

## How do I apply for admission into the MA program in Design with a concentration in design research?

### Master of Arts (MA) in Design with a Concentration in Design Research

The Master of Arts in Design with a Concentration in design research (MA-DES-DR) 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.

*What follows is a listing of national and international consulting firms and corporations that are actively utilizing applications of design research theory and methods to better serve their clients. Most of these organizations employ sets of people who possess diverse educational and professional backgrounds; many of them now operate in-house design research teams or offices.*

|   |                        |                                 |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>frogDesign</i>                         | <i>Centralis</i>       | <i>Tti North America</i>        |
| <i>Rackspace</i>                          | <i>Huge</i>            | <i>Dubberly Design Office</i>   |
| <i>Firstwater</i>                         | <i>SC Johnson</i>      | <i>Greater Good Studio</i>      |
| <i>Institute for Creative Integration</i> | <i>Jump Associates</i> | <i>Sapient</i>                  |
| <i>IDEO</i>                               | <i>Nurun</i>           | <i>The Dublin Group</i>         |
| <i>Lincoln Financial Group</i>            | <i>Leo Burnett</i>     | <i>Ecco Design</i>              |
| <i>Qualcomm</i>                           | <i>Chamberlain</i>     | <i>The Nielsen Norman Group</i> |

### MA-DES-DR Coursework

The projects that comprise the coursework of this MA program 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 situations in and around the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan environment. Doing this will imbue them with knowledge and skill sets that a large array

## &gt;&gt; MA-DES-DR

**MA-DES-DR  
Coursework  
(Continued)**

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-DR has also been designed to prepare its graduates to be much more well-prepared to enter doctoral degree programs in graduate programs in areas such as *Anthropology, Psychology, Information Technology, Decision Sciences, Merchandising, Marketing and Logistics, Journalism, Public Administration 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) from an institution of higher learning accredited by at least one of the following regional accreditors:

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools  
The New England Association of Schools and Colleges  
The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools  
The Northwest Accreditation Commission  
The Western Association of Schools and Colleges  
The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

*Please note that so-called "online undergraduate degrees" are generally **not** accepted as adequate preparation for either of the Master's Level programs in Applied Design Research.*

*These applicants must also have earned a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 (3.3 is preferred).*

**Application Deadlines**

*November 9, 2012 for spring 2013 admission;  
March 22, 2013 for fall 2013 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 MFA-DES-DR students begin their coursework in the fall semester to ensure proper course sequencing, although arrangements to begin this course sequence at the beginning of the spring semester can be made in select cases.

**Application Procedures**

The process of applying to the MA in Design with a Concentration in design research 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 one and two below:

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

Send the following items to:

*[continued at the top of page 3]*

## &gt;&gt; MA-DES-DR

**Application Procedures  
(Continued)**

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](http://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 (reference the top of this page) of higher learning.*
- c | Graduate Record Examination (GRE) test scores.* There are no minimum scores that must 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 *recommend* that applicants to this program score at least 150 on the verbal reasoning portion of this exam, and at least a 4.0 on its analytical writing portion. *Please understand: not achieving these scores is will not automatically disqualify any applicant from being accepted into the design research MA program.* For information regarding the 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.

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 determine that the application materials they receive on behalf of a particular MA-DES-DR 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 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

*[continued at the top of page 4]*

## &gt;&gt; MA-DES-DR

**Application Procedures  
(Continued)**

d | *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.

e | *A letter/statement of intent.* Please articulate what you hope to achieve by completing the requirements to earn a MA-DES-DR. This document must be between 500 and 800 words. Write this document in a manner that articulates how your immersion in the MA-DES-DR curriculum might help you attain particular career- and life-path goals, along with two to three well-articulated rationales for how you believe that learning to engage in design processes might effectively complement the skill sets and bases of knowledge you've developed during your previous academic and/or professional experiences.

f | *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-DR 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.

g | *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.

**Department of Design  
Suggested Admissions  
Timeline**

Since admission to our Graduate School involves the submission of materials not only from the applicant, but from testing services (official GRE scores), other colleges and universities (official transcripts), and outside professionals (letters of recommendation), the application process is somewhat time consuming. Applicants should allow significant time to allow the application process to operate within the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies and within the Department of Design. The following are suggested dates to keep applicants on track:

*November 9, 2012 (if applying for entry in the spring of 2013);*

*March 22, 2012 (if applying for entry in the fall of 2013).*

These are the dates 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.)

*October 26, 2012 (if applying for entry in the spring of 2013);*

*March 1, 2013 (if applying for entry in the fall of 2013).*

These are the dates 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.)

## &gt;&gt; MA-DES-DR

**Department of Design  
Suggested Admissions  
Timeline (Continued)**

*November 30, 2012 (if applying for entry in the spring of 2013);*

*April 19, 2013 (if applying for entry in the fall of 2013).*

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.

*December 21, 2013 (for entry in the spring semester of 2013);*

*May 24, 2013 (for entry in the fall semester of 2013).*

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

*January 4, 2013 (for entry in the spring semester of 2013);*

*June 14, 2013 (for entry in the fall semester of 2013).*

Date by which you must notify the Department of Design of your intent to enroll *in writing*.

*The earlier you apply, the greater your chances for securing scholarship and/or fellowship funding to support your MFA-DES-DR graduate experience become.*

Should your application not be completed by the Departmental deadline and/or by the time the faculty collect the applications submitted during a particular review period to evaluate them, the assessment of your application may be postponed, which could result in your entry into the MA-DES-DR program being delayed. If you submit an incomplete application to either the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies or to the Department of Design, you will be contacted concerning what materials need to be submitted to complete your application within three to five weeks of the Departmental office receiving your materials.

**Program Structure:  
Sequence of Courses**

With each course counting as 3 credit hours, each candidate must successfully complete a minimum of 36 semester hours to earn the MA-DES-DR 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 Courses

4 classes; 12 credit hours (ADES 5520, ADES 5530, ADES 5522, ADES 5526)

Applied Design Research Courses

3 classes; 9 credit hours (ADES 5521, ADES 5523, ADES 5525)

Interdisciplinary Elective Courses

3 classes; 9 credit hours (all of these must be earned from courses taken within *one* UNT Department)

Practicum Courses (during which a design research project is formulated, operated, tested, analyzed, evaluated and reported upon in a thesis document)

2 courses that span an entire academic year; 6 credit hours (ADES 5546 and ADES 5548)

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

## &gt;&gt; MA-DES-DR

**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 MFA-DES-DR Practicum in Innovation Studies research project and who chairs his/her Colloquium committee (more information about this is presented in the section titled MFA-DES-DR Practicum and Colloquium). The student chooses the major professor in consultation with the MFA-DES-DR faculty, but the decision depends heavily upon the student's area of focus within the program and consent from the professor. Most MFA-DES-DR students will have the professor assigned to teach ADES 5546 and ADES 5548 as their Major Professor.

**The MA-DES-DR Candidate's Graduate Reviews** 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 18 credit hours of graduate work toward the MA-DES-DR.

**MA-DES-DR Practicum Experience/ Thesis Experience** All MA-DES-DR candidates are required to present their work for critical analysis and evaluation by the select Department of Design faculty at the culmination of each semester. This Review will occur in December or May for most of these individuals, and its results are used to determine whether individual candidates may advance within the program, or if they must repeat particular courses within it, or if they must leave the program.

An MA-DES-DR student must have completed at least 24 hours of graduate coursework that satisfies the MA-DES-DR degree plan before enrolling in the course sequence necessary for completing the Practicum/Thesis experience in design research.

All MA-DES-DR candidates must engage in a process that spans the final year (i.e. two semesters) of their studies in the program to:

*one~*

identify a social, technological, economic, environmental, cultural or market-based "problem" or situation that they believe they can suggest or design the means to improve, and then;

*two~*

engage in carefully selected and studied research methodologies to begin to gather, analyze and then utilize relevant data to fuel the invention of a means to make or re-make an artifact, system, community, process or method that they can test as a potential means to solve the problem or improve the situation they identified in step one;

*three~*

test and re-test whatever they made or re-made in step two as they explore and assess multiple hypotheses, prototypical iterations and modalities for working and communicating with each other, the user groups or audiences they have pledged to work on behalf of, and with their faculty;

*four~*

effectively document and present the processes that informed the evolution of their Practicum/Thesis experiences, and the artifacts, systems communities processes or methods that were invented or affected as a result of it.

**FIN.**