

Game Design, M.A.

Degree Offered

- Master of Arts

Nature of the Program

The MA in Game Design blends creativity, technology, and strategy to prepare students for the dynamic gaming industry. Designed for aspiring game designers, developers, and storytellers, this program provides hands-on experience in game design, game theory, interface design, user experience (UX), and usability testing.

This 30-credit-hour program is ideal for emerging game designers looking to expand their conceptual, production, and project management skills while advancing their professional credentials. The curriculum is fully online and asynchronous, allowing students to participate from anywhere in the world. It culminates in a capstone project that challenges students to design and develop a functional, playable game prototype, demonstrating their ability to bring a game concept to life.

With selective enrollment, students benefit from individualized mentorship with a dedicated and diverse faculty who are industry experts and committed to ongoing professional engagement. Throughout the program, students will develop and communicate a deep understanding of historical, cultural, contemporary, and aesthetic issues within the game industry. They will also be expected to articulate and defend their capstone project proposal and final prototype within the context of the evolving game design landscape.

Program Format

The academic calendar for this online and asynchronous program comprises four accelerated terms, aligned with the University's established parts of term: Early Fall (August–October), Late Fall (October–December), Early Spring (January–March), and Late Spring (March–May).

Admissions for 2026-2027

The program accepts applications for both the spring and fall semesters. There is a two-step process for graduate applications.

Step 1: Apply (<http://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/>) to West Virginia University Graduate School online. This application will require you to upload your transcripts, resume, letter of intent, three letters of recommendation and pay an application fee. Applicants must have had a minimum undergraduate grade point average of 2.75 to be considered for admission.

Step 2: Submit your portfolio (<https://wvuart.slideroom.com/>) to the WVU School of Art & Design.

Submit the following material for the degree you are interested in:

MA in Game Design: Portfolio: Up to 5 representative samples of your work with a total viewing duration of no longer than 60 minutes, including interactive projects, game prototypes, game components, graphic imagery, virtual environments, virtual character studies, photographs, or video documentation of the same. WVU School of Art & Design faculty will review portfolios and make recommendations for program acceptance.

Applicants may be required to take additional course work after careful review of undergraduate transcripts.

In addition to the application materials listed, transfer students must transfer graduate work completed elsewhere. Transcripts must accompany the written request. The acceptance of transfer credit is not automatic. The graduate faculty, the graduate advisor, and the School Director will determine how much, if any, previous graduate-level work may be transferred. The maximum allowable number of graduate transfer credits toward the degree is nine. All transfer credits must be in place by the end of the first semester.

Major Code: 3730

Degree Requirements

Code	Title	Hours
ART 502S	Game Design	3
ART 503	Game Theory	3
ART 505S	Game Production	3
ART 603S	Thesis: Concept & Research	3
ART 604S	Thesis: Design & Project Plan	3
ART 606S	Thesis: Project Launch	3
ART 607S	Thesis: Production	6
Select six hours from the following:		6

ART 608	Game Design Residency
ART 507	Focus Module
Electives	
Total Hours	30

Suggested Plan of Study

First Semester	Hours
ART 608	1
	1
Second Semester	Hours
ART 502S	3
ART 503	3
ART 507	1
	7
Third Semester	Hours
ART 505S	3
ART 603S	3
ART 507	1
	7
Fourth Semester	Hours
ART 608	1
	1
Fifth Semester	Hours
ART 604S	3
ART 606S	3
ART 507	1
	7
Sixth Semester	Hours
ART 607S	6
	6
Seventh Semester	Hours
ART 608	1
	1

Total credit hours: 30

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The first semester in this program is a summer term.

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An accelerated track is also available. Candidates may consult their faculty advisor to learn more details.

Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's BA in Game Design and Interactive Media and MA in Game Design

Students must fulfill all degree requirements for the B.A. in Game Design and Interactive Media and all the requirements for the M.A. in Game Design. Students must also meet all the requirements of the A.B.M. in Game Design.

ABM Requirements

Code	Title	Hours
Undergraduate Coursework		111
Shared B.A. / M.A. Coursework		9
Graduate Coursework		21
Total Hours		141

Shared Bachelor's/Master's Curriculum Requirements

Code	Title	Hours
A minimum grade of C- or better is required in all major coursework.		
ART 502S	Game Design	3
ART 503	Game Theory	3
ART 505S	Game Production	3
Total Hours		9

Suggest Plan of Study

First Year

Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours
ART 191		2 MDIA 215S	3
ART 121S		3 ART 122S	3
MDIA 101 (GEF 4)		3 ARHS 160 (GEF 6)	3
ENGL 101 (GEF 1)		3 GEF 2	4
ARHS 120 (GEF 6)		3 Elective or Minor course	3
		14	16

Second Year

Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours
ART 287		3 ART 270S	3
ART 272S		3 ART 286S	3
ART 285S		3 ENGL 102 (GEF 1)	3
GEF 3		3 Elective or Minor course	3
Elective or Minor course		3 Elective or Minor course	3
		15	15

Third Year

Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours
ART 273S		3 MDIA 328	3
ART 372S		3 ART 486S	3
ART 386S		3 GEF 7	3
GEF 5		3 ART or ARHS or MDIA or JRL elective at 200 level or above	3
Elective or Minor course		3 ART 503	3
		15	15

Fourth Year

Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours
ART 487S (or General Elective)		3 ART 387	3
ART 502S		3 ART 472S	3
Elective or Minor course		3 ART 505S	3
GEF 8		3 GEF 8	3
ART or ARHS or MDIA or JRL elective at 200 level or above		3 Elective or Minor course	3
		15	15

Fifth Year

Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours
ART 507, ART 608, or Electives		6 ART 606S	3
ART 603S		3 ART 607S	6
ART 604S		3	
		12	9

Total credit hours: 141

Major Learning Outcomes

GAME DESIGN

1. Graduates of this program will be able to analyze the structure of a game to address theory, narrative, character, environment, and sound elements.
2. Graduates of this program will be able to produce functional game prototypes based on theoretical insight, factual observation, iterative processes, and a game design document.
3. Graduates of this program will be able to develop executive leadership, project management, and team management abilities to organize and manage a production pipeline in a remote team-based environment.
4. Graduates of this program will develop competence in usability testing for game quality control.