

Master of Fine Arts, Game Design Final Review Handbook

This handbook contains the Game Design Final Review requirements, planning guides, and resources. Please read through all of this information carefully before preparing your materials for Final Review. If you have any questions or need clarification on any aspect of your upcoming Final Review, you will find information about who to contact on page 19 of this handbook.

It is your responsibility to use the latest version of the Final Review Handbook. If you are uncertain if this is the latest version, please refer to the Game Design page on the Graduate Showcase:

<http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/>

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 **ONLINE ICON:** The online icon will mark items that are specific to online students only. On campus students can skip these items.

ELIGIBILITY FOR FINAL REVIEW

All Final Reviews must be held at the end of the semester in which you complete your regular program units. You must declare your graduation term before a tentative date can be set. The process has three steps:

1. **DECLARATION:** In the semester prior to your Final Review, you can either contact your advisor to declare your graduation term or go through your self-service page. Additional graduation declaration and commencement information is found online here: <http://www.academyart.edu/content/aaу/en/students/my-academy/academic-resources/graduation-commencement.html>
2. **REGISTRATION:** Register for your final semester of coursework with your advisor or online through your [Online Student Registration Profile](#).
3. **REVIEW SIGN-UP:** Once you have declared your graduation term and registered for courses, at the start of the semester you are presenting, you will need to review the Final Review online orientation and complete the online sign-up form available here: <http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/>. Refer to the Graduate School Calendar for the available online sign-up dates here: <http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/academic-resources/graduate-student-academic-resources>. See further details for scheduling a final review below.

NOTE: If Final Thesis Project conditions have not been met within two semesters, you will need to reapply to the Graduate School to graduate.

Plan ahead and prepare as much of your project as possible by the beginning of the semester. Strive to have only your final touches remaining to be completed *during* your last semester of coursework.

SCHEDULING A FINAL REVIEW

Final Reviews are conducted in the spring, summer and fall semesters. Presentations typically start in the eleventh or twelfth week of the fall or spring semester and in the sixth week of the summer semester. You can find the sign-up dates in the Graduate School Calendar: <http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/academic-resources/graduate-student-academic-resources>

No Final Reviews are permitted during the intersession. A finalized date will be set during the semester the Final Review is to be conducted, based on director availability. This date can be changed only in case of personal emergency, and must be approved by both the Graduate School and the department director to be official.

NOTE: Please communicate with your Graduate Advisor about when would be the most appropriate term to schedule your Final Review. It is important to know the final cut-off date for scheduling your review. You should receive an email from the Final Review Coordinator approximately one week prior to the start of the semester you will be presenting your Final Review with details on how to sign-up. The email will direct you to the Graduate Midpoint and Final Review Showcase <http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/>.

You are required to watch the online Final Review Orientation prior to completing the Final Review sign-up form online. You have the option of presenting your Midpoint or Final Review online or on campus. If you will be doing your Final Review online please review the [online presentation specifications](#). You will be sent confirmation of your review date shortly after the close of the review sign-up period.

Please [contact](#) the Final Review Coordinator if you have any questions on scheduling your review.

ATTENDANCE & CANCELLATIONS

Final Review attendance is mandatory. All Final Reviews must be held at the end of the semester in which you complete your regular program units. If you do not attend the Final Review will be considered a “No Show” and will be noted as “Not Approved”.

Cancellations or postponements may be approved as a rare exception, all requests must be organized through the Final Review Coordinator at least 5 working days prior to the scheduled review date. Late cancellations or postponements will be considered “No Show” and will be noted as “Not Approved” for the Final Review.

Students are asked **not** to invite non-committee members, friends or family to their Final Review. Please do not provide food at the Final Review.

DELIVERABLE DETAILS & DUE DATES

Your Final Review will consist of the following four components: portfolio, thesis book, oral presentation, and Directed Study Journals. [Link to tutorial on uploading work to LMS.](#)

Portfolio: This is a formal presentation to the committee of your body of work. You are required to upload your portfolio to the LMS. This specific place for your portfolio allows you to include file types which cannot be uploaded in your Thesis Book. For your Final Review, your portfolio should be incorporated into your Thesis Book/Presentation doc and delivered as a single professional presentation with clear concise slides. The visual presentation will include your full professional project and a link to your directed study journal(s).

[Link to more detailed portfolio checklist](#)

Where: Upload to the Portfolio Icon in LMS

When: Two weeks prior to review date

Format: PDF

Thesis Book/Presentation doc: Your Final Thesis Project Written Summary must provide a synopsis of the research and the creative processes involved in the completion of the work. **For the Final Review, your portfolio should be included.** You can see and download examples of other students work under Showcase Projects: <http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/schools/game-design.html>
Flawless spelling and grammar are required of all submissions.

[Link to more detailed thesis book checklist.](#)

Professional Editing: The proposal must be professionally executed, grammatically correct and free of spelling errors and typos.

Where: Upload to the Thesis Book Icon in LMS

When: Two weeks prior to review date

Format: PDF

IMPORTANT: If your Thesis Book and Portfolio are not received in time, your Final Review will be cancelled, and you will need to present the following semester.

Oral Presentation: The oral presentation is the overview of your actual presentation. Online students are required to create and use a PowerPoint or PDF presentation.

[Link to more detailed oral presentation checklist.](#)

Where: At the Final Review

When: At the scheduled day/time of your review; two weeks prior to review date if presenting online

Format: PowerPoint or PDF

Practice and Prepare: Practice your oral presentation in advance of your review to ensure your comfort level during the presentation. Be prepared to answer questions when you are finished.

Notes: You may use notes, flashcards, or prompts in your PowerPoint as cues to help you remember the information during your oral presentation. Do not read your entire presentation.

[Link to online presentation details for online students](#)

Directed Study Journals: Your Directed Study Journal must be made available to the review team. Please include photographs and sketches.

On campus students: Please bring your journal with you to your presentation or provide a link to your online journal. Hard copy journals will be reviewed and returned to you at the end of the review.

Online students: If you kept a physical Directed Study Journal, you will need to mail it in with your Final Review package. Please include a correctly-sized return envelope to receive it back. Journals are mailed back after all Final Reviews are completed.

If you are keeping an online Directed Study Journal within the online directed study class system, your director will have access to review it and no action is required.

NOTE: If you are keeping an online Directed Study Journal outside of the online class system such as a blog or website, please provide a link to your site.

FINAL REVIEW PROCESS

Final Reviews are one hour in duration. Your presentation should be 20 minutes long.

The Final Review meeting will follow this structure:

Final Review Panel/Student Introduction	5 minutes
Final Review Presentation	20 minutes
Committee Question & Answer Session	10 minutes
Committee Discussion – closed door/offline	15 minutes
Committee Decision & Feedback	10 minutes

Review Committee: The Final Review Committee is comprised of faculty and/or industry professionals approved by the Graduate School and the Department Directors.

Committee Question & Answer Session: After your presentation, questions will be asked by the Committee for clarification on your project.

Committee Discussion, Decision, & Feedback: After the question and answer session, the committee will recess in private to discuss the merits of your proposal.

Upon reconvening, the committee will present you with one of the following outcomes:

APPROVED: You have passed the review portion of your degree requirements and may be granted your degree upon completing all degree requirements. [See awarding the Master's Degree below.](#)

NOT APPROVED: You have NOT passed, and will NOT be granted your degree until one of the following has been completed and the Final Review materials are approved by the Final Review Committee:

- **Resubmit:** Following specific Final Review Committee requirements your project requires small changes that must be corrected and re-submitted within 3 weeks. If the re-submission meets the requirements, then the Final Review materials are approved and you may be granted your degree. OR
- **Represent:** Following specific Final Review Committee requirements you must complete additional studio work, and/or rethink your Final Project, to present at a new Final Review next semester. You must sign-up for a new review date at the start of the next semester.

Please follow directions outlined in the link below to view your results and written feedback after your Final Review.

http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/content/dam/Grad%20Showcase/home_page/pdf/ReviewResults.pdf

EVALUATION QUESTIONS: The work you submit will be assessed using the Graduate School of Game Design program learning outcomes. At the Final Review the review committee is evaluating your success in meeting the stated outcomes.

<http://www.academyart.edu/academics/game-design/graduate-degrees>

AWARDING THE MASTER'S DEGREE: Your degree will be awarded and diploma issued after you have completed ALL of the following:

- All curriculum requirements are fulfilled: all units and minimum grade requirements completed.
- Presentation and approval of your Final Review before Committee.
- Submission of all Final Project materials.
- No outstanding financial obligations.
- Completed the Online Graduate Survey at <http://apply.academyart.edu/careersvsgradtrack/>.

NOTE: If Final Project conditions have not been met within two semesters, you will need to reapply to the Graduate School to graduate.



Final Review: Checklist

PORTFOLIO CONTENTS

FINAL PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

Include still images, designs, maps, video of game play or cinematic. All artwork created must be portfolio quality. The samples shown needs to be from your time as a student at Academy of Art University. Include (but not limited to):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Class work/Professional work | <input type="checkbox"/> Class work/Professional work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storyboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Storyboard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concept Sketches and Paintings | <input type="checkbox"/> Concept Sketches and Paintings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment and Prop Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment and Prop Design |

Game Design & Animation

- Executable of complete build or movie of run through.
- GDD – Game Design Document in MS Word (preferred) or PDF.
- .JPGs of level design sketches and paper maps

Concept Art

- .JPGs of all presentation work
- Load the same content to the portfolio tab on your student Homepage.

Modeling

- .JPGs or turntable of models
- Movie walkthrough of environment (if environment model is done)
Load the same content to the portfolio tab on your student Homepage.



Final Review: Checklist

THESIS BOOK CHECKLIST

Your **Final Thesis Book** must provide a synopsis of the research and creative processes involved in the completion of the work. It must also include images of your work and details (see the checklist below for more information and layout). This document must also include your Growth Portfolio. **Flawless spelling and grammar are required.**

- **GRAMMAR/SPELLING:** Be sure the proposal is grammatically correct and free of spelling errors and typos. The Academy Resource Center (ARC) offers support for both your written and oral presentation.
- **EVOLUTION:** Your thesis book must significantly reflect the evolution of your project since your Midpoint Review. **DO NOT** recap what you wrote in your Thesis Project Proposal at your Midpoint Review.

THESIS BOOK
CONTENTS

In your thesis book, you must include the following sections with a separate heading for each:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cover Page | <input type="checkbox"/> Thesis Summary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Table of Contents | <input type="checkbox"/> Thesis Project |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Autobiography | <input type="checkbox"/> Thesis Project Visuals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resume | <input type="checkbox"/> Production Timeline |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Portfolio Samples | <input type="checkbox"/> Course Timeline |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Growth Portfolio | |

COVER PAGE

The cover page of your thesis book must include the following:

- ☐ Project title
- ☐ Your Name
- ☐ Student ID Number
- ☐ Academy of Art University, Graduate School of [SCHOOL]
- ☐ Final Thesis Project
- ☐ Date of Presentation
- ☐ Time of Presentation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

All Final Reviews must have a table of contents (TOC)

- ☐ Number each page of the book
- ☐ List each topic section and its corresponding page number in the TOC
- ☐ Select an appropriate font
- ☐ Font size should be no smaller than 10 pt. and easily readable



Final Review: Checklist

- AUTOBIOGRAPHY** For your autobiography, write in a concise and engaging manner. Briefly address the following in *no more than one page in length*:
- ☐ Introduce yourself
 - ☐ Explain how you developed an interest in Game Design
 - ☐ Discuss what led you to enroll at the Academy of Art University
 - ☐ You may also include other information that seems appropriate or relevant
- RESUME** You will need to include a formal resume in your proposal. This is a one-page professional document that lists your current contact information, work experiences, skills and education. Dates should be listed chronologically, most recent at the top of the list.
- ☐ Name
 - ☐ Address
 - ☐ Phone number
 - ☐ E-mail
 - ☐ Website (optional)
 - ☐ Additional contact information
 - ☐ Educational background
 - ☐ Recent or pertinent employment history
 - ☐ Other relevant interest/vocational information
- PORTFOLIO SAMPLES** Include still images, designs, maps, video of game play or cinematic. All artwork created must be portfolio quality. The samples shown needs to be from your time as a student at Academy of Art University. Include (but not limited to):
- ☐ Class work/Professional work
 - ☐ Storyboard
 - ☐ Concept Sketches
 - ☐ Environment and Prop Design
 - ☐ Reference Materials
 - ☐ Level Designs
 - ☐ Character Designs
 - ☐ Vehicle Designs
- GROWTH PORTFOLIO** Include Undergraduate, outside or transitional/development work to show your growth (if applicable).
- THESIS SUMMARY** The Thesis Summary is a short but detailed summary of your Final Thesis Project. By reading this summary, the committee should have a solid sense of what you have created without having to read the full book. The summary should include what the project was about, why the project was created, and what methods you used to fulfill the intent of the project. The summary should be approximately 150 words.
- ☐ Area of emphasis
 - ☐ Genre
 - ☐ Subject matter
 - ☐ Reason for choosing the subject matter
 - ☐ Reason for creating the project



Final Review: Checklist

THESIS PROJECT VISUALS

When you include Thesis Project visuals in the book, make sure you have:

- ☐ Four pictures per page (maximum) or less
- ☐ Research images: environment, items etc.
- ☐ Model images: Multiple views including textures, exploded views, wireframes, etc.

IMPORTANT: All artwork being presented **MUST** be in this book.

PRODUCTION TIMELINE

List out your completed production timeline.

- ☐ Plug the items listed in your Production Backlog into a calendar that matches the length of your project (in most cases 3 full semesters).
- ☐ Edit the subject matter of your project to fit within your timeline.
- ☐ Show time breakdown in a Gantt chart with overlapping data.

COURSE TIMELINE

The timeline must include a list by semester the courses that you have taken, including the course number, title, and instructor



Final Review: Checklist

FINAL REVIEW ORAL PRESENTATION

ORAL PRESENTATION

The oral presentation is a summation of the research process and conceptual solution of the Final Thesis Project. Original work must be shown but may be accompanied by slides or other visual materials.

- **POWER POINT/PDF:** A PowerPoint or PDF presentation accompanying your oral proposal is *required*.
- **Q&A:** Plan to answer questions and defend your work at the end of your presentation.
- **PRACTICE:** Practice your oral presentation in advance of your review. Such practice is essential to your preparedness for your Review.

IMPORTANT: DO NOT READ your presentation off the slideshow. Use bullet points and fill in the information. Also, do not read directly from your notes. How you present your work will affect the overall decision. The committee is looking for how well you speak about your work; address your ideas and overall approach.

This is a formal presentation to the committee of your body of work - the Final Thesis Project as proposed at Midpoint Review. Recap your written document as your presentation. Do not include heavy details from your thesis book.

- You must present the fully developed content as proposed at your Midpoint Review.
- All work presented for the Final Review should be created after successfully passing the Midpoint Review.
- The project presentation must exemplify your highest level of technical proficiency.



Final Review: Checklist

POWERPOINT CHECKLIST

FINAL REVIEW POWERPOINT/PDF CHECKLIST

Your PowerPoint/PDF should include the following slides:

- ☐ Introduction Slide
- ☐ Portfolio Review Slides
- ☐ Final Project Slides
- ☐ Closing Slide

INTRODUCTION SLIDE

The introduction/title slide must include the following items:

- ☐ Your name
- ☐ Department name
- ☐ Project title
- ☐ Date of the presentation

PORTFOLIO SLIDES

The portfolio slides must include the following items:

- ☐ Artwork in .JPG format

FINAL PROJECT SLIDES

The final project slides must include the following items:

- ☐ Any artwork in .JPG format
- ☐ Links to executable or walkthroughs
- ☐ Abstract/Summary
- ☐ Inspiration
- ☐ Research
- ☐ Pre-production art – concepts and prototypes
- ☐ Show Project

CLOSING SLIDE

This slide should clearly indicate that you are finished with your presentation. You may choose to include the following:

- ☐ Your Name
- ☐ Your Project Title
- ☐ A Thank You





Final Review: Timeline

3 to 4 months before your review	<p>Read Game Design specific Final Review Handbook</p> <p>Watch the Final Review Orientation</p> <p>Review your Midpoint Thesis Book and review committee comments. Identify whether you have made changes to the project that may require approval from the Department Director prior to your Final Review</p>
2 to 3 months before your review	<p>Check graduate website for Final Review sign-up schedule</p>
6 weeks before your review	<p>Prepare your thesis book</p> <p>Work with an proofreader/editor or contact ARC to make sure your thesis book is grammatically correct and typo-free.</p>
1 month before your review	<p>Create your PowerPoint/PDF slide show</p> <p>Organize and create notes for your oral presentation</p> <p>Work with a friend, colleague or ARC on your oral presentation</p>
3 weeks before your review	<p>Send to your department two (2) identical bound copies of your Final Review Thesis Book</p> <p>Practice your oral presentation out loud and with a timer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Review the online-specific requirements and test all of your equipment● Email your PowerPoint or PDF presentation to Online Graduate School



Final Review: Timeline

2 weeks before your review	<p>Upload your PDF of your portfolio and thesis book to your home page</p> <p>Upload a link to your Directed Study Journal blog or document to your dashboard</p> <p> Meet online with your Online Graduate Department Learning Coordinator to review your presentation room setup and use</p> <p>On campus students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Email the Game Design Administrative Assistant to arrange for a PC or MAC for your presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange to test out your review location and verify your equipment works prior to your actual presentation date
1 WEEK	<p> Online Students: Send your PowerPoint presentation to Online Graduate School via email</p> <p>Meet online with your Online Coordinator to review your presentation room setup and use</p> <p>Plan your attire, dress professionally</p> <p>Practice your presentation in front of a live audience</p>
Tips for the day of your review	<p>Get plenty of rest the night before</p> <p>If you will be using a cellphone, make sure the battery is charged</p> <p>Have a glass of water available during your presentation</p> <p>Arrive at your Final Review on time and ready to go</p> <p>Greet your committee members prior to beginning your presentation</p> <p>Listen to the committee's advice and take notes</p> <p>Maintain professionalism during the entire review</p>
Following your review	View your Final Review results here





Final Review: Frequently Asked Questions

When can I schedule my Final Review?	Once you have completed your eligibility requirements and have petitioned to graduate, contact the Final Review Coordinator via email at FinalReview@academyart.edu to be added to the presentation list. <i>You must be in contact with the Coordinator no later than the first few days of the semester you wish to present.</i>
How many pages should the thesis book be?	There is no specified length for the completed Thesis Project Summary. The Thesis Book should be thorough in describing all aspects of your project, but you also want to think about how you can be concise and avoid redundancy of information in the content.
If I'm an online student, do I need to send in physical samples of my class work?	No. Physical samples are not required.
Can we include work we've done outside of the Academy?	Work not executed at the Academy of Art University should not constitute more than 10% of your portfolio presentation.
Can I use fancy text, borders and custom backgrounds for my PowerPoint presentation?	We would recommend against it. Simple, easy to read and easy to see content is best.



Final Review: Important Links

Graduate student homepage	http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/academic-resources/graduate-student-academic-resources
Academy Resource Center (ARC)	http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/academy-resource-center Your resource for proofreading, ESL assistance, Final Review, Writing Lab.
Accessing Your Review Results	http://gradstudents.academyart.edu/assets/pdf/ReviewResults.pdf
Online Chat Schedules & Recordings	Chat Schedule: http://online.academyart.edu/innovative-learning/chats.html Graduate Chats: http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/graduate-chats.html Twitter: @auchats
Department Specific Websites	https://www.academyart.edu/academics/game-design http://online.academyart.edu/schools/game-design
Graduate School Calendar	http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/academic-resources/graduate-student-academic-resources
Graduate Review Showcase	http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/ Here you will find a link to the Final Review Orientation, and links to the Midpoint Review Guidelines and Handbooks.
Game Design Review Showcase page	http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/schools/game-design.html
Online Connection Through Mobile Devices 	http://www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect/feature-details/adobe-connectmobile.html Application required for using the Adobe Connect Meetings from your mobile device.
Online Presentation Do's & Don'ts 	http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/ Look under Additional Presentation Tools



Final Review: Important Links

Online Technical Requirements	http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/ ● Look under Resources → Technical Resources → Online technical requirements
Technology Trouble Shooting	● To participate in the web conference, you need to make sure that your computer has the latest versions of the Flash and Shockwave plugins and can run the web-casting software. To check this, please click on this link: http://arcps.adobeconnect.com/common/help/en/support/meeting_test.htm
Uploading Review Content	http://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/content/dam/Grad%20Showcase/home_page/pdf/Uploading_Review_Content_6.17.14.pdf
Photographing & Submitting Artwork	http://media.academyart.edu/howto/index.html http://howto.academyart.edu/submitting-artwork



Final Review: Online Presentation Specifications

Scheduling a Meeting with an Online Graduate Review Coordinator

Academy of Art University's Online Graduate Review process provides a means for Academy students to present their project proposals via the Academy's online meeting environment.

An Online Graduate Review Coordinator will contact you after your review has been scheduled to test your computer, internet connection, web-camera, and telephone. The Online Graduate Review Coordinator will also show you how the online review process works and how to upload and use your slideshow during your oral presentation.

Students presenting online are required to have their equipment and any required presentation materials ready to upload and test at least two weeks prior to the presentation date (1 week for the Summer Semester).

Online-Presentation Guidelines

You are required to provide a PowerPoint or PDF presentation with visual and written information that will go along with your oral presentation. Be sure to follow your department guidelines, as some departments have different requirements. You can also find a checklist below with details on what to include in your presentation.

Font: Use an easily readable font (some fonts do not load correctly in Adobe Connect for PPT files). Use a font size and color that is clear to read.

Images: Images need to be in JPEG format and optimized for web viewing. Review your department requirements for labeling and titling your images.

Credit: When including art made by other artists, credit the artist

Content: It is best to keep the text in bullet point format or very short clear sentences instead of written paragraphs. References, copyright information, and technical notes may be included at the end of the presentation

Please refer to the links below for technical requirements:

[Online technical requirements](#)

[Adobe Connect diagnostic test](#)

Online graduate Review Contact Information

Email: onlinegradreview@academyart.edu

Phone: (415) 618-3614



Final Review: Contact Information

FINAL REVIEW COORDINATOR:

FinalReview@academyart.edu

(415) 618-6390

CONTACT FOR ONLINE STUDENTS:

OnlineGradReview@academyart.edu

(415) 618-3614

DEPARTMENT CONTACT:

Stefanie Stowers, Game Design
Administrative Assistant

School of Game Design

Tel: (415)618-3756

Email: SStowers@academyart.edu

SEND MATERIALS TO:

Academy of Art University

School of Game Design

Final Review

79 New Montgomery

San Francisco, CA 94105

NOTE: Please obtain a tracking number or
return receipt of delivery for your shipments.