



Master of Fine Arts, Game Development Final Review Handbook


This handbook contains the Game Development 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 18 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 Development 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.



1. ELIGIBILITY FOR FINAL REVIEW

A. Eligibility

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/aau/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.

2. SCHEDULING YOUR FINAL REVIEW

A. Review Date

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/>.

B. Review Orientation

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.

C. 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.

3. 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.](#)

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.

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](#)

Upload/Deliver To:	Upload to the Portfolio Icon in LMS
Due Date:	Two (2) weeks prior to review date
Format:	PDF

Thesis Book/ Presentation Document: 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.**

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

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

Upload/Deliver To:	Upload to the Thesis Book Icon in LMS
Due Date:	Two (2) weeks prior to review date
Format:	PDF



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](#)

Upload/Deliver To:	At the Final Review
Due Date:	At the scheduled day/time of your review; two (2) 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 Documentation: Throughout all units of Directed Study coursework you will be keeping progress notes for each course through online Thesis Progress Tracking for students presenting Midpoint Review in Spring 2015 or later.

If your approved Midpoint Review presentation was prior to the Spring 2015 semester, your department will accept Directed Studies journals instead of Thesis Tracking online as this feature was not activated for you.

For more information about your departments specific Directed Study documentation requirements, please refer to the Directed Study Guidelines:

http://www.academyart.edu/content/dam/assets/pdf/gradstudents/directed_study_guidelines.pdf

4. FINAL REVIEW PROCESS

A. Review Expectations and Structure

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.

B. Results

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

C. Evaluation Questions

The work you submit will be assessed using the Graduate School of Game Development 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>

D. 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.

5. CHECKLISTS

FINAL PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

Portfolio Contents: 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	Concept Art	Modeling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executable of complete build or movie of run through. • GDD – Game Development Document in MS Word (preferred) or PDF. • .JPGs of level design sketches and paper maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • .JPGs of all presentation work • Load the same content to the portfolio tab on your student Homepage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • .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.

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 of your thesis book must include the following:
	<input type="checkbox"/> Project title
	<input type="checkbox"/> Your Name
	<input type="checkbox"/> Student ID Number
	<input type="checkbox"/> Academy of Art University, Graduate School of Game Development
	<input type="checkbox"/> Final Thesis Project
	<input type="checkbox"/> Date of Presentation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Time of Presentation

Table of Contents:	All Final Reviews must have a table of contents (TOC)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Number each page of the book
	<input type="checkbox"/> List each topic section and its corresponding page number in the TOC
	<input type="checkbox"/> Select an appropriate font
	<input type="checkbox"/> Font size should be no smaller than 10 pt. and easily readable

Autobiography:	For your autobiography, write in a concise and engaging manner. Briefly address the following in no more than one page in length:
	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce yourself
	<input type="checkbox"/> Explain how you developed an interest in Game Design
	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss what led you to enroll at the Academy of Art University
	<input type="checkbox"/> 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.

<input type="checkbox"/> Name	<input type="checkbox"/> Additional contact information
<input type="checkbox"/> Address	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational background
<input type="checkbox"/> Phone number	<input type="checkbox"/> Recent or pertinent employment history
<input type="checkbox"/> E-mail	<input type="checkbox"/> Other relevant interest/vocational information
<input type="checkbox"/> Website (optional)	

Portfolio Samples: The timeline must include the following:

<input type="checkbox"/> Class work/Professional work	<input type="checkbox"/> Reference Materials
<input type="checkbox"/> Storyboard	<input type="checkbox"/> Level Designs
<input type="checkbox"/> Concept Sketches	<input type="checkbox"/> Character Designs
<input type="checkbox"/> Environment and Prop Design	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 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.

<input type="checkbox"/> Area of emphasis	<input type="checkbox"/> Reason for choosing the subject matter
<input type="checkbox"/> Genre	<input type="checkbox"/> Reason for creating the project
<input type="checkbox"/> Subject matter	

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



ORAL PRESENTATION CHECKLIST

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 to insure your comfort level during the presentation. 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 a student's body of work - the Final Thesis Project as proposed by the student at Midpoint Review. Recap your thesis book 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 PDF CHECKLIST

PowerPoint 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 Slide: 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

6. PREPARATION TIMELINE




3 to 4 months before your review	Read Game Development specific Final Review Handbook Watch the Final Review Orientation 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
2 to 3 months before your review	Check graduate website for Final Review sign-up schedule
6 weeks before your review	Prepare your thesis book Work with a proofreader/editor or contact ARC to make sure your thesis book is grammatically correct and typo-free.
1 month before your review	Create your PowerPoint/PDF slide show Organize and create notes for your oral presentation Work with a friend, colleague or ARC on your oral presentation
3 weeks before your review	Practice your oral presentation out loud and with a timer ● Review the online-specific requirements and test all of your equipment
2 weeks before your review	Upload your PDF of your portfolio and thesis book to your home page Upload a link to your Directed Study Journal blog or document to your dashboard On campus students: <input type="checkbox"/> Email the Game Development 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 ● Send your PowerPoint presentation to Online Graduate School via email ● Meet online with your Online Graduate Department Learning Coordinator to review your presentation room setup and use
1 week before your review	Plan your attire, dress professionally Practice your presentation in front of a live audience

Tips for the day of your review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get plenty of rest the night before ● If you will be using a cellphone, make sure the battery is charged Have a glass of water available during your presentation Arrive at your Final Review on time and ready to go Greet your committee members prior to beginning your presentation Listen to the committee’s advice and take notes Maintain professionalism during the entire review
Following your review	View your Final Review results here

7. 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.
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.

8. 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://gradshowcase.academyart.edu/content/dam/Grad%20Showcase/home_page/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: @aachats
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 Final Review Guidelines and Handbooks.
Game Development 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
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_WI15.pdf
Photographing & Submitting Artwork	http://media.academyart.edu/howto/index.html http://howto.academyart.edu/submitting-artwork

9. ONLINE PRESENTATION DETAILS

A. 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).

B. 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



10. CONTACT INFORMATION

Final Review Coordinator: finalreview@academyart.edu
(415) 618-6297

Contact for Online Students: onlinegradreview@academyart.edu
(415) 618-3614

Department Contact(s): Chelsea Hale
Game Development Administrative Assistant
Tel: (415) 618-3756
Email: CHale@academyart.edu

Send Materials To: Academy of Art University

School of Game Development
Final Review

79 New Montgomery
San Francisco, CA 94105

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