Graduate FAQ

Q: What is a Portfolio?

A: A portfolio is a sample of your previous work that may be given as part of your application to the Game Design and Development MS degree program. Portfolios may include (but are certainly not limited to) the following types of articles:

- Small games or programming exercises from undergraduate work
  - Simple game engines
  - Game artificial intelligence
  - Level or map systems
  - Computer graphics
  - Usage of current APIs
- Level designs
- Character designs
- Work in user-interface or control systems for games / entertainment
- Game "mods" for existing titles, constructed using scripting languages
- Game development narratives
- Audio treatments (music, audio effects, etc.)
- Internal and external documentation samples
- 2D or 3D game art / models / etc.
- Group work at the undergraduate level

The primary focus of the portfolio review is to ensure that students have appropriate background preparation for the Game Design and Development degree. The portfolio process is also designed to provide baseline samples of core concepts such as object-oriented programming, computer literacy, and other desired skills. All entering students are expected to exhibit these skills and **all portfolios are expected to contain source code** in order to demonstrate proficiency in software development.

Q: What is involved in submitting a Portfolio?

A: A portfolio submission can be very simple. Most individuals choose to put their portfolio materials on a website or dropbox along with a description of the materials and then they just submit the website or dropbox link to us. This is the preferred submission method. Some individuals choose to send us a cd or dvd with the materials. If portfolio items are done as part of a group (like a group project), then please make sure to include the role in design/development of the person applying for admission.

Q: What is the timing of Admissions Procedures?

A: A faculty committee is constituted in February in order to review applications. In contrast to some other degrees within GCCIS, there will be ONE entry point into the program, in the fall

semester. Students may submit an application at any time, but these will be held in a queue. Applications are reviewed as they come in and priority for financial aid is given to those applications submitted before March 31st. Each entering class is estimated at 30 students. Students should submit a paid deposit in order to hold an acceptance slot.

Q: If I'm a current RIT student, do I have to pay the application fee?

A: Application fees for existing RIT students applying to the MS degree program are waived.

Q: If a student takes the 'undergraduate version' of a course, what happens at the graduate level?

A: This is an issue that will need to be addressed on a course-by-course basis.

In any case, where a course is waived at the graduate level, a suitable replacement course would need to be found, with the consent of the graduate director.

Q: May I obtain transfer credit?

A: Standard rules for transfer credit, as they relate to RIT graduate programs, apply here. These credits may count towards the completion of the degree, as deemed appropriate by the admissions committee. These credits cannot then count towards any other graduate degree. In cases where transfer credit allows a student to fall below the full-time enrollment requirements, students will have the option of filing for equivalency for the given semester or taking an elective course in another area.

Q: Do graduate students do co-ops?

A: Yes, a student may choose to co-op. If a student chooses to do a co-op during their degree, because of the cohort nature of the program, the student really only has two options for a co-op experience: either the nature of their work experience could be completed in the summer between the first and second year, or the student could work an entire year, skipping a year between their first and second academic experiences. Such a scenario would mean that a student would enter with one cohort and finish with another, but would be "on track" for both the seminar sequences and capstone experience with respect to scheduling and enrollment.

Q: What are the differences between another MS degree and the MS-GDD Degrees?

A: Most MS degrees are more specialized than their BS counterparts. This is true of the MS in GDD. While students need background competency in programming and web and interactive media development, this degree program is specifically tailored for individuals who aspire to

work in the commercial games industry or a closely related field such as computer simulation, edutainment, or serious games. This is not a general computing MS degree.

Q: How long does it take to complete the MS-GDD degree?

A: MS-GDD is a two-year, full-time, Master of Science program that is designed to build solid technical depth along with the professional competencies necessary for successful employment in the commercial games industry or a closely related field.

Q: Can't I just join the MS-IT or MS-CS program and take all of the games courses?

A: No. Courses in the MS-GDD are only available to other department's MS students on a case-by-case basis with instructor approval. Even when a student petitions the instructor and enrolls in an MS GDD course, this is not the same experience as being enrolled in the MS-GDD degree. Instead of a customized course or concentration, MS-GDD students take many MS GDD courses and have a cohorted capstone experience at the end of the degree.

Q: Some universities have tracks, why don't you?

A: When we switched from quarters to semesters at RIT, the faculty chose to remove tracks from the degree program. We found that no two students have exactly the same goals and that design and development commonly overlap. Thus, we do not offer the experience where students only take design or development courses. We give students the flexibility to determine what goals they want to achieve with their own coursework in terms of 5 electives in the field.

Q: What is special about the capstone experience of an MS-GDD student?

A: A MS capstone is the culminating creative experience for masters-level graduate study. The MS-GDD has a decidedly different capstone experience from a normal individual thesis or project that is expected in most computing MS degree programs. It is an intensive six-credit project implemented as a two-course sequence in the second year of study focusing on first the design, and then the development of a complete game implementation. These courses are designed for team work that reflects the game industry software production experience. Students develop capstone ideas that include both individual and team goals and responsibilities. These ideas are then reviewed and approved by the MS-GDD faculty. The MS-GDD faculty evaluate capstone projects in the spring term of the second year of study. Successful students then defend their work by participating in a public showing before members of the academic community and invited guests from the game and entertainment industries. An optional backup showing can be scheduled for the subsequent term if necessary.