

# Master of Arts Program in Digital Studies of Language, Culture, and History

## Student Manual 2024–2025

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## Program Overview

The Master of Arts Program in Digital Studies of Language, Culture, and History (abbreviated as the “Digital Studies M.A.” or just “DIGS”) is housed within the [Forum for Digital Culture](#), the University of Chicago’s center for digital arts and humanities. Click [here](#) for information about the teaching staff of the Forum for Digital Culture and its faculty advisory board.

There is a one-year version of the Digital Studies M.A. with no thesis and a two-year specialized M.A. with a thesis requirement. Detailed information about these two versions of the Digital Studies M.A. and the various DIGS course offerings can be found [here](#).

Students admitted to the one-year M.A. cannot transfer to the two-year M.A. However, students admitted to the two-year M.A. may transfer to the one-year M.A. Students in the two-year M.A. must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.3 (B+) or higher. If they fail to do so, they will be transferred to the one-year M.A. and will not be allowed to continue for a second year.

### Course Load

The Digital Studies M.A. requires 9 courses per year, i.e., 3 courses per quarter in the Autumn, Winter, and Spring quarters (for the dates of each quarter, see the [academic calendar](#) of the University of Chicago). Each academic quarter entails 9 weeks of classes plus an examination week. This course load will require full-time effort from the student.

The standard tuition fee covers 3 courses per quarter. Taking any additional courses for credit will result in an additional tuition fee, even if these courses are graded pass/fail. Instead of taking a fourth course in a given quarter, students should consider using their electives to pursue their individual interests.

Students in both the one-year and two-year versions of the Digital Studies M.A. program are required to take the same [6 DIGS core courses](#) (3 in Autumn, 2 in Winter, and 1 in Spring). Students doing a two-year specialized M.A. are also required to take a three-week [summer tutorial on machine learning](#) in the Summer Session after their first year in the program. This non-credit tutorial does not entail an additional fee.

### Required Core Courses

#### *Autumn Quarter*

- **DIGS 30001**, Introduction to Computer Programming Using Python
- **DIGS 30002**, Introduction to Statistics Using Python
- **DIGS 30003**, Data Management for the Humanities

#### *Winter Quarter*

- **DIGS 30004**, Data Visualization for the Humanities
- **DIGS 30007**, History and Theory of Computing for the Humanities
- One approved elective course

#### *Spring Quarter*

- **DIGS 30005**, Data Publication for the Humanities
- Two approved elective courses

## Graduation and Convocation

Please see the [registrar's website](#) for the degree application deadline and the date of the annual [Spring convocation](#). Students planning to graduate in the Spring convocation must apply for the degree by the Friday of the first week of the Spring Quarter.

## Academic Policies

### Class Attendance

Digital Studies M.A. students are required to attend all class sessions of their courses in person, except in the case of illness, in which case the instructor must be informed in writing of the reason for the absence. Habitual unexcused absences will be penalized by reducing the final course grade and may result in academic probation (see below).

### Electives and Auditing

Students must obtain approval for their [elective courses](#) from the Associate Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Students may not audit any course. Each course must be taken for credit, regardless of whether it is a required core course or an elective course. In addition, all Digital Studies courses with a "DIGS" course code must be taken for quality grades and may not be taken pass/fail.

### Course Grades and Good Academic Standing

To remain in good academic standing, students must obtain a grade of C (2.0) or higher in each of the [DIGS core courses](#) and must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.7 or higher, if they are doing the one-year M.A., or a cumulative GPA of 3.3 or higher, if they are doing the two year M.A. If they fail to meet these requirements, they will be placed on academic probation (see below).

Students in the two-year M.A. whose cumulative GPA is less than 3.3 at the end of the Winter Quarter of their first year will be transferred to the one-year M.A. and will not be allowed to continue for a second year. If transferred to the one-year M.A., they must have a cumulative GPA of 2.7 in order to graduate. If permitted to continue for a second year, they must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.3 to remain in good academic standing.

In addition, remaining in good academic standing entails completing all coursework before the grading deadline each quarter. In each academic quarter, the DIGS core courses have as prerequisites the successful completion of courses taken in previous quarters, i.e., the courses build upon one another in a sequence. For this reason, incomplete coursework will result in academic probation (see below). DIGS courses may not be taken pass/fail but must be taken for a quality (letter) grade.

Elective courses offered by other departments that do not have a DIGS course code may have different requirements concerning incomplete courses and pass/fail grades. Please note, however, that M.A. students are not allowed to audit any course, as a matter of divisional policy, but must take each course for credit.

## Academic Probation

Before the start of each quarter, the Associate Director of Curriculum and Instruction will check whether students are in good academic standing. Any one-year M.A. student who has a cumulative GPA below 2.7, any two-year M.A. student who has a cumulative GPA below 3.3, and any student in either track who has failed to obtain a grade of C (2.0) or higher in a DIGS core course or has an incomplete course will be placed on academic probation and will be notified of this by email with a timeline and instructions on how to return to good academic standing. The only exception will be in the case that an instructor has not submitted a grade for work that the student has completed and submitted on time. Students may also be placed on academic probation if they have frequent unexcused absences in one or more of their DIGS courses.

In the first week of the quarter, students on academic probation will be required to meet with the Faculty Director of the Forum for Digital Culture to discuss what they must do to return to good academic standing. If these conditions are subsequently not met, the Faculty Director will recommend to the Dean of Students that the student be administratively withdrawn from the M.A. program.

*Example 1:* In the Autumn Quarter, Krystle passes her courses and maintains a GPA higher than 2.7 but in the Winter Quarter she obtains a grade lower than C in the required core course DIGS 30004. Krystle is placed on academic probation.

*Example 2:* In December, Helen misses the final exam for one of her Autumn Quarter courses. The instructor does not assign a grade. Although Helen has already arranged with the instructor to make up the exam, she is placed on academic probation in January. The Faculty Director determines that she must make up the exam by the second week of the Winter Quarter. Helen completes the exam in time and receives a final grade of B+ for the course, and thus returns to good standing.

*Example 3:* In the Winter Quarter, Richard does not complete DIGS 30007. He is placed on academic probation and must complete the work for DIGS 30007 by the end of the third week of the Spring Quarter. Richard fails to complete the work before the deadline and is withdrawn from the program. Richard may later petition the Dean of Students and the Faculty Director for reinstatement (see below).

*Example 4:* After successful completion of the Autumn Quarter courses, Mark begins the Winter Quarter. After two weeks he stops attending classes and does not respond to emails. Because he has not requested a leave of absence, he is placed on academic probation in Week 4 of the Winter Quarter. He will need to begin attending his courses immediately and make up the work he missed in order to return to good academic standing.

## Leaves of Absence and Reduced Course Loads

Students who are struggling academically or encounter an emergency may need to take extended time away from their program of study. In such cases, they will discuss it with the Dean of Students of the Division of the Humanities and the Faculty Director of the Forum for Digital Culture and will adhere to the relevant policies of the Division of the Humanities and the University of Chicago.

Please click here for the [leave policy of the Division of the Humanities](#). In addition to maintaining contact with the Dean of Students when returning from a leave, students returning from leave must contact the Faculty Director and develop a plan to satisfy all degree requirements.

Please note that international students must also meet registration requirements to maintain their visa eligibility. International students must contact the Office of International Affairs and the Dean of Students to receive information regarding leave of absences, reduced course loads, and updated visa documents before dropping below full-time registration.

Students can also seek out accommodations via the Student Disability Services Office. Please find information about registering with that office [here](#).

*Example 5:* While biking one day in January, Magda has a bad fall. She needs several surgeries, followed by physical therapy, and so cannot complete her courses. She applies for a medical leave of absence for two quarters. Following the leave, she returns from the leave of absence and enrolls in coursework to complete her degree.

*Example 6:* After not feeling well, Sarah informs her instructor that she will miss one week of classes. Later she requests to attend class remotely. The instructor declines and reminds her that all academic accommodations must be approved by Student Disability Services.

### Withdrawal and Reinstatement

Students may [elect to withdraw](#) from the University or may be administratively withdrawn. Failure to satisfy the terms of academic probation will result in a recommendation to the Dean of Students that the student be administratively withdrawn from the Digital Studies M.A. program. After withdrawing or being withdrawn, a student who wishes to return and complete the program [must petition the Dean of Students and the Faculty Director](#) to be reinstated. The Dean of Students and Faculty Director may approve or deny such petitions at their discretion. If the petition is approved, the student must pay a reinstatement fee of \$250, and the resumption of financial support is not guaranteed. Petitions for reinstatement will not be considered beyond three years after a student's withdrawal.

Further details concerning withdrawal from the University of Chicago may be found [here](#).

*Example 7:* Two years after being administratively withdrawn, Richard (see above) petitions the Dean of Students and Faculty Director for reinstatement. He is permitted to return to the program and resumes coursework.

### Academic Honesty

The University of Chicago has adopted the following [statement on academic honesty](#):

It is contrary to justice, academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another's statements or ideas as one's own work. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University's disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously.

Proper acknowledgment of another's ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is expected. In particular, if any written or electronic source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source should be identified by author, title, and page number, or by website and date accessed. Any doubts about what constitutes "use" should be addressed to the instructor.

Plagiarism or other forms of cheating, including the unauthorized use of ChatGPT and similar generative AI tools to complete assignments, may result in a grade of "F" for the course and may also result in additional disciplinary measures at the discretion of the instructor and/or the Dean of Students, up to and including expulsion from the University.

## Resources for Students

### Navigating UChicago

#### Humanities Dean of Students

The [Humanities Dean of Students](#) can assist students with academic records, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, tax forms and proof of enrollment, grievance procedures, and leaves of absence or withdrawal. Incoming students are welcome to reach out to the Dean of Students with questions ([humdos@uchicago.edu](mailto:humdos@uchicago.edu)).

#### UChicagoGRAD

[UChicagoGRAD](#) offers a range of services and resources to enhance the experience of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars and help them navigate their careers at UChicago and beyond. Their staff provides academic and career support through individual consultation, professional development workshops, and programming that supports students as they explore careers in the academy and industry. UChicagoGRAD also refers students to or maintains a variety of resources on [life beyond the classroom](#).

#### Office of International Affairs

The [Office of International Affairs](#) (OIA) can help students acquire visas or maintain their immigration status. For newly admitted students and current students, OIA staff provide advising about acquiring and maintaining an F-1 or J-1 visa, including Optional Practical Training (OPT) authorization. Every admitted international student is assigned an OIA advisor. The OIA also maintains current travel information.

#### Student Health and Wellness

[Student Health Services](#) is available for primary or routine medical care as well as acute treatment. Their office is at the 840 East 59th Street and is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. You can also reach them via phone during normal business hours at 773-834-WELL.

[Student Counseling Services](#) provides mental health services as well as referrals for students requiring services from other mental health professionals near the University. Their services are covered by the student service fee with no additional cost. Their office is at 840 East 59th

Street and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. You can reach them via phone during their business hours at 773-834-WELL.

All graduate students must be enrolled in a health insurance plan. Many students opt for the University Student Health Insurance Plan (U-SHIP). The only way to opt out of U-SHIP is to be enrolled in a comparable health insurance plan. Students can go on the Web to [enroll in or waive U-SHIP requirements](#) starting in August.

All graduate students are required to submit immunization records. If you do not submit your records or get the necessary vaccinations on campus, you will not be able to enroll in courses. You can find detailed instructions on submitting the required immunization records on the [Student Health and Counseling Services website](#).

### Office of the University Bursar

The [Office of the University Bursar](#) maintains student accounts, disburses loans, scholarships, grants, and other financial aid, and offers emergency financial assistance. Tuition and fees are paid to the bursar.

If you encounter an emergency and [need financial assistance](#), the bursar can provide three forms of assistance: a living-expense advance, an emergency loan, or a one-time grant. Short-term loans must be repaid within 60 days; for extraordinary needs, a grant is available. Applications are available via the [my.UChicago](#) website.

### Registrar

At the [Office of the University Registrar](#), students can clear holds, request instructor permission to enroll in classes with prerequisites, find information about the academic calendar and graduation, and order transcripts.

### my.UChicago

[my.UChicago](#) is the system that allows you to register for classes, view financial aid awards, update your contact information, get unofficial transcripts, and more. You can search for courses by clicking on the “My Classes” tab, which will take you to the Course Search catalog. There, you can search for courses by name, course number, or instructor name. This is also where you can add or drop courses during registration. On each department's website, you can also find a complete list of courses for the school year. The registrar has compiled [a how-to document](#) on adding/dropping courses.

### ID and Privileges

The [ID and Privileges Office](#) issues identification cards that allow you access to campus facilities and services, including the library, the gym, and the campus shuttle system. This office is located immediately inside Regenstein Library.

### Student Disability Services

[Student Disability Services](#) coordinates access to campus resources for students with disabilities. If you know that you will need disability accommodations, you should contact the Student Disability Services Office and get the accommodation process started immediately. This process can take 8 to 10 weeks, so it is better to start the process before

arriving in September. You can read more about accommodations [online](#) or [contact](#) the Student Disability Services Office.

### Identity and Inclusion

The [Center for Identity and Inclusion](#) creates and supports intentionally diverse communities. Through the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, LGBTQ Student Life, and Student Support Services, the Center for Identity and Inclusion also offers programming and support for students of many identities and sociocultural backgrounds.

[Student Support Services \(SSS\)](#) aims to facilitate the personal, professional and social success of first-generation, lower-income, undocumented, and immigrant students by leading the University of Chicago community in initiatives that enhance self-efficacy, resiliency, and a sense of belonging. We focus primarily on graduate and professional students but everyone is welcome to contact us.

### Workshops and Intellectual Engagement

UChicago offers a rich intellectual climate for students. Many dedicated or occasional workshops provide a great opportunity for intellectual engagement and networking.

Depending on their concentration, areas of interest, students may wish to connect with the following organizations.

- [Mass Culture Workshop](#)
- [Digital Media Workshop](#)
- [Language Evolution, Acquisition and Processing \(LEAP\)](#)
- [Research Computing Center \(various workshops\)](#)
- [The Institute on the Formation of Knowledge \(events and courses\)](#)
- [The Weston Game Lab](#)

Besides these, the [Council on Advanced Studies](#) funds and supports over fifty workshops that convene around topics or areas of study and meet regularly throughout the year.

### Arts, Social and Cultural Events, and Entertainment

The [Humanities Division Graduate Student Council](#) (HDGSC) organizes social events and provides funding for student-organized events and mini-conferences; limited conference travel funding is also available. HDGSC sends regular updates to all graduate students in the Division of the Humanities. [Grad Council](#) also hosts a [Slack channel](#) for grad students providing another way to get involved at the University.

The Digital Studies M.A. is a demanding academic program, and yet academic work requires some balance of social life and play. The following links will introduce you to some of the social, cultural, and entertainment possibilities found on-campus and throughout the city.

#### *On the University campus*

- [Court Theatre](#)
- [Doc Films](#)



- [Film Studies Center](#)
- [Franke Institute for the Humanities](#)
- [Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures](#)
- [Karla Scherer Center for the Study of American Culture](#)
- [Logan Center for the Arts](#)
- [Major Activities Board](#)
- [Mandel Hall Concerts](#)
- [Nicholson Center for British Studies](#)
- [The Pub](#)
- [Renaissance Society](#)
- [Smart Museum](#)
- [University Ballet of Chicago](#)
- [University Theater](#)

*Life in the Hyde Park neighborhood*

- [Chicago Reader's special issue on Hyde Park](#)
- [DuSable Museum](#)
- [Experimental Station](#)
- [First Aid Comics](#)
- [Hyde Park Art Center](#)
- [Hyde Park Farmer's Market](#)
- [Hyde Park Progress](#)
- [Plein Air](#)
- [Jimmy's Woodlawn Tap](#)
- [Seminary Co-op Bookstore](#)
- [Stony Island Arts Bank](#)

*In the city of Chicago*

- [The Art Institute](#)
- [Chicago Cultural Center](#)
- [Chicago Reader](#)
- [Chicago Tribune's RedEye](#)

- [Dusty Groove](#)
- [Goodman Theatre](#)
- [Hottix](#)
- [Joffrey Ballet](#)
- [Steppenwolf Theatre](#)
- [Lyric Opera](#)
- [Millennium Park](#)
- [Museum of Contemporary Art](#)
- [Newcity](#)
- [Second City](#)
- [Chicago Symphony Orchestra](#)
- [UChicago Arts Pass](#)
- [Chicago Review](#)

#### Transportation, Food, and Housing

The university provides [daytime and nighttime shuttles](#) in the Hyde Park area that students can ride for free. These shuttles connect with public transit, stopping near major apartment complexes and stores. On the weekends, a shuttle runs from Hyde Park to the South Loop.

The university also provides nighttime door-to-door service through [Lyft Ride Smart](#).

Public transit throughout Chicago is available on the [CTA \(Chicago Transit Authority\)](#).

There are many formal and informal resources to help students plan their finances and assist them in getting food and housing:

- Student Support Services provides food security resources for graduate and professional students facing food insecurity. To learn more about food security resources, please visit the [Center for Identity and Inclusion's food security website](#).
- On budgeting, see the Office of Financial Aid's web pages on [Cost of Attendance](#) and [budgeting](#). See also UChicagoGRAD's [explainer on budgeting](#).
- Living with roommates will cost approximately \$800 to \$900 per month (rent only) and living without roommates will cost \$1,500 to \$2,500 per month (rent only).

Informal resources include the following:

- Events on campus: [https://www.instagram.com/gc\\_uchicago/](https://www.instagram.com/gc_uchicago/).
- A very effective Facebook group for free food on campus: <https://www.facebook.com/UChicagoFreeFoodWatch>.
- Another effective group, for finding roommates: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1606998439581363>