MSRA Graduate Student Handbook
Academic Year 2025–2026

Purpose

This handbook provides all deadlines, requirements, and procedures for MSRA students planning to graduate in the 2025–2026 academic year. Students should review this document carefully and follow all steps to ensure a smooth path to graduation.

This handbook is a working draft intended for informational purposes only. The content is subject to change without prior notice and does not constitute a binding contract. The University of Colorado Denver and the College of Arts & Media reserve the right to revise, update, or modify program requirements, policies, and procedures at any time.

Prepared by Program Director: Dr. Cecilia Wu

Edited by: MSRA Faculty and CAM Academic Advisors

Disclaimer: This handbook does not constitute a contract with the University of Colorado Denver's College of Arts & Media, nor does it override Graduate School or University policies. The College reserves the right to change, delete, or add to any provisions at its sole discretion. Students must also follow the policies outlined in the CU Denver Graduate Catalog and Graduate School Policies and Procedures.

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1. Graduation Timeline & Key Deadlines

Non-Thesis Students (Portfolio)

Requirement	Fall 2025	Spring 2026
Submit Application for Graduation via UCDAccess	Sept 3, 2025	Feb 4, 2026
Complete Exit Survey	Dec 12, 2025	May 15, 2026
End of Term	Dec 13, 2025	May 16, 2026
Commencement Ceremony	Dec 13, 2025	May 16, 2026

Thesis Students

Requirement	Fall 2025	Spring 2026
Submit Application for Graduation via UCDAccess	Sept 3, 2025	Feb 4, 2026
Submit Thesis for Format Review to Writing Center: **Thesis Students only**	Oct 31, 2025	Apr 3, 2026
Submit Request for Examination	2 weeks prior; no later than Nov 7, 2025	2 weeks prior; no later than Apr 10, 2026
Prepare Thesis Approval Form & Submit to Chair	Prior to Defense Day	Prior to Defense Day
Defend Thesis	Nov 21, 2025	Apr 24, 2026
Submit the Thesis Approval Form to the Dean	Nov 28, 2025	May 1, 2026
Submit Final Thesis to **ProQuest**	Dec 5, 2025	May 8, 2026
End of Term	Dec 13, 2025	May 16, 2026
Commencement Ceremony	Dec 13, 2025	May 16, 2026

Important Notes:

1. Plan ahead: committees may request revisions after the defense.

2. Missing deadlines postpones graduation; a new graduation application is required.

3. All forms must be typed and electronically signed.

4. Students must be registered in the semester of exams, defenses, or submissions.

5. Theses must comply with the official format guide.

6. Transfer credit requests must be submitted at least one semester before graduation (Master's).

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2. Admissions & Registration

- **Admissions:** MSRA students may apply for Fall admission (check current deadlines on the [MEIS/MSRA website](#)). Deferrals may be requested for up to one year with approval from the Program Director.

- **Registration:** Students must register each semester through **UCDAccess**. Registration deadlines are posted in the Academic Calendar. Students are responsible for enrolling in the correct courses and maintaining continuous enrollment through their final semester.

- **Course Sequence:** MSRA is a cohort program; students are encouraged to follow the recommended course sequence on the updated MSRA Advising Sheet each semester for timely graduation.

- **Withdrawal:** Students who withdraw from the University must follow Graduate School policies for full, partial, or medical withdrawals as posted in the Graduate Catalog.

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3. Advising & Course Selection

- The **Advising Sheet** is updated each semester; required core courses remain the same.

- Schedule advising appointments with **Hansen Millison**: hansen.millison@ucdenver.edu. An appointment is required before you enroll in any courses for the next semester to ensure you are in good standing for timely graduation.

- Students are responsible for consulting with Hansen Millison each semester before enrolling.

- Faculty may provide additional project- or research-specific advising.
- Required core courses cannot be exempted; electives may be chosen based on student interest.

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4. Academic Evaluation Standards

- Students must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0.
- All coursework must be completed with a grade of B- (2.7) or better.
- A grade of "C+" or lower will not count toward degree progress.
- Students falling below the GPA standard may be placed on probation or dismissed from the program.
- **MSRA 5000 and MSRA 5001 must be completed (with a passing grade of B- or higher) during the first academic year of study. Students who do not pass these courses will not be permitted to continue in the program or enroll in subsequent academic years.**
- Students who complete the defense but do not pass will receive a grade of Incomplete (I).
- Students who do not complete the defense process will receive a grade of Fail (F) for the 1-credit thesis course.

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5. Incomplete Grade Policy

- An **Incomplete (I)** may be assigned only for reasons beyond a student's control and if substantial work has already been completed.
- Incomplete grades must be resolved within one year; otherwise, the grade automatically converts to "F."
- Instructors, in consultation with the Program Director, set conditions and timelines for completion.

- For 4+1 students, carrying an Incomplete will jeopardize the timely completion of their undergraduate degree requirements and will prevent continuation into the second year of the 4+1 program.

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6. Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory Policy

- MSRA students are not permitted to take required courses for Pass/Fail or S/U grading.
- Only approved electives outside MSRA may be taken Pass/Fail with prior advisor approval; however, they do not count toward degree requirements.

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7. Choosing Between Thesis & Portfolio (Non-Thesis Project)

1. Thesis Option

- Conduct scholarly research under a thesis advisor.
- Produce a written thesis with a **presentation and oral defense**.
- Must follow formatting requirements and be **published online via ProQuest**.

2. Portfolio (Non-Thesis Project) Option

- Develop a professional portfolio under a portfolio advisor.
- Include documentation, audio, multimedia, or technical files reflecting career goals.
- May include a professional **"Show Kit"** or demo.
- Evaluated via **written, audio/multimedia files, and oral defense**.
- Format varies in consultation with their thesis committee chair and committee members.
- Portfolio is **not published online**.

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8. Forming Your Thesis/Portfolio Committee

- Committee roles are **volunteer**; members may decline.
- The chair may withdraw if the other two members cannot commit.

Committee Composition (3 members minimum):

1. **Committee Chair** – Tenured or tenure-track RA faculty (eligible: Sam McGuire, Lorne Bregitzer, Cecilia Wu, Mark Rabideau).
2. **Second Member** – CU Denver faculty (any department; adjuncts cannot serve).
3. **Third Member** – Industry expert or faculty from CU Denver or another university (adjunct faculty allowed here).

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9. Enrolling in MSRA 6950/6951 (Thesis/Portfolio Course)

Step 1: Select Committee Chair

- Choose a faculty member whose expertise aligns with your project.

Step 2: Complete Required Forms

- Independent Study Request Form
- Special Processing Form (Fillable)
  ⚠️ Forms may appear dated, but are valid.

Step 3: Obtain Signatures & Submit

- Signatures required: Committee Chair + Department Chair Evan Shelton
- Submit completed forms to:
  - fennec.reedy@ucdenver.edu
  - CC: hansen.millison@ucdenver.edu, cecilia.wu@ucdenver.edu

Notes:

- These forms are specific to **6000-level thesis/portfolio enrollment**.
- Independent study registration follows a similar form and signature process.

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10. Working with Your Committee

Responsibilities:

- Regularly update the chair and all advisors on progress.
- Submit a **complete draft at least 2 weeks before** the defense.
- Incorporate feedback to ensure readiness for defense.

Key Reminders:

1. The Program Director does **not necessarily** serve as a student's thesis/portfolio advisor. The student must invite a qualified faculty member to serve on this role.
2. The Committee Chair has **final approval authority**.
3. The other two members provide valuable feedback.
4. Academic freedom is respected; each defense is evaluated case-by-case basis.

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11. Thesis & Portfolio Deliverables

Feature	Thesis	Portfolio
Length	80+ pages	30+ pages
Sections	Abstract, Intro, Research Method, Analysis/Discussion, Conclusion, Future Work, References	Abstract, Intro, Creative Method, Discussion/Conclusion, Future Work, References
Format	Required template & guide	Required template & guide

Feature	Thesis	Portfolio
Submission	ProQuest	Not submitted online
Evaluation	Written + oral defense	Written/audio/multimedia + oral defense
Use of MSRA 5000 Final Project	Encouraged as a draft	Encouraged as a draft
Examples	[Recording Arts Thesis] [Interdisciplinary Thesis] [Music Tech Thesis]	[Recording Arts Portfolio] [Music Tech Portfolio]

12. MSRA Completion Forms

Part 1: Required Forms

1. **Graduation Audit** – Hansen Millison (hansen.millison@ucdenver.edu)
2. **Course Registration** – SpecialProcessingForm_Fillable.pdf
3. **Apply for Graduation** – UCDAccess portal
4. **Thesis Formatting & Submission (Thesis Only)** – format-guide.pdf, submit to ProQuest
5. **Defense & Approval** – thesis-approval.pdf, signed by all committee members, submitted to Program Director

Part 2: Workflow

1. Email Program Director **Cecilia Wu** (cc Hansen Millison) with the Student ID for credit check.
2. Obtain committee signatures on all forms.
3. The Program Director signs last.
4. The Program Director submits forms to MEIS/CAM for processing.
5. Graduate School provides the final signature.

6. Check the **MSRA course modules** for form-specific deadlines.

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13. Thesis/Portfolio Formatting & Template

- **Formatting Guide:** format-guide-1.pdf
- **Template:** thesis_dissertation-template.docx

Notes:

- Thesis students must follow the template, submit to ProQuest, and pass the format check.

- Final submission for Thesis ONLY is reviewed by **Drew Bixby for formatting**, Assistant Director of the Writing Center (drew.bixby@ucdenver.edu).

- Portfolio students: follow the template, but **no ProQuest submission or format check**.

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14. Defense Preparation Checklist

1. **Schedule Early** – Contact all committee members **≥1 month before defense**.
2. **Prepare Presentation** – 40–45 minutes covering Abstract, Methods, Results, Conclusion.
3. **Submit Drafts** – Complete draft **≥2 weeks before defense**; include multimedia if applicable.
4. **Rehearse** – Arrange a defense rehearsal with your chair before your defense. Anticipate questions, check timing, and review committee feedback.
5. **During Defense** – Present work, leave 15 min for committee discussion, take notes on revisions.
6. **Post-Defense** – Outcome: Pass / Pass with Conditions / Fail; submit required forms.
7. **Final Submission** – Thesis: ProQuest; Portfolio: finalize all documentation and media.

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15. Thesis Defense Format and Expectations

To ensure clarity and consistency across defenses, MSRA students should expect the following process during their thesis defense:

1. Presentation by the Student (30-40 minutes)

- Provide an overview of your research premise.
- Explain how you conducted your research, including methods and rationale.
- Present your findings, highlighting key results and implications.
- Use sides and/or audio/visuals to demonstrate the above

2. Committee Questions and Dialogue (15-20 minutes)
Each committee member will ask one or two questions designed to engage you critically with your work. These may include:

- Why did you ask the research questions you chose, and what questions were left unasked?
- What approaches did you take in your research, and why were these the most appropriate?
- Where might you take this research next (future directions, further studies)?
- What opportunities exist for publication, presentation, or industry application of your work?

3. Committee Deliberation

- At the conclusion of questioning, you will be asked to step out while the committee discusses your defense.
- The committee will then invite you back to share its decision (Pass, Pass with Conditions, or Fail).

4. Final Steps

- Complete the top and bottom sections of the "*Thesis Approval Form* (excluding signatures) and send it to your Chair in advance of the defense.
- After your defense, ensure all revisions are made and your final thesis/portfolio is submitted according to Graduate School deadlines.

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16. Email Policy

- Email is the **official means of communication** for CU Denver.

- Students are required to activate and regularly check their CU Denver email account.
- The University and Program will only use official email addresses; forwarding does not exempt students from missed communications.

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17. Facilities and Access

- MSRA students have access to MEIS recording studios, labs, and equipment as part of their coursework.
- Facilities must be used **only for instructional and research purposes**. Personal or commercial use is not permitted.
- Students are responsible for following posted lab policies and may not grant access to non-MEIS guests.
- CU Denver and CAM are not liable for damage, loss, or theft of personal property left in studios or labs.

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18. Student Conduct, Policies, and Standards

- MSRA students are bound by CU Denver's **Student Code of Conduct** and **Academic Integrity Policy**.
- Violations include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, fabrication of data, unauthorized collaboration, harassment, and misuse of university resources.
- Faculty may establish additional professional conduct expectations in course syllabi.
- Students must uphold the highest standards of professional, ethical, and academic behavior at all times

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19. Graduation Certification

- Students must apply for graduation via UCDAccess by the published deadline.
- Official graduation occurs only after a final degree audit, typically **six weeks after the end of the term**.
- Students not certified must reapply if they wish to return to CU Denver for additional study.

Conclusion

This handbook serves as the definitive guide for MSRA students. Students must follow all procedures, meet deadlines, and maintain professional communication with faculty, advisors, and committee members. Adhering to these guidelines ensures academic rigor, timely completion of the program, and preparation for professional and scholarly success.

The College of Arts and Media and the MSRA Program thank you for your diligence and commitment to excellence.

MSRA Graduate Student Handbook
Student Acknowledgment & Release of Liability

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received, carefully read, and fully understood the MSRA Graduate Student Handbook (Academic Year 2025–2026). I agree to comply with all deadlines, requirements, policies, and procedures contained herein, as well as all University and Graduate School policies.

I further understand, acknowledge, and agree that:

1. Participation in the MSRA Program, including all classes, studios, labs, facilities, field trips, events, and related activities, is voluntary and may involve risks, including but not limited to personal injury, property loss, theft, or damage. I voluntarily assume all such risks.

2. The University of Colorado Denver, College of Arts & Media, the MSRA Program, and their officers, employees, and agents shall not be liable for any claims, damages, or losses arising from my participation in the program, whether caused by negligence or otherwise.

3. I release, waive, and hold harmless the University, College, and Program from any claims or causes of action that may arise from my participation in the MSRA Program.

4. The University reserves the right to modify policies, procedures, or program requirements at any time.

5. Failure to adhere to program or University policies may result in academic probation, dismissal, or delayed graduation.

I acknowledge that I have read this document carefully, understand its contents, and sign it voluntarily, fully aware of its legal effect.

Student Information

Name (print): _____

Student ID Number: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____