



# BİLKENT UNIVERSITY **GRADUATE** **HANDBOOK**

Master of Fine Arts in  
Media and Design

2021-2022

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*Information for all current and prospective graduate students at Bilkent:*  
<http://www.bilkent.edu.tr/bilkent/academic/graduate/intro.html>

## WHAT IS A MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN MEDIA AND DESIGN?

The Master of Fine Arts in Media and Design, a joint offering with the Bilkent Department of Graphic Design, prepares students for careers in design and creative technologies, Film and Media. The M.F.A. in Media and Design emphasizes professional development, innovation, and experimentation in an academic environment.

The M.F.A. in Media and Design combines training in practical methods of media creation and design with coursework in theoretical, interdisciplinary, and comparative approaches to media analysis and criticism.

Seminars and course offerings are lined up along two main focus areas:

- Design & Creative Technologies
- Film and Media

The program provides students with sophisticated theoretical and practical knowledge, enabling graduates to make original contributions to media and design production in Turkish and global media industries. In addition, the curriculum emphasizes applied and artistic research, analysis, interpretation, and constructive criticism of a variety of media platforms.

## DEGREE REQUIREMENTS:

Students in the Media and Design M.F.A. must complete a total of **eight**, fully-credited courses designated at or above the 500-level, for a total of 24 Bilkent credits.

Three credited courses are required, and they should be completed successfully in the first two terms of study:

COMD 512 // Foundations in Visual Studies (Fall Semester)  
 GRA 501 // Graduate Studio I (Fall Semester)  
 GRA 502 // Graduate Studio II (Spring Semester)

After you have completed the first term of coursework, you must register for **GRA 599 Master's Thesis** and maintain enrollment each term for the rest of your time in the program.

In addition to these requirements, students must earn credits from **select five elective courses**, of which **no more than two can come from departments other than COMD and/or GRA**. Courses taken outside of the department must be coded 500 or above and offer at least 3 course credits in order to be applied towards the M.F.A. degree. (See below for guidelines if you are transferring credits from a different institution.)

At least **three electives must come from the Restricted Electives list** provided below and/or as indicated the current course catalog linked below. Please note that not all of these courses will be open for enrollment during your time in the program. For more information, you can check the course catalog here:  
<https://catalog.bilkent.edu.tr/current/dep/d77.html>

COMD 521 // Body Movement and Vision in Immersive and Interactive Media\*  
 COMD 524 // Essay Film\*  
 COMD 525 // Curatorial Practices in Contemporary Art\*  
 COMD 527 // Creative Sound Design and Synthesis\*  
 COMD 538 // Adaptation in Media\*  
 COMD 541 // Writing for Media\*  
 COMD 563 // Music and Media  
 COMD 566 // Documentary Form and Practice\*  
 GRA 503 // Illustration I  
 GRA 504 // Illustration II  
 GRA 511 // Typography I  
 GRA 517 // Image Time and Motion I\*  
 GRA 521 // Animation I  
 GRA 535 // Computational Design Methods  
 GRA 541 // Graphic and Visual Representation

\* = *Restricted elective for both M.F.A. and M.A. programs*

Students are strongly encouraged to complete all required coursework during the first two semesters of their enrollment. **All course credits MUST be earned by the end of the fourth enrollment semester (see below).**

Guided by their interdisciplinary research interests, some of our M.F.A. and M.A. students have fulfilled their unrestricted elective requirements by taking 500-level courses in other graduate programs at Bilkent. For a complete list of Bilkent graduate programs in the humanities and social sciences: <http://esbe.bilkent.edu.tr/degprog.html>

## Non-Credit Course Requirements:

Three additional, non-credit courses are required by the program:

### **GE 500 Research Methods and Academic Publication Ethics**

All graduate students enrolled at Bilkent are required to complete GE 500 with an S (Satisfactory) grade during their first year of enrollment. **Make sure to register for GE 500 in your first semester.** The course is organized as a series of five independent modules and designed to prepare students both for academic work and for future careers outside academia. For more information about the GE 500 requirement, including the current schedule for required modules and how to register: <http://w3.bilkent.edu.tr/bilkent/ge-500-research-methods-and-academic-publication-ethics/>

**GE 590 Academic Practices** is a module-based course aims to prepare graduate students for academic studies and research. Register for this course starting in your first semester. For more information: <https://w3.bilkent.edu.tr/bilkent/ge-590-ge-690-academic-practices/>

**GRA 590 Seminar in Research Topics** is a non-credit course that should be part of your registration in your second term in the program.

## REGISTRATION

Graduate students register for courses through the online registration service STARS-SRS. When you have either finalized your course selection, OR when the deadline to finalize arrives---whichever comes first---this will activate the “Send Registration to Advisor for Approval” function. It is then up to the graduate adviser to review and approve your course selection (see below for more about adviser selection and advising in general).

After registration is completed through STARS-SRS, either by student action or automatically, students will not be able to add/drop a course or to change the section of a course online. These actions will only be possible by filing a paper Registration Form that shows all required signature approvals.

Academic advisors have about a week to review and approve the registered courses of their advisees. After this deadline, which will shift each term but fall within one week of the first day of classes, any course which has not been approved by the adviser will be dropped from the student’s records.

## Transferring Graduate Credits from Other Universities

According to Bilkent University regulations, current graduate students may apply to transfer credits from another university towards course requirements of the Bilkent graduate program they are enrolled in. These credits must have been earned in graduate-level courses taken within the last three years. Credits for a maximum of two courses taken outside Bilkent can be applied to the requirements for Bilkent M.F.A. programs, which will consider these courses as unrestricted electives.

A course taken outside Bilkent University which is to be transferred toward the M.F.A. must be passed with at least a **B grade** and must not be counted towards the requirements of another degree. The courses counted towards your program are transferred with a **T grade** on the Bilkent University transcript, and the original letter grades of those courses are not included in calculating grade point averages.

All applications for credit transfers are finalized by EYK (the board of the related institute) by the end of the second semester of the program.

## Time to completion: Regulation

YÖK regulation stipulates that all requirements for an M.F.A. program with a thesis component must be completed within six semesters of initial enrollment in order to graduate. This time to completion includes a successful thesis project and written component defense. Failure to successfully defend a thesis by the end of the sixth enrolled semester will result in dismissal from the program.

The program in Media and Design is planned so that, ideally, **candidates complete all credit-bearing coursework in the first two terms.** The second year (the third and fourth semesters) should then be dedicated to the thesis project, thesis, and other research activities in the Department of Communication and Design.

All course credits **MUST** be earned by the end of the fourth semester. Failure to complete the coursework on time and with a CGPA of at least 3.0 will result in dismissal from the program.

Students may apply for a leave of absence under certain extenuating circumstances, but any semester(s) spent on leave will be counted toward the six-term maximum duration of the program and incur tuition fees that must be paid out of pocket or waived with department approval.

## Applying for extended enrollment

**Extensions to the normal four-term program of study will only be granted in cases where unforeseeable circumstances prevent a timely defense.**

If the thesis project has been realized and sufficient progress has been made on the thesis by the end of the fourth semester, but for legitimate reasons the defense cannot take place until the fifth semester, the Graduate Director, Department Chair, and the University administration will consider applications for extended enrollment.

This application must:

1. demonstrate clear progress with the thesis (generally, two or more fully drafted chapters), and
2. have the full support of the project adviser.

If either of these criteria is found to be deficient, the application may be denied. In this case, the candidate may continue the program without a tuition waiver OR, in the case of glaringly deficient progress, the candidate may be dismissed from the program.

Applications for fall extension are due to the Graduate Director no later than September 1.

## FUNDING

All applicants to the graduate program are automatically considered for financial support from the Department of Communication and Design. Funding decisions are made jointly between the department and university administration.

*Financial support for any graduate student is offered with the understanding that the student will study full-time and actively contribute to academic activities of Bilkent University above and beyond the requirements of his/her coursework.*

Full-time employment outside of the academic program is considered to be incompatible with this goal.

Upon acceptance to the program, the department offers two levels of financial support to full-time students who are not otherwise employed:

- 1) Partial tuition waiver (%50)
- 2) Partial tuition waiver (%50), plus additional funding

Applicants initially granted a partial waiver may receive additional support for subsequent semesters IF academic performance exceeds initial expectations AND the budget allows for expanded support.

The cost of tuition is reduced by 50% for students currently registered only for thesis credits (GRA 599) and for those registered for a leave of absence. The department cannot guarantee tuition support for scholarship students undertaking a leave of absence.

**Students receiving any level of funding from the department MUST maintain at least a 3.0 CGPA and have no F course grades in order to continue receiving financial support.**

### Extended funding

Tuition aid packages offered at the time of initial registration are time-limited and meant to cover ONLY the standard timeline of four semesters. No department funding can be guaranteed beyond four semesters; this includes partial tuition waivers.

Absolutely no funding beyond tuition remission can be granted to students enrolled past their fourth semester.

Fifth-semester students may be considered for tuition remission based on availability of funds and progress with the thesis as described in the application for extension (see above). Absolutely no tuition remission will be offered to students beyond the fifth registration semester.

**BOTTOM LINE: Defend on time**—that is, within two years of your initial enrollment. If you anticipate extending your enrollment into the fifth and, if required, sixth semesters, then you should expect to pay tuition costs for these additional term(s) out-of-pocket.

## Additional Research Funding

All currently enrolled graduate students are strongly encouraged to seek funding for their academic work outside of the department. There are some university- and faculty-wide opportunities, but national and international scholarships can also be pursued.

Your faculty adviser can help you with the strategies and logistics involved in proposal writing, but a successful outcome ultimately depends on your own investment in the project you are trying to fund, your attention to requirements, meeting deadlines, etc.



*If your application(s) for outside funding is/are successful, it is your responsibility to alert your advisor, the Graduate Director, the Department Chair as soon as possible after receiving notice, as receiving outside funding may affect your eligibility for continued university support.*

## **TÜBİTAK**

<https://www.tubitak.gov.tr/tr/burslar/lisansustu/egitim-burs-programlari/icerik-2211-yurt-ici-lisansustu-burs-programi>  
The link provided above (in Turkish) outlines the various funding opportunities available to graduate students through TÜBİTAK, the national science administration of Turkey. Applications are accepted twice a year (October/March).

Research scheme 2210-A seems to be most applicable to our program; however, other grants might also be of interest depending on the nature of the thesis project. Interested students are responsible for following the relevant application timeline/deadlines as well as adhering to the requirements checklist.

## **Dean's Fund**

The Dean's Fund offers limited, one-time funding for graduate students carrying out research-related activities (e.g. software, equipment, conference travel, etc.). The maximum award per student is \$300 USD. Applications for the Dean's Fund must be submitted by the academic advisor, who also directs its spending.

## TIMELINE FOR M.F.A. COMPLETION

TERM	Dept & Elective Courses	Additional Requirements	Thesis Project Progress (by the end of term)	Thesis Progress (by the end of term)
1	GRA 501, COMD 512 + two 500-level electives	GE 500 & GE 590	-	
2	GRA 502 + three 500-level electives	GE 500 (if needed), GE 590, GRA 599	Plan timeline for project proposal and process.	Complete all required sessions for GE 500. Submit Topic & Advisor Declaration Form. Plan timeline for proposal & bibliography.
summer	-	-	Draft full proposal. Collect & annotate samples and bibliography.	Draft full proposal. Collect & annotate bibliography. Look for relevant conference & publication opportunities.
3	Remaining courses, if any (no more than 2)	GE 590, GRA 590 & GRA 599	Present proposal in GRA 590 for feedback. Continue working on prototypes. <b>Proof of Concept &amp; Progress Report Form</b>	Present proposal in GRA 590 for feedback. Begin drafting chapters. Submit work for peer review or conference presentation. <b>Progress Report Form</b>
4	All course credits MUST be earned by the end of the fourth semester.	GE 590, GRA 599	Finalize full project by April.	Full draft of thesis to advisor. Finalize full committee and distribute copies. <b>Schedule defense before 15 May for spring graduation. Apply for a summer extension by 1 May if you cannot finish in time.</b>
summer	-	-	-	<b>Defend no later than 1 August for summer graduation.</b> Apply for fall term extension (if needed) by August 15.
5		GE 590, GRA 599		<b>EXTENSION beyond four terms granted ONLY in cases of extensive revisions and/or extenuating circumstances.</b>
NOTES:	Total of 8 courses at 500-level, including GRA 501, GRA 502, COMD 512 & five electives, of which at least three are restricted. No more than two courses can come from outside COMD/GRA. Must maintain a CGPA of at least 3.0			Defense MUST take place no later than ONE MONTH before the graduate school submission deadline. Failure to schedule accordingly will require an application for extended enrollment, possibly incurring tuition fees.

## ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

While each course draws on these components to varying degrees, the program as a whole is designed to build and assess the following skills:

- Creative project development,
- Academic writing in English,
- Knowledge and understanding of key concepts in media and design studies,
- Ability to build and draw on a relevant bibliography,
- Project management skills,
- Self-directed research and overall self-discipline.

Graduate students **MUST** maintain a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 3.0 or higher in order to remain enrolled in the program.

Letter grades for courses should be understood as follows:

**A range** = Consistently meets or exceeds expectations for graduate-level work.

**B range** = Mostly in line with graduate-level work, but leaves room for improvement.

**C range** = The C grade indicates performance that does not meet the standard for graduate-level work. Any final course grade in the C range should be discussed promptly with the course instructor and the Graduate Director. Earning multiple C grades in a single term should be reason to consider withdrawing from the program, and continuing students may find their departmental support in jeopardy.

**F** = Earning an F grade in a course will result in withdrawal of all financial support from the department.

### Other Letter Grades

#### **I = Incomplete**

An Incomplete indicates that the student has met basic requirements for course assessment (e.g., regular attendance, some assignments submitted) but substantial assignments have not been submitted due to illness or some other valid reason as discussed in advance with the course instructor.

**All Incomplete grades must be resolved within two weeks of the grade submission deadline, during which the missing work must be submitted to the instructor and graded.** The instructor must then file a Letter Grade Correction form to change the I to a regular letter grade.

Failure to submit missing work (on the part of the student) and/or file the necessary paperwork (on the part of the course instructor) within this two-week period will automatically change the grade on the transcript from I to F.

#### **P = In-Progress**

Indicates satisfactory performance in a course that requires registration for multiple terms, such as GRA 599. After the thesis is successfully defended, the P grade earned in the last registration term will be converted to S.

#### **S = Satisfactory performance**

This grade indicates either 1) that all requirements have been met in a single-term, non-credit course, or 2) that a multi-semester course has been completed successfully.

**U = Unsatisfactory progress**

Failure to meet the minimum requirements for non-credit courses will result in a U grade. This is considered a failing grade, and its consequences are the same as an F grade earned in a credit-bearing course.

For more about grading policies, including how to calculate CGPA, please consult the Bilkent University catalog.  
<https://catalog.bilkent.edu.tr/current/general/grading.html#GRADES>

## ADVISING

All first-year graduate students, by default, have the current Graduate Director on record for their program as their primary academic advisor. During this first year, this relationship is largely informal, not binding for present or future advising, and unrelated to thesis or other project work. If there is pressing reason for an exception—for example, if a first-year student is working on a funded project—the student and project advisor may present a joint petition to formally change this advisorship in the first year of enrollment.

By the end of the second semester, each student is expected to determine a topic for thesis research and formally declare affiliation with an appropriate faculty advisor, chosen from current COMD/GRA graduate faculty. The primary advisor for a thesis project must also be present on campus for the defense (see below).

**The Graduate Thesis Topic Declaration Form** should be signed by both the student and the new adviser and submitted to the Graduate Director no later than the last week of classes in the second term of enrollment.

### Co-advising

Co-advising between two or more members of the COMD/GRA graduate faculty OR between one COMD/GRA faculty member and another faculty from another Bilkent department may be pursued if the thesis topic is exceptionally interdisciplinary. In formal co-advising, where two faculty members share equal responsibility for overseeing the project, the co-advisors “share” a vote on the defense committee, and a fourth member must then be recruited to sign off on the defense.

### Faculty outside COMD/GRA

Non-advising thesis committee members may be recruited from departments at Bilkent other than COMD/GRA. The department reserves the right to oversee the composition of any candidate’s thesis committee.

One member of the thesis defense committee **MUST** hold a current affiliation from a university other than Bilkent. It is the thesis adviser’s job to recruit someone for this role, but suggestions from the student should be welcome.

Throughout the program, graduate students are strongly encouraged to seek mentors among Bilkent faculty in addition to the official adviser.

### Advisor absence / Changing advisors

During the course of thesis research, if the primary adviser leaves the department temporarily (e.g., medical or sabbatical leave) or permanently (e.g., takes a new position elsewhere) and therefore can no longer fulfill his/her duties, then the adviser role will revert to the Graduate Director unless or until an alternative is proposed by the student.

*If a student wishes to change his/her advisor for reasons other than the adviser’s foreseeable absence, the change must be proposed in writing and discussed with the Graduate Director before taking effect. No change in advisor will be approved if fewer than three months remain before the anticipated date of defense AND the original advisor can assure his/her presence on campus at that time.*

## Expectations

As an advisee, **you can expect the following** from your advisor during your thesis year:

- Guidance for methodological issues and structuring the thesis,
- Recommendations for relevant readings,
- Face-to-face meetings scheduled at regular intervals throughout the year (minimum once per month),
- Prompt responses to emails (within one week),
- Feedback on written drafts,
  - A reasonable expectation would be one round of feedback per individual chapter, then another round with the finished thesis before the defense.
  - Discuss with your advisor what to expect for feedback cycles
- Suggestions for publication or conference opportunities, and feedback on work designated for submission,
- Support for applications to obtain outside funding or special research funds offered by the University,
- Fair warning before any prolonged, foreseeable absence (e.g., new position, sabbatical leave, etc.).

## Your advisor, in turn, expects the following from you:

- Accountability for your progress,
- Use scheduled meeting time wisely,
- Prompt responses to emails (within one week),
- Understand and apply proper citation techniques (including APA style as required by the Graduate School) in all academic work; NEVER engage in plagiarism,
- Pre-reviewed drafts submitted for feedback,
  - At least one other person should read any writing you want to submit to your advisor for feedback BEFORE your advisor sees it
  - This reader could be someone at BilWrite, a fellow graduate student, or another trusted reader who can address issues with content as well as language/grammar/readability
- Effective responses to critique.
- **Written notice if you plan to leave the program--in this case, please CC the Graduate Director and COMD Department Chair.**

All masters-level theses must show evidence of rigour and appreciation of the relationship of the subject to a wider field of knowledge/scholarship. They must be clear, concise, well-written, and orderly. However, please note that no one expects perfection. The goals shared by you, your advisor, and the program are for you to complete a defensible thesis and finish the program in a timely manner. Do not hold your work to impossibly high standards of scope or quality. Our standards are high, but they are achievable; your admission to the program means that we believe you can meet these standards with sufficient effort.

Your advisor should be involved in determining appropriate research methods and overseeing your work; however, they should NEVER be the first person to read a draft of your work (see above). The primary advisor is neither an editor nor a collaborator, and it is ultimately the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that the submitted work represents the academic procedures, theoretical perspectives and intellectual creativity that have led to its production. In light of this, it should be noted that **it is the responsibility of the student to maintain suitable contact with the advisor** through pre-arranged meetings during the time of research.

As a general principle, the earlier you begin writing your thesis, the stronger the result. Writing should begin while research is still actively in progress. While completing research before ‘writing up’ is appropriate in some disciplines, this approach is rarely suitable for media studies, where the writing process itself forms a crucial part of research activity. Be prepared to write early—as early as your second semester, and certainly the summer thereafter—and understand that much of your advisor’s active supervision will come from commenting on your submitted work.

The thesis is always a work in progress, even at the moment of its defense. Do NOT let the perfect be the enemy of the done—you’re looking for “good enough” to defend, NOT the final and total word on the topic you’ve studied.

### **Publication, art/design-work exhibition and conference presentation**

M.F.A. candidates are advised to work with their supervisors and/or another faculty mentor to prepare original project, research or writing for submission to EITHER an academic conference, OR a notable exhibition/project, OR an academic journal by the end of the third enrollment semester. This submitted work can be related to the graduate thesis project, thesis, or it can come from an unrelated project (i.e., developed as part of graduate coursework). This submission will be counted as part of GRA 590.

Please note that **acceptance for presentation, exhibition or publication is not a requirement**. But evidence of submission of material(s) for consideration must be presented to the Graduate Director in a timely manner, no later than the end of the third enrollment semester (normally 30 December).

## THESIS PROJECT

The thesis project is **the core component of the M.F.A. in Media and Design Program.**

After the completion of the required theoretical and studio courses, the candidates are expected to realize **a thesis project that will be accompanied by a written component, which is the thesis.** The thesis project should demonstrate and reflect the candidate's ability to combine his/her research interests and creative skill-sets into a cohesive, unique body of work in the domains of media and design. The thesis project is an artwork/design-work that can locate itself in a wide-range within the creative fields and critical approaches.

### Developing a Thesis Project

By the end of the 2nd semester, the M.F.A. candidates are expected to start working on conceptualizing, researching, prototyping, and documenting a feasible thesis project. By the end of the 3rd semester, they should have a **“proof of concept”** of their thesis projects.

During the second year of the M.F.A. program, the students present their ideas, research, prototypes and get feedback and submit assessment modules regularly to their advisors, thesis monitoring committee, visiting artists/professionals, and peers. The process should make clear the steps taken by the students and covered stages in the development and realization of the project, together with the audience's impact.

**Students can commence Thesis Projects if their advisors have endorsed it.** Regular meetings with the advisors, faculty members, and peers for the presentations and the demonstration of the process are amongst the requirements of GRA 590 and GRA 599. By the end of the 4th semester, they are expected to have both their projects and their theses realized, exhibited, and defended.

### Thesis Project Exhibition

Prior to the defense of the thesis, the students should exhibit their works at the **Thesis Project Exhibition** as a requirement of the program, and their projects should be evaluated as satisfactory work by the members of a selected jury (**in April**). The Thesis Project Exhibitions are curated by the advisors and the students are expected to work on the realization of the exhibition together. The Thesis Project Exhibition, unless indicated otherwise takes place at the Faculty of Art, Design, and Architecture Exhibition Hall (FADA Exhibition Hall/Gallery). The students are highly recommended to visit the Exhibition Hall prior to designing their projects. Students are also allowed to offer additional/altering venues for the exhibition of their projects.



## THESIS FORMATTING & PROCEDURES

### a. Length

While there is no fixed requirement for thesis length, an MA project should aim for ~30,000 words exclusive of bibliography (80-120 double-spaced pages) in order to demonstrate sufficient scope and depth of research.

Some of the total page count may be devoted to visual illustrations in addition to written text. However, any and all images in the submitted thesis should be attributed to source(s) according to APA rules AND adhere to principles of fair use as understood by copyright law.

To this end, we recommend that you consult the Fair Use Policies of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies:

[https://www.cmstudies.org/page/fair\\_use](https://www.cmstudies.org/page/fair_use)

### b. APA style

All theses in the Graduate School are expected to adhere to APA citation and formatting style. For a guide to the most up-to-date version of APA style, check the Purdue OWL website:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1/>

It is in your best interest to master APA citation as soon as possible. Apply it meticulously to all your work, particularly but not only the thesis. This practice is important, because if there are style errors in the draft(s) submitted to Turnitin, there is a high risk of “false positive” signs of plagiarism, which can take a lot of time and effort to correct before resubmission.

Learn APA style and be vigilant in its application starting from your very first semester.

### c. Academic integrity & plagiarism

Academic integrity is central to the mission of the Bilkent University Graduate School. The graduate programs in the Department of Communication and Design seek to uphold this mission. All students enrolled in these programs are held to the highest possible standards of academic integrity in coursework and in thesis work.

Any submitted work found to be in violation of these standards due to plagiarism, falsified data, or cheating may be grounds for loss of scholarship funding and/or disciplinary action, including dismissal from the program.

For detailed university policies pertaining to academic integrity and plagiarism:

<http://w3.bilkent.edu.tr/bilkent/policy-on-conflicts-of-interest-and-commitment-academic-integrity/>

### d. Turnitin

The Graduate School requires that a pre-defense draft of all theses be submitted to Turnitin no later than one week before the scheduled defense date.

The candidate must provide the files in a timely manner, but it is the thesis advisor's responsibility to submit the draft to the appropriate administrator(s) for processing, in both .docx and .pdf formats. Advisors may contact the Graduate Director for current information about Turnitin submission procedures.

The revised, post-defense draft must also be submitted to Turnitin for approval (see below). This process may take several days, and it is up to the advisor and the candidate to allow enough time, up to one week, to receive this approval before proceeding with binding and other ESBE submission protocols.

Graduate instructors may require Turnitin submission for coursework at their discretion.

**e. ESBE regulations**

General formatting & preparation guide for graduate theses: <http://esbe.bilkent.edu.tr/GuidelinesFinal.pdf>

Thesis cover pages (advisor & committee signatures) with sample formatting  
<http://esbe.bilkent.edu.tr/CoverPages.pdf>

## THESIS DEFENSE

### a. Committee

For the M.F.A., the Graduate School requires a committee of three faculty members, each ranked Assistant Professor or higher, to serve on a thesis committee. One must be the primary advisor from the Bilkent COMD graduate faculty); another from Bilkent, generally COMD, but interdisciplinary projects might bring in someone from another department; and the third **MUST** be affiliated with a university other than Bilkent, in a department/field that relates closely to the thesis topic.

The department reserves the right to oversee the composition of any candidate's thesis committee. It is the thesis advisor's responsibility to recruit the outside committee member, but suggestions from the student should be welcome during the selection process.

### b. Scheduling

Graduate students are expected to defend their thesis project on time for spring graduation ceremonies. Any extensions beyond this timeline will require proof of progress and approval from the advisor as part of an application submitted to the Graduate Director.

**IMPORTANT:** The department will not schedule any thesis defense less than one month before a Graduate School submission deadline. These deadlines are determined by the academic calendar and change from year to year, but they are always made public on the academic calendar: <http://w3.bilkent.edu.tr/bilkent/academic-calendar/>

While exact dates will change each year, the following time frames are a guide for timing the thesis defense and final submission:

- **Spring defense, by 15 May** // Bound thesis to ESBE before spring term grades are submitted in June

#### **SPRING DEFENSE IS THE GOAL.**

- **Summer defense**, by 15 July // Application for summer extension to the Graduate Director by May 1. // Bound thesis to ESBE before graduate student registration begins in mid-September
- **Winter defense**, by 15 December // Application for fall extension to the Graduate Director by September 1 // Bound thesis to ESBE before fall term grades are submitted in mid-January

After the advisor receives a satisfactory pre-defense Turnitin report, **a complete draft of the thesis AND a copy of the Turnitin report should be distributed to all committee members at least one full week before the scheduled defense date.**

It is recommended that candidates ask each committee member whether s/he prefers digital files or hard copy for making comments. Consider as well the form in which you would rather receive these comments in order to smooth out the revision process.

### c. Preparation and outcomes

At the defense, the candidate is expected to orally present the project (for no more than 15 minutes; visual materials are welcome but not required) and respond to the committee's questions and critiques.

There are three possible outcomes for the thesis defense:

#### 1) Success

The thesis passes as it stands (which is extremely rare) or passes with minor corrections to be completed within one month of the defense, which is the most common successful outcome.

#### 2) Extension

The thesis is referred back to the candidate for revisions extensive enough to require additional time to complete. If this time includes an additional semester, this extended registration will normally be at the candidate's expense.

A **post-defense extension** is recommended by the committee in cases where:

- there is still time remaining within the six-semester limit,
- AND the project shows potential for significant scholarly accomplishment,
- BUT the revisions requested by the committee exceed what could be reasonably completed within the one-month period granted a successful defense.

The kind of revisions involved in a post-defense extension may include: expanding the corpus or bibliography; reorganizing chapters or major sections of writing; reconsideration of relevant theories; etc.

Under these circumstances, the candidate must remain enrolled in the program through the summer OR for an additional term, as applicable, in order to complete the required revisions under supervision of the advisor.

At the end of the extension period, a revised draft of the thesis will be distributed to the same committee members, and a new defense will be scheduled in accordance with the deadlines imposed by the academic calendar.

#### 3) Failure

The candidate will fail the defense and be dismissed from the program if, at the time of defense, the thesis project fails to demonstrate scholarly accomplishment or potential for accomplishment in line with the expectations for an M.F.A. degree.

A post-defense report must make clear to the candidate the areas in which the thesis is deficient and why, in the committee's view, these deficiencies are not addressable by revision or re-submission

In all cases except passing without any requested revisions, the advisor shall compile the input of the entire committee and prepare a post-defense report for the candidate that clearly indicates the area(s) in which the committee finds the thesis deficient and, in the case of successful and extended defenses, the report will outline the revisions which are required to bring it up to standard.

#### d. After the defense

After a successful defense—whether on the first attempt or after an extension—the candidate will have **one month** to make adjustments to the thesis as requested by the committee. For a successful defense, these changes will be minor.

After completing these minor corrections, the candidate **MUST** submit a new draft to the advisor, who will approve the changes and submit the files to Turnitin **BEFORE** the candidate can proceed to formatting, printing, and binding the thesis for submission to the Graduate School.

As with the pre-defense draft, **the candidate must provide the final draft in both .docx and .pdf formats, but it is the advisor's responsibility to submit the files to the relevant administrator for the post-defense Turnitin report.** Advisors may contact the Graduate Director for current information about Turnitin requirements.

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the printed thesis follows all formatting rules required by the Graduate School (see ESBE link provided above).

It is also the candidate's responsibility to obtain signatures from each member of the committee after the final draft has been prepared and approved by the advisor. Make sure all names are spelled correctly and all academic titles are accurate **BEFORE** seeking signatures on the approval form. Multiple original copies of this form will be required by ESBE. **Please read all requirements and submission procedures carefully before finalizing your paperwork, and follow ALL formatting requirements in the cover pages of the thesis.**

Candidates are strongly encouraged to obtain the advisor's signature **FIRST** in all paperwork that circulates among the full committee. It is best if signatures can be obtained in person, and by scheduled appointment.

It is also the candidate's responsibility to *allow sufficient time for this revision and approval process* before the Graduate School submission deadlines. Once the final draft is approved by the primary advisor, plan for at least three days to complete the printing and binding.

## CAMPUS AND DEPARTMENT RESOURCES

### **BilWrite**

<http://bilwrite.bilkent.edu.tr/>

BilWrite provides free tutorials to Bilkent students that help improve academic writing at all levels. Check the website for more information and to schedule an appointment.

### **Media Archaeology Lab**

<http://comd.bilkent.edu.tr/facilities/media-archaeology-lab/>

The BITS media archaeology lab offers a unique place for cross-disciplinary experimental, transdisciplinary research in media technology and history. The lab contains an assortment of analog and digital audiovisual tools, software, and platforms, many of which are seemingly “obsolete” or have fallen into disuse.

The lab aims to make these tools and equipment accessible for research and artistic practices and production. While making these tools usable and opening up these technologies, the lab not only expands the established institutional practices of archives and museums, but it also develops “pedagogical ways of appropriating past technologies as epistemological ways of understanding the modern technological culture” (Jussi Parikka).

### **Other Department Facilities**

<http://comd.bilkent.edu.tr/facilities/>

### **Libraries**

<http://library.bilkent.edu.tr/>

Library orientation sessions can be scheduled by request:

<https://library.bilkent.edu.tr/reference-introductory-services/>

The faculty librarian for the Faculty of Art, Design, and Architecture is Semra Kesler:

[usun@bilkent.edu.tr](mailto:usun@bilkent.edu.tr)

Graduate students are invited to recommend materials to purchase for the library’s permanent collection. First, perform a search to make sure the title isn’t already available in the collection. If it isn’t, log in with your Bilkent ID and password, then click the “Send a Request” prompt at the top of the page. Under “Request Type,” in the drop-down menu select “Recommend to Order,” then fill in as much of the information as you can and submit the form.

Orders for new material can take several weeks or months to process. They can be tracked using the My Account feature on the library website.

If you are requesting material needed for an urgent deadline, Interlibrary Loan can usually make books and articles available more quickly, generally within two weeks. However, the loan period is shorter for ILL materials than for those found in the permanent collection.

## APPLYING FOR FURTHER STUDY

If you plan to apply for doctoral programs, make this goal known to your thesis advisor as soon as possible. This may shape your research and writing timeline in significant ways, depending on where you aim to apply and the deadlines they require for your application.

Aim to have at least two chapters of your thesis completed before applying to any PhD program, and be on track to defend your thesis for a spring or VERY EARLY summer graduation (i.e., by late June). This is important, because your letter writers will need to discuss your thesis in detail in order to properly support your application.

Your letter writers should also be able to vouch for your ability to finish the work on time to begin a new program in the fall. In fact, your acceptance may also be conditional, depending on a completed M.F.A. to enroll. Please also note that few doctoral programs offer a winter start with full financial support, so assume that you will start fresh in the fall wherever you go, no matter when you do finally graduate.

Once you have determined where you plan to apply, it will be helpful to provide your letter writers with a single chart containing the following information about each of your applications:

- **Name of institution**

- **Department**

- **Application deadline**

- **Why you are applying to this particular program**

Is it the chance to work with a particular professor? Reputation in a specific subfield? Proximity to relevant archives?

- **Required format for submission of letter**, if you can learn this information (e.g., hard copy or online; letterhead required or optional)

Give your letter writers at least two weeks' notice before the first application is due.

## ACADEMIC WRITING

At the graduate level, it should be assumed that you have already mastered the basics of academic writing in English, e.g.: clear grammar and usage, good and consistent citation practice, essay organization, etc.

Graduate courses are not designed to build these skills from scratch, but rather to reinforce skills already gained before starting the program. If you or your instructors feel that these basic areas fall below the expected standard for graduate study, remedial work on your writing needs to be undertaken individually and under your own initiative.

In addition to the personal services offered through BilWrite, to this end the Bilkent University Library has a number of books offering tutorials on improving academic writing. You are strongly encouraged to peruse this collection, and find the book(s) that will address the particular issues that you face in your writing.

Selected volumes and their call numbers are given below, but other books may present equally useful or more personally relevant information. You are also strongly encouraged to order new materials on academic writing for the library's collection.

### **Academic Writing: Selected Bibliography (available in Bilkent Library)**

Belcher, Wendy Laura. *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009. Z 471.B45 2009

NOTE: Belcher's workbook focuses on completing an article rather than a thesis, but the front matter has some keen insights into the psychology of writing that make it worth a look.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 3rd ed. Chicago, IL: U Chicago P, 2008. Q 180.55.M4 B66 2008

Dunleavy, Patrick. *Authoring a PhD: How to Plan, Draft, Write, and Finish a Doctoral Thesis or Dissertation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003. LB 2369.D85 2003

Evans, David, Paul Gruba and Justin Zobel. *How to Write a Better Thesis*. 3rd ed. Melbourne: Melbourne U P, 2011. LB 2369.E92 2013

Godfrey, Jeanne. *How to Use Your Reading in Your Essays*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009. LB 2369.G58 2009

Goodson, Patricia. *Becoming an Academic Writer: 50 Exercises for Paced, Productive, and Powerful Writing*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2017. PE 1408.G585 2017

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 2017. PE1431.G73 2018 (Reserve collection)

Hayot, Eric. *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities*. New York: Columbia U P, 2014. PE 1404.H3943 2014

Murray, Rowena. *How to Write a Thesis*. 2nd ed. Berkshire: Open U P, 2008. LB 2369.M87 2008



## NOTES

This image shows a full page of handwriting practice paper. It features multiple sets of horizontal dashed lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a guide for letter height and placement. The background is plain white, and there are no margins or additional markings.

BİLKENT UNIVERSITY  
Master of Fine Arts in  
Media and Design

**GRADUATE**  
**HANDBOOK**  
2021-2022

**COMD**  
COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN  
Bilkent University



*The text in this document has been prepared by Asst. Prof. Dr. Colleen Kennedy-Karpas and has been modified for the M.F.A. program by Funda Şenova Tunalı, PhD.*