



Visual Communication Design Research Methods

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Research Skills

Visual Communication Design Research Methods

Learning outcomes

Students will

- know different art and design research methods
- improve skills in research thinking
- improve skills in formulating research questions
- learn to narrow down the information needed for their Master's thesis
- learn to analyze information conceptually
- learn to search for and use needed information

This module

- provides an introduction to design research
- discusses different types of research methodologies commonly used in design research
 - qualitative, quantitative, visual and applied methodologies
- with particular emphasis on those methods used in visual communication design research

Workload and credits

- 2 credits for taking this module
 - attend lectures
 - prepare a research plan
- 1 credit for taking the book exam
- 1 credit for taking the advanced information retrieval course

Lectures

- include group discussions and individual exercises on
 - defining research questions
 - identifying suitable methods to address those questions, in the context of MA theses
- active participation is therefore required

Research plan

You are expected to develop and present a research plan

- identify a **research topic**
 - may or may not be your final MA thesis topic
- write a brief **literature review** based on 2-3 articles
- write a **research statement**
- formulate 1-2 main **research questions**
- propose a **research approach**
 - identify suitable **research methodology and methods**

Book exam

- Gjoko Muratovski (2016), **Research for Designers: A Guide to Methods and Practice**
- Gillian Rose (2016, 4th Edition), **Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials**
- Please register online for the book exam
 - 19 Jan, 23 Feb, 16 Mar, 13 Apr, 11 May, 15 Jun

Advanced information retrieval

Please register online for it separately

- next one is on 4-5 March
- registration is open now



Master's Thesis Guide

into.aalto.fi/display/envcdm/Completing+your+master%27s+thesis

Aims of the MA thesis

- demonstrate **command** of the field of the master's programme and ability to **apply the knowledge and skills acquired** in the programme independently
- demonstrate ability for **research-oriented work** on an artistic, theoretical or applied research topic
- demonstrate ability to use **data and source material** for research purposes
- demonstrate good **communication skills** for work in the field of study

Types of MA thesis

- the thesis may be
 - a piece of theoretical, artistic or applied research
 - a work of art
 - a combination of these
- it may also include a **production component**
- the production component may be depending on the field, for instance, a **design**, a work of art, an exhibition, or project

Written component

- theses **always** include a written component
- if the thesis consists of a design or other production component and a written component, the student must **specify the emphasis to be given to the different components** in the evaluation
- the thesis is always **evaluated as a whole**, with all the components of the thesis included in the evaluation
- the written component should be 25–70 pages

Thesis plan

- the thesis process begins with **choosing a topic** and defining the scope or **research questions** of the thesis
 - a topic related to the programme and/or major
- students **write a thesis plan** on the thesis
 - either independently or in the thesis seminar
- thesis plan serve as a **mental organisation tool**
 - helping both the student and the thesis advisor(s) grasping the thesis process

Thesis plan

- topic and tentative title of the thesis
- student name, programme and major
- thesis supervisor and thesis advisor(s)
- extent of thesis
- goals set for the research of the thesis
- description of the artistic component
 - if the thesis is an artistic work
- definition of the thesis scope
- **methodological choices**
 - meaning a tentative plan on the ways of seeking solutions to the research questions or a description of the starting points and goals of artistic work
- language of the thesis
- planned timetable for thesis completion
- financing plan if required by the topic of the thesis

Thesis supervision

- the **thesis supervisor** and **thesis advisor** support the student in the thesis process
- the **thesis supervisor** is responsible for ensuring that
 - thesis topic is related to the programme and feasible to be covered within the scope of a master's thesis
 - student finds a thesis advisor
 - student is given sufficient supervision and guidance
- the **thesis advisor** supports the student in different stages of the thesis process

Thesis plan approval

- the **thesis topic** needs to be approved after the thesis plan is complete
 - the supervisor approves the topic and the thesis plan
 - the supervisor appoints a thesis advisor or advisors
 - the supervisor determines the period of validity of the topic
 - the deadline for thesis submission
- the topic of a thesis not submitted for examination by the deadline expires
 - need to re-apply for the topic to continue working on it
 - need a new agreement on thesis advising

Master's theses archive

aaltodoc.aalto.fi/handle/123456789/23



Aalto University
School of Arts, Design
and Architecture