.edu](http://www.international.unt.edu).

2. **Graduate Record Examination (GRE) test scores (if available).** There are no minimum scores to be achieved on the GRE for entry into any of the MFA in Design programs; however, the faculty in the Department of Design consider an applicant's scores on the GRE as another indicator of potential success in the graduate 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](http://www.gre.org). This is a very helpful website that contains study guides and sample test questions.

Scores on the GRE do not need to be submitted during the admission process if the test has not yet been taken. If the scores are not submitted with all other application materials, they must be submitted prior to the end of the student's first semester in the MFA program. If scores are NOT submitted before the end of the first semester of coursework, then the student will not be permitted to register for further semesters until the scores have been received.

International Admissions takes approximately 2-4 weeks to process complete applications and verify the applicant's eligibility to study in the United States. If the application meets the minimum university requirements, the above materials are forwarded to the Department of Design to be reviewed by the faculty with the materials submitted by the applicant directly to the Department (see step 2 below).

**APPLICATION STEP 2 - Application to the Department of Design** (phone 940-565-3621)

Send the following items to:  
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. **A minimum of 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.

d. **A professional résumé.** Should list all 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 structures are 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 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, listing courses already completed, and courses that remain to be taken in order to graduate. The degree plan must be filed with the Graduate School through the Department of Design office. This plan is completed in consultation with the major professor and done 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 degree plan is also required to achieve this objective.