

MA in GAME STUDIES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

DEPARTMENT OF DIGITAL HUMANITIES

BROCK UNIVERSITY

2024-2025

These Policies and Procedures are intended to conform to the requirements and regulations of the Brock University Faculty Handbook, the Brock University Graduate Calendar, and, where relevant, the Collective Agreement between the University and BUFA, and the University and CUPE 4207.

Approved: January 16th, 2024

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SECTION 1: GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1.1 THE GRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

1.1.1 It is the duty of the GPD to oversee the graduate program in consultation with the Department of Digital Humanities (DDH) Departmental Committee. The usual term is three years. Specific duties include:

- a. serving as Chair of the Graduate Program Committee.
- b. reporting on activities to the DDH Departmental Committee.
- c. providing guidance to students who are enquiring about the program and/or their options in general.
- d. providing guidance for students with respect to their interactions with the program and the department, including selection of courses.
- e. overseeing the preparation and appropriate distribution of graduate program materials, which may include updating information and application materials, advertising posters, the graduate section of the departmental web site, the Brock Graduate Calendar, and other university publications.
- f. meeting with incoming students to welcome them and to review departmental policies and expectations.
- g. assisting students in procuring Supervisors, Second Readers and Supervisory Committee members.
- h. ensuring that all student department files are kept up-to-date with respect to their progress, grades, graduate record forms, and so on.

- i. overseeing student progress by monitoring grades and bringing any related problems to the attention of the Graduate Program Committee.
- j. bringing unresolved student concerns to the attention of the Graduate Program Committee.
- k. mentoring new graduate supervisors as required.
- l. overseeing arrangements for thesis defences in collaboration with the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies.
- m. serving as a member of the university Graduate Council. The purpose of the Council is to provide a forum for GPDs, and others involved in graduate programs, to meet and exchange ideas about administrative aspects of graduate programs.
- n. consulting with the DDH Chair regarding deployment to the Graduate Program Committee.
- o. assigning, on an annual basis, a Graduate Program Designate to serve as a substitute for the Director when necessary (in the case of the Director's absence or a conflict of interest, for instance).
- p. in consultation with the DDH Chair, proposing and overseeing the annual budget.

1.1.2 The GPD nominally receives a half-credit course release per academic year.

1.1.3 The procedures for nominating a GPD are as follows:

- a. Except in the case of the inaugural GPD (see 1.1), in October of the final academic year of his or her term, the current GPD shall approach all those who are eligible to hold the position (i.e., all DDH appointed and affiliated faculty and Graduate Program Committee members). The GPD shall distribute to the Graduate Program Committee a list of all those faculty members who wish to be considered for the position.
- b. A meeting of the DDH Departmental committee shall be held to consider the applications of the candidates for GPD. Each candidate shall have an opportunity to present to the DDH Departmental committee, following which they shall be excused for the in camera discussion.
- c. A secret ballot vote shall be held to conclude no later than 48 hours after the meeting. All faculty members on the DDH Departmental committee shall be eligible to vote. Absentee ballots shall be provided for members who are unable to attend the meeting at which the vote takes place. Absentee ballots shall be submitted to the Administrative Assistant in a sealed envelope with no identifying information on the ballot ahead of the meeting during which the motion is to be considered. Ballots shall be securely stored by the Administrative Assistant.

- d. Votes shall be counted by the DDH Chair and the Administrative Assistant. The Director shall communicate the DDH Departmental committee's recommendation to the DDH Departmental committee and the Dean, cc'd to the candidates. The communication shall include the numerical results of the vote.

1.2 THE GRADUATE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

- 1.2.1 It is the duty of the Graduate Program Committee to oversee and monitor the graduate program and to plan for further program development when appropriate. Relevant proceedings of the Graduate Program Committee meetings are presented at regularly scheduled Centre meetings for discussion and approval.
- 1.2.2 The Graduate Program Committee shall be composed of the GPD, four faculty members (three-year term), all faculty members teaching in the program, DDH staff, and a student representative (appointed by the GPD following an annual student election). The student representative shall be a voting member except in matters restricted to BUFA faculty members as outlined in the collective agreement. Quorum for the Graduate Program Committee shall be 4 members of the program committee and the GPD. A simple majority vote is sufficient to pass motions. The GPD shall not vote except in cases of ties. Specific duties of the Committee are:
 - a. to act as the Admissions Committee.
 - b. to approve all Supervisors, Second Readers and Supervisory Committees.
 - c. to consider feedback about the program. On the basis of this feedback, the Committee may make recommendations to deal with concerns. These recommendations are forwarded to the DDH Departmental Committee as a whole if the issues are related to general policy or procedures.
- 1.2.3 The Graduate Program Committee shall normally include one member designated as the Grants Officer. The Grants Officer's duties are: a) to publicize OGS- and SSHRC-award competitions and pertinent deadlines to senior undergraduate and current graduate students. b) to conduct, in the Fall, workshops for undergraduate and graduate students on OGS- and SSHRC-award competitions. c) to review draft proposals for these competitions and to assist applicants in their search for appropriate letter writers. d) to serve on university awards adjudication committees established by the Dean of Graduate Studies in order to promote the value of applications from the Faculty of Humanities.

1.3 ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

- 1.3.1 Applications for admission to the MA program, on either a full-time or a part-time basis, will be accepted from students holding an Honours degree or equivalent, with an overall average not less than B+. Exceptions for students with unique circumstances will be considered. International

students should consult the information on admissions offered online by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA).

- 1.3.2 In addition to the material required by FGSPA, applications to the program require a Statement of Interest (Sol). The Sol should indicate that applicants have some experience studying and/or making games, broadly defined. Recognizing that applicants may come from a wide range of academic backgrounds, the admissions committee will consider the following (non-exhaustive) items as assets:
- a. An undergraduate degree in games, interactive media, or a related discipline;
 - b. Evidence of experience studying games at the post-secondary level (e.g., courses, a senior research paper, etc.);
 - c. Evidence of experience making games inside or outside of an educational setting;
 - d. Critical or scholarly writing on games (e.g., for websites, magazines, etc.);
 - e. Professional experience in the games industry;
 - f. A post-graduate certificate in games, interactive media, or a related discipline;
 - g. Any other evidence of scholarly or applied engagement with games.
- 1.3.3 The decision to admit rests with the Graduate Program Committee. Upon approval by the Committee, the admissions process will be handled by FGSPA.
- 1.3.4 Applicants accepted for program entry in the Fall academic term may request a deferral of one year if they are unable to enter as planned in September. This request is to be presented in writing to the GPD and must be accompanied by an explanation of the circumstances leading to the delay. If entry is delayed beyond the following September, reapplication for admission will generally be required.

1.4 FUNDING AND EMPLOYMENT

- 1.4.1 Tuition and other fees for the current academic year are listed at the web site for Financial and Administrative Services: <https://brocku.ca/finance/students/graduate>
- 1.4.2 Students offered admission to the program shall be informed of the minimal level of financial support promised and the period of time over which this support will be provided. The minimum total financial support includes amounts received from internal University awards and from teaching and/or research assistantships.
- 1.4.3 Students are encouraged to apply for internal and external scholarships and grants, and to consult the departmental Grants Officer, early in the Fall, to learn more. Canadian citizens and permanent residents are eligible for Ontario Graduate Scholarships and can apply to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and other provincial and federal funding agencies for scholarships and fellowships. There are also many scholarships and bursaries available to particular groups or students who can demonstrate need. Information about scholarships and bursaries (available to particular

groups or students who can demonstrate need) can be obtained from FGSPA (<https://brocku.ca/graduate-studies/currentstudents/financialresources>) and the Graduate Calendar.

- 1.4.4 Some support is available from the university to full-time graduate students who apply for the reimbursement of expenses incurred in presenting original research at academic conferences. Students are encouraged to contact the GPD in advance of such expenses for advice on how to apply to the Department and FGSPA for such funds. Graduate students whose applications to the Humanities Research Institute are accepted may be eligible for further support. Please note that, according to University regulations, original receipts must be submitted to be reimbursed for expenses, and not all expenses are eligible for reimbursement.
- 1.4.5 Graduate Teaching Assistantships are governed by the provisions of the CUPE 4207 Collective Agreement, available through <http://4207.cupe.ca>. The nominal number of hours of work per term is 120 (see Article 22.01 [b]). According to Article 22.04 (a), "Graduate Students enrolled at Brock University shall not accept an appointment in excess of an average of ten (10) hours per week over an academic term, in which she is enrolled as a full-time student, without the prior permission of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Such permission shall not be unreasonably denied; however, the Parties recognize the importance of this workload limit as it relates to a student's time to completion."
- 1.4.6 It is each individual course instructor's responsibility to meet with her/his TAs at the beginning of the term for advance discussion of the work expected, and the scheduling of duties throughout the term. These will be detailed in an Allocation of Hours form distributed by the Department at the start of each contract. Teaching Assistants are expected to lead seminars, hold office hours, correspond by email with students, attend course lectures, and grade student participation, tests, essays and examinations as required. It is the Department's responsibility to ensure that adequate preparation time is allowed and the graduate student's responsibility to be prepared. Graduate students are urged to familiarize themselves with the relevant articles from the CUPE 4207 Collective Agreement, available at <http://4207.cupe.ca>
- 1.4.7 Graduate Research Assistants are usually paid from research grants and contracts for assistance with particular research projects. When payment is for assistance with research not closely related to the student's thesis research, the average number of hours worked per week must not exceed 10 (including TA hours, if applicable). Permission for a graduate student to work more than an average of 10 hours a week requires prior permission of the Dean of Graduate Studies.
- 1.4.8 Research Fellowships are research training stipends offered in some cases to applicants at the point of admission. They are deposited to the student account in terms specified by the supervisor.

SECTION 2: THE PROGRAM

2.1 THE MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECT STREAM

- 2.1.1 The MRP may take a variety of forms, including
- a. an applied or creative component (e.g., a game), accompanied by a written component (20-30 pages) describing the theoretical framework and scholarly question(s) addressed by the applied or creative component;
 - b. a major research paper (30-50 pages in length);
 - c. other formats, which must first be approved by the supervisor and GPD.
- 2.1.2 This stream requires six half-credit courses, including GAME 5P01 and 5P02.
- 2.1.3 In the Fall, the GPD will guide students in selecting research topics and suggest students consult with possible supervisors. The GPD will assist in making arrangements for a supervisor and (in consultation with the supervisor) a second reader.

2.2 THE THESIS STREAM

- 2.2.1 This stream may only be pursued with the permission of the GPD, which shall normally be secured in the first term following a student's acceptance of an offer of admission.
- 2.2.2 This stream requires five half-credit courses, including GAME 5P01 and 5P02, a piece of independent research of 80-100 pages in length, inclusive of notes, references, and appendices, and a public oral defence with an external examiner in attendance. Applied projects may be permitted with permission of the supervisor and GPD.
- 2.2.3 The student is responsible for securing a Supervisor and Thesis committee in consultation with the GPD, normally before the end of the first term in the program.

Section 3: Major Research Paper and Thesis Supervision

3.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

- 3.1.1 Graduate research is a partnership involving students, Supervisors, Second Readers and other Supervisory Committee members. It is vital that students are provided with responsible, professional supervision that is sensitive to student needs and free of personal conflicts that might interfere with intellectual development. The quality of supervision is an important variable contributing to the quality of student work and to its timely completion.
- 3.1.2 The GPD will, through the best means available, communicate to students the relevant research interests of Departmental faculty. The GPD will suggest possible supervisors for a student research project based on faculty research interests, normally within the first term of the program.

- 3.1.3 In the case of conflicts arising between students and supervisory faculty, students should first attempt to resolve matters in conversation with the faculty in question. If the conflict cannot be resolved in this way, the student should bring the matter to the GPD for discussion and steps toward further resolution.
- 3.1.4 In cases where conflicts arise between students and the GPD, students should first attempt to resolve matters in conversation with the GPD. If the conflict cannot be resolved in this way, the student should bring the matter to the Chair of the Department for discussion and steps toward further resolution.

3.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF MRP AND THESIS SUPERVISORS

- 3.2.1 Supervisors are expected to be actively engaged in scholarly activity and linked to a wider scholarly network, and students have the right to expect from Supervisors scholarly expertise, accessibility, and assistance with the design, planning, and conduct of feasible research projects.
- 3.2.2 Supervisors must devote the time required to share his or her knowledge and skills with students. For this to happen, Supervisors must undertake to be available to students interested in his or her areas of expertise. Specifically, Supervisors must:
- a. assess MRP and Thesis draft proposals and offer constructive feedback as needed with the aim of approving final proposals by the stated deadlines.
 - b. be reasonably accessible to the student for consultation and discussion of academic progress and research problems, and give timely responses (i.e., normally within 2 weeks) to written work with constructive suggestions for improvement.
 - c. offer supervision and advice appropriate to the stage of the student's work.
 - d. help the student establish and maintain a suitable timetable for completion of the various stages and requirements.
 - e. ensure the student is aware of University, Faculty, and Departmental requirements and standards for the graduate program.
 - f. conform to basic principles of academic integrity and professionalism.
 - g. make a suitable alternative arrangement for supervision when on extensive leave of absence from the university.
 - h. notify the Second Reader of the expected date of submission of the MRP by the student, and the deadline for the Second Reader to submit his or her grade for it.
 - i. in the case of MRP supervisors, offer (in conjunction with the Second Reader) a grade for the MRP to the student, and provide the MRP title and grade to the GPD at least two weeks

in advance of the deadline set each year by FGSPA for its receipt of a Graduate Record Form (in Fall, usually early September; see the FGSPA for exact dates); this form indicates that all degree requirements are complete.

- j. in the case of Thesis Supervisors, recommend to the GPD a short list of appropriate External Examiners and establish and maintain (with the student and GPD) a timeframe for the scheduling of the defence and related deadlines.
- k. Supervisors participating in the program shall normally not supervise more than three students at any given time.
- l. Supervision is available to all BUFA faculty members participating in the program, including LTA and ILTA members.

3.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF MRP SECOND READERS AND THESIS SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

3.3.1 Second Readers or members of the Thesis Supervisory Committees are expected to follow, in general, the guidelines laid down for the primary Supervisor, although they do not have primary responsibility for the student.

3.3.2 Specific duties of MRP Second Readers are to

- a. offer appropriate advice upon request.
- b. assess draft proposals and offer constructive feedback, with the aim of approving the proposals by the stated deadlines.
- c. approve the MRP Proposal by May 1st.
- d. read the penultimate draft in a timely manner and discuss the draft with the Supervisor and student.
- e. approve the final draft and agree with the Supervisor on the grade to be awarded.

3.3.3 Specific duties of Thesis Supervisory Committee Members are to:

- a. offer appropriate advice upon request.
- b. assess draft proposals and offer constructive feedback, with the aim of approving the proposals by the stated deadlines.
- c. approve the Thesis Proposal by May 1st.
- d. review and report to the GPD on the student's progress in preparation for the January and May Academic Progress Reviews.
- e. approve the final draft of the thesis.
- f. participate in the Examining Committee at the oral defence.

3.3.4 As a departmental standard in a normal term, all student work submitted to Supervisors, Second Readers and other Supervisory Committee members should be returned within two weeks (14 days).

Students should be clearly informed of any delays caused by exceptional circumstances in advance whenever possible.

SECTION 4: MRP AND THESIS REQUIREMENTS

4.1 MRP AND THESIS PROPOSALS

- 4.1.1 MRP proposals should be 5-7 pages in length; thesis proposals should be 10-12 pages in length. Both should include a title for the paper, an overview of the topic, a review of relevant scholarly literature, a description of the methodology being employed, a proposed timeline for completion of the project (including the exchange of drafts with Supervisory Committee members), and a bibliography of works cited. Creative or applied MRP and thesis proposals will be of the same lengths given above but their constitutive features are to be determined in consultation with the Supervisor.
- 4.1.2 Once the final proposal has been circulated with Supervisory faculty, the Supervisor will convene a meeting at which the student and the supervisory faculty discuss the research project. Faculty members will offer constructive feedback and any guidance that is required.
- 4.1.3 The Supervisor and Second Reader or Supervisory Committee must sign the Departmental Proposal Approval Form, attach to it a copy of the approved proposal, and submit both to the GPD by May 1.

4.2 MRP REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

- 4.2.1 MRPs must be prepared according to current scholarly style guidelines appropriate to the field of study. Their constitution and length should follow the specifications outlined in 2.1.1 and 2.1.2.
- 4.2.2 The MRP must be presented in final form to the Supervisor at least two weeks in advance of the deadline set by FGSPA for the receipt of final grades in a given term. This allows time for the Supervisor and Second Reader to assign a grade to the student and communicate it to the GPD, and for the GPD to communicate the grade to FGSPA.
- 4.2.3 In the case of disagreement between the Supervisor and Second Reader on the assignment of a grade, the GPD and/or the Chair will attempt to mediate; failing that, the average of the grades will be assigned.
- 4.2.4 If the student believes that the Supervisor or Second Reader is unduly delaying grading of the research paper, the student may petition the GPD to review the matter.
- 4.2.5 If a failing grade is awarded for a major research paper, the student will be withdrawn from the program (see Faculty Handbook B.10.2.B).
- 4.2.6 All major research paper documents must be preserved and deposited for public display in the graduate program's archive. It is the responsibility of each MA student, upon receiving a final grade, to supply to

the GPD a PDF file of the complete document (including an appropriate title page featuring the author's name, the supervisor's name, the date of submission, and the document's title).

4.3 THESIS REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

- 4.3.1 Theses must be prepared according to current scholarly style guidelines appropriate to the field of study. They should be 80 to 100 pages in length, inclusive of notes, references, and appendices. Applied projects may only be undertaken with permission by the supervisor and GPD. Applied projects must include a written rationale as to their scholarly merit.
- 4.3.2 Once a complete draft of the thesis is sent to the Supervisory Committee, the GPD will contact the Associate Dean of Humanities, Research & Graduate Studies or designate to indicate that a defence will be necessary.
- 4.3.3 The thesis submitted to the GPD for provision to the Examining Committee must be accompanied by a Faculty of Graduate Studies Certificate of Approval signed by the Supervisor attesting to the fact that the Thesis is approved by the Supervisory Committee as ready for defence.
- 4.3.4 The candidate must provide one copy of the approved thesis to the GPD for distribution to each Supervisory Committee member and ~~three copies to~~ the GPD. The GPD delivers one copy to FGSPA for distribution to the External Examiner and one to the Dean of Graduate Studies (or designate). The thesis must be presented to the Examining Committee at least four weeks in advance of the anticipated date of the oral defence so that appropriate arrangements can be made for its scheduling.
- 4.3.5 The Examination Committee will comprise the Supervisory Committee and an External Examiner from outside the university or from outside the program but within the university.
- 4.3.6 The External Examiner will be principally responsible for provision of an independent and objective evaluation of the academic quality of the thesis. The approval of the External Examiner is the responsibility of the Dean of Humanities or designate. The GPD will solicit from the Thesis Supervisor a ranked list of at least three possible candidates who are qualified to serve as an External examiner (including telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and a brief statement of qualifications). The GPD will supply this list to the Dean of Humanities or designate. The Supervisor and student should not contact potential external examiners to discuss availability, and any contact with an External Examiner prior to the thesis defence should be brought to the attention of the GPD.
- 4.3.7 Typically, a thesis defence will occur four to six weeks following the External Examiner's receipt of the thesis document. External Examiners shall be informed at this time that their report will be shared with the student prior to the defence. External Examiners shall submit their report no later than one week prior to the defence. External Examiners shall as part of their report identify whether the thesis is ready for defence and whether the thesis is to be recommended for submission to internal/external thesis award competitions.

- 4.3.8 The external examiner's report will be shared with the examination committee and the graduate student prior to the defence.
- 4.3.9 The Dean of Humanities or designate will act as Chair of the Examining Committee and direct proceedings at the defence. A recommended format for the defence is as follows. At the examination, the candidate will present a statement (20-30 minutes long) outlining the study. The Examination Committee will then proceed to question the candidate. Questions related to, but not directly covered in the thesis, may be asked. The order of examiners will be: External Examiner(s), second reader, third reader (if applicable), thesis Supervisor. Normally two rounds of questions will be permitted. Once questioning has finished the candidate has a final opportunity to make additional comments or seek clarification. The thesis Supervisor is not permitted to respond at any time on behalf of the student. After this time, the candidate and any visitors must leave. The Examination Committee will then deliberate in camera regarding the thesis defence. Approval of the thesis will require acceptance by three-quarters of the committee.
- 4.3.10 If revisions are necessary, the Committee will specify the areas for revision and the date by which the revised thesis is to be returned to the GPD. Students should typically be given two to four weeks to complete minor revisions, which are to be approved by the graduate supervisor, and four to twelve weeks to complete major revisions, which are to be approved by the graduate supervisor and the chair of the defence.
- 4.3.11 When the thesis is in its final form (following defence and any revisions), has been approved by the graduate program, and meets FGSPA Thesis Format Specifications, the student will submit the thesis to the Brock University Digital Repository. Procedures are outlined here: <https://brocku.ca/graduatestudies/current-students/thesis/ethesis-submission>. The student must also submit to the FGSPA the Certificate of Approval, the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) Non-Exclusive License to Reproduce Theses, and the Brock University Thesis and Major Research Paper Copyright Licence.
- 4.3.12 In the case of empirical research, one copy of all data should be maintained by the Supervisor as well as any copies of coding sheets or important analyses. When human participants have been involved, all original material which contains participant identification shall be turned over to the Supervisor for disposal or safekeeping, as required by University guidelines.
- 4.3.13 Thesis grades shall be reported as either a Pass or Fail grade. A Pass grade must be further differentiated as one of: Acceptable as is, Acceptable with minor revisions, Acceptable with major revisions. All aspects of the work as well as the student's performance during the defence must be taken into consideration when determining the grade. Normally, if all but one member of the committee agree on a decision, the decision shall be that of the majority. If this happens, it must be reported to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who in consultation with the Faculty Dean will determine an appropriate course of action. A failing grade will be awarded if two or more committee members find the thesis unacceptable.
- 4.3.14 In the instance of a failed defence, the candidate may, at the discretion of the Examining Committee, be permitted a second and final thesis submission and defence. This will be scheduled for no later than one

calendar year after the original presentation and defence. In preparing the thesis for resubmission, the student will be guided by the written feedback of members of the Examining Committee. Under normal circumstances the composition of the Examining Committee of the second thesis defence will be identical to that of the original Examining Committee. A fee may be charged for re-examination. Appeals relating to the procedures followed in a thesis examination or to the grade assigned shall be considered by the Dean of Graduate Studies.