# The MA DAH and DC Dissertation Project

The capstone achievement for the MA in Digital Arts and Humanities or Digital Cultures is the successful completion of a digital research project that combines a unique and crafted digital artefact and a written dissertation of 12,000-15,000 words.

Throughout the course you will complete various components of this larger project including an annotated bibliography and a map of the topic in **Communities of Practice in Digital Scholarship**, a research project proposal in **Conceptual Introduction to Digital Humanities**, a preliminary review of literature in **Communities of Practice in Digital Scholarship** and a statement of proposed methodology in **Humanities and New Technologies: Tools and Methodologies**. By the completion of the second semester, you will have refined your project proposal, identified whether an ethics review is necessary to undertake as part of your project and be in a position to present a progress review in April.

You will be assigned a supervisor to assist you with your project during the second semester. Your supervisor is your primary point of contact to help you successfully carry out this project. However, it is your project and your responsibility to make the best use of the supervisory resource. Your supervisor can help you shape your research question, consider the approaches you propose to take and collaboratively reflect on your process and findings. Your supervisor will also be available to feedback on your written work in a timely fashion. **Drafts of dissertation components can be submitted for feedback up to the 1st of August to enable an opportunity to provide thoughtful feedback**.

It is essential to appreciate that this is a research project and dissertation in Digital Arts and Humanities / Digital Cultures and as such it requires a specific exploration of the digital aspects of your chosen field. It is essential to demonstrate your learning during the programme, and to demonstrate a critical reflection on the field of study particularly. It is important to consider why you are carrying out this research, what it brings to field and why you have chosen a specific approach to your research.

The digital artefact you craft is at the core of your research project in that it provides an object of discussion and a reflection of the Digital Arts and Humanities and Digital Cultures question being explored. It must demonstrate a degree of technical challenge and represent something that moves beyond what you may have been able to accomplish before the programme.

Although you are not evaluated directly on the artefact itself, it is intrinsic to the discourse of the written work - the literature review providing a context, the tools and methods discussing the technical and epistemological underpinnings/technology decisions and the discussion surrounding the findings and engaging directly with the artefact. The artefact reflects the findings of your research and the dissertation reflects on the artefact itself. The two are tightly bound.

MA Dissertations will be submitted to UCC"s Cork Open Research Archive (CORA) to support the department's commitment to the open collection and dissemination of the digital research output of the UCC scholarly community.

Formal submission instructions for a dissertation (Taught Masters) at UCC:
https://www.ucc.ie/en/graduatestudies/thesis/

**Scholarly Apparatus**

Acknowledgements/Dedication (100-200 words)
Abstract (250 words)
Table of Contents
      Clearly laid out with accurate pagination
      Active link to digital artefact at head of page
Declaration
      Following the table of contents, a signed declaration should be included stating that the thesis submitted is the candidate's own work and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere.

## Introduction (1000 – 2000 words)

**Hint**: Revise this extensively once you complete the thesis.

## Literature Review & Horizon Scan (2500 – 3000 words)

You should substantiate your research project with at least 5 - 10 key pieces of literature on which your work relies.
In a traditional humanities MA, this would draw entirely on existing scholarly work. However, in our field, it is also necessary to survey existing digital projects related to your topic.
This is where you lay the foundation for your thesis. Work from the broad topic identifying the relevant themes and integrating supporting literature into the discussion. What critical concepts are foundational to your work? What key authors or theories are vital, and if you were to keep explaining them as you go would detract from the flow of your central thesis? Lay out the scholarly basis for your work here.

**Hint**: Don't present this as an annotated bibliography led by the specific authors and works, but instead identify the thoughts and ideas and engage with contrasting opinions.
In subsequent chapters you do not want to have to go into detail on the contribution of a particular author to your presentation - instead refer back to previously established points from this section.
The general structure of this chapter should proceed from the broad to the more specific - eventually reaching and establishing grounds for OR identifying the gap demanding the research you are undertaking as part of your own project.
Key disciplinary texts should be introduced here in conjunction with *your* understanding of them and how they inform your project.

## Epistemological (the WHY) & Methodological Statement … (1000 words)

Building on the literature review, this is a discussion that grounds and substantiates your perspectives and approaches chosen with relation to the field. This section addresses the reason why this project is a useful contribution to the field.
Why are you doing this – what is the need?  Why you, why now, why …?

## Methods - the HOW (1000 words)

The method is the HOW!  How are you going to do this?
Some basic aspects that you need to address include:
Quantitative or  Qualitative or Mixed Methods?
Define your method – why you chose it, and how you will implement it. What tools will you use and how did you make these decisions - what alternatives did you consider?

"*Understanding the difference between methods and methodology is of paramount importance. Method is simply a research tool, a component of research – say for example, a qualitative method such as interviews. Methodology is the justification for using a particular research method.*  http://deborahgabriel.com/2011/05/13/methods-and-methodology/ May 13, 2011"

## Process (2000 - 4000 words)

The content here depends on the project. It could be a description of the actual application of the methods, a research or lab notebook. This is also where you would describe the key decisions you made in the design and building of the digital artefact, the problems encountered in building it, and how they were overcome.

## Analysis & Discussion of findings (2000 - 4000 words)

Here you will document the outputs from the "experiment" part of the work: what results emerged from the methods used? This is where you explain your results in detail
The structure of the work, contextualising the topic, how and why did the work and results emerge.

## Conclusion  (1000-2000 words)

Here, you highlight the key insights from the research.  What was learned – is there any new knowledge?  New problems or possibilities? Directions for future research and development?

## Bibliography (MLA or Harvard)

Use Zotero - or another reference manager - this needs to be very clear and consistent - the work of a professional researcher.

An alternative, less formal way to see the process, from the Writing For Research Blog is through this template which may help you to develop a structure

How to tell your research story
- I work in the field of:
- The disciplines, or sub-disciplines, that I most engage with are:
- My research topic is:
- Much is already known about my topic. For example:
- However, one thing that is not adequately understood is:
- It would be useful to remove this gap in our knowledge because:
- The particular question I asked myself was:
- The method I chose for answering this question was
- What I discovered was:
- The results suggest/indicate/show/demonstrate/prove that:
- I interpret the results in that way because:
- The main way in which my research has changed or added to the field is
- The value of this contribution is that it:
- Of course, my study has limitations. In particular:
- The main way in which we should behave differently as a result of this study is:
- The main way in which we should think differently as a result of this study is
- A next step is:

https://writeyourresearch.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/telling-your-research-story1.docx

Some additional reminders:
1. Structure of the paragraph:
    a. Claim:  Make your claim, state your argument → one paragraph has one

       central point

2. Data: Back it up with research, examples to support  → Quotation/Reference

    a. Warrant:  How does my data make my claim evident? → Explain – how does

       the data/reference make the point as far as you are concerned? Remember it

       may not be clear to your reader - your job is to "get your point across".

3. Follow those simple steps, not always in same order – and all will be well.
4. Keep a post-it of your title, your thesis focus, at the top of your laptop / screen. Try never to finish a paragraph without understanding how you are developing your thesis at every point as you proceed.  This simple technique helps you to stay focussed.