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Master curriculum

Interface Cultures

at the University of Art and Design Linz

Academic degree: Master of Arts, abbreviated: MA

Decision of the Curricula Committee of 20 April 2005

In accordance with the University Organisation Act (UG 2002, BGBl. Nr. 120/2002), the Senate of the University of Art and Design Linz adopts the curriculum for the master programme Interface Cultures in its present form.

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## § 1 Curriculum

The artistic-scientific master programme Interface Cultures provides an education for aspiring media artists and media researchers in the field of creative and innovative interface design.

The term “interface” has become pervasive in our lives. Basically, it describes the interface or connection between different computer systems which use hardware components (hardware interfaces) or software applications (graphical user interfaces - GUI) to facilitate the exchange and transfer of digital information via communication protocols.

Moreover, an interface refers to the connection between human and machine (human-computer interaction). Through interaction, a person (“user”) can control the software and hardware components of a digital system.

Hence, an interface allows people to communicate with digital technologies and to generate, receive and exchange data. Common interfaces include, for instance, mouse-keyboard interfaces or graphical user interfaces (desktop metaphor). Recent years have seen a rapid development of more intuitive and seamless interface designs with the emergence of research areas such as ubiquitous computing, intelligent environments, tangible user interfaces, auditory interfaces, VR- and MR-based interaction, multi-modal interaction (camera-based interaction, voice-driven interaction, gesture-based interaction), robotic interfaces, natural interfaces or artistic interfaces.

Artists in the field of interactive art have been exploring human-machine interactions for a number of years now, integrating digital processes into the artistic process through artistic, intuitive, conceptual, social and critical interaction design. Instead of resulting in static artworks, interactive art crosses the boundary between hardware and software design and offers process-oriented media designs which expand the cultural and conceptual potentials of media art and technology. Artistic designs include interactive art, participatory art, net art, software art, robotic art, sound and noise art, games and storytelling, mobile interaction and SpaceArt as well as new hybrid forms such as BioArt and NanoArt.

It is precisely this combination of technical know-how, interdisciplinary research and creative artistic-scientific methods which allows for the development of new creative interfaces creating innovative artistic applications for media art, media design, media research and communication.

In the future, the concept of “interfaces” will leave strictly digital forms behind and establish itself at a biological, neuronal and nano level. Terms like ubiquitous computing, wireless ad-hoc networks, intelligent environments or biological interfaces will gain creative importance in media art and interactive art.

## § 2 Educational and qualification profile

### 2.1 Teaching and learning objectives

The master programme Interface Cultures imparts in-depth knowledge of existing interface designs in the fields of hardware, software, communication design and media art.

Furthermore, students are encouraged to work as artists and researchers enhancing available interface technologies and applications beyond the status quo. Interdisciplinary research and team work allow them to develop new forms of interface design and cultural and social applications.

The rapidly evolving field of interface design research and application does not only rely on the creativity of hardware and software engineers but also on significant contributions made by media artists in the fields of interactive art, human-computer interaction and media design.

Graduates of the programme should pioneer the exploration of new technological and cultural trends in the fields of human-computer interaction, interactive art and media art. Next to practical development and team work, they also acquire theoretical knowledge on publishing and communication. The programme comprises technical courses in the fields of hardware design, software design, software programming and communication design, artistic-scientific publishing and research activities as well as theoretical and artistic courses on media art, media theory and interdisciplinary creative research.

Students learn to develop and implement new ideas and concepts of interface design and to explore relevant cultural, social and societal problems. The professional profile of graduates includes creative-technical professions such as media artist, media designer, media researcher, interaction designer, game designer, programmer, network engineer, producer or communicator.

### 2.2 Qualification profile

Interface Cultures is a project- and theory-oriented two-year master programme. It focuses on interactive digital media and connects practice and theory, art and research as well as project and prototype development and scientific publication. The lectures, seminars and workshops of the introductory phase impart technical and artistic know-how. Subsequently, students develop individual and group projects (lab, studio and project work) while practising interdisciplinary work and artistic-scientific research.

### § 3 Programme structure and schedule

The master programme Interface Cultures at the University of Art and Design Linz comprises four semesters and a minimum of 120 ECTS.

The programme consists of four phases:

1st semester: Interface Literacy (30 ECTS) comprehends Interface Technologies I (15 ECTS), Interactive Art & Media Theories (15 ECTS).

2nd semester: Interface Lab (30 ECTS) comprehends Interface Lab I (15 ECTS) and modules of Interface Cultures or related subjects (15 ECTS).

3rd semester: Advanced Labs (30 ECTS) comprehend Advanced Interface Lab (15 ECTS) and Free Electives (15 ECTS).

4th semester: Master Project (30 ECTS) comprehends Theoretical Master Thesis (15 ECTS) and Practical Master Project (15 ECTS).

Total: 120 ECTS

### 3.2 Teaching and learning methods

The programme offers the following teaching, learning and working methods:

Artistic-scientific lab (KWL)  
Reading class (LK)  
Lecture (VL)  
Exercise (UE)  
Lecture and exercise (VU)  
Keynote lecture (IVL)  
Seminar (SE)  
Colloquium (KO)  
Workshop (WSP)  
Excursion (EX)  
Internship (PR)

#### Artistic-scientific lab:

Artistic-scientific labs are carried out as project classes. They focus on the conception, development and realisation of media forms and impart and enhance skills regarding the development and application of scientific findings and methods. Artistic-scientific labs offer either individual or group supervision of student projects, depending on students' needs, employing artistic strategies as well as theoretical knowledge. Furthermore, students train and refine work steps, from the formulation of goals to project conception, project development and project implementation to the presentation of results. Classes may be held in English.

#### Reading class:

Reading classes promote the understanding of and sensible use of texts. They focus on questions of structure and argumentation of different types of texts and methods of textualisation, allowing participants to take a critical position on academic and artistic theses and theorems. Furthermore, students discuss and practice methods of textualisation.

Reading classes may be held in English.

#### Lecture:

Lectures aim at a systematic or specialised transfer of knowledge. They provide insight into the current state of research, the subjects and methods of the respective field and they analyse scientific findings. Lectures may be held in English.

#### Exercise:

Exercises allow students to test, review and refine the acquired knowledge on a specific subject. They refer to theoretical teaching contents or to concrete projects and require active student participation. Exercises may be held in English.

#### Lecture and exercise:

These classes systematically impart advanced knowledge. They give insight into the current state of research, subjects, problems and methods of a specific scientific or artistic field and allow students to discuss, review and refine acquired knowledge. Courses focus on theoretical contents or a specific subject and require active student participation. Classes may be held in English.

#### Keynote lecture:

Keynote lectures correspond to other artistic or scientific course types (e.g. artistic-scientific labs), impart knowledge on and introduce students to methodological problems, aesthetic strategies and forms of action. Courses may be held in English.

#### Seminar:

Seminars are at the interface of knowledge transfer and independent knowledge acquisition. Scientific dialogue clarifies positions and improves the skills of articulation. Seminars are based on the exploration of theories and the reading of texts. Students contribute actively through reading, research, presentations etc. Courses may be held in English.

#### Colloquium:

A colloquium facilitates advanced academic and artistic discourse as well as the joint development of current topics and problems in the field of interfaces cultures. Theoretic or artistic specialisation, critical review and analysis, development and discussion of thesis papers, individual works and participants' designs are the focus of this course type. Courses may be held in English.

#### Workshop:

Workshops impart specific theoretical knowledge and technical skills regarding scientific or artistic implementation. Depending on technical requirements and previous knowledge, the number of participants is usually limited to fifteen. Workshops are block courses including continuous assessment and may be held in English.

#### Excursion:

Depending on subjects and requirements, a semester may also include an excursion. These field trips allow students to experience artistic works and media productions on-site, to learn about problems and "landscapes" and to explore different cultural, infrastructural and technical conditions.

#### Internship:

Internships allow students to gain practical and professional experience.

## § 4 Examination regulations

Courses are completed with an assessment corresponding to the course type (one or several oral, written or artistic-scientific assignments or exams). Examiners must inform the students on teaching contents and examination modalities at the beginning of the semester, allowing them to prepare according to the examination requirements.

Abbreviations:

- m *mündliche Prüfung* – oral exam
- s *schriftliche Prüfung* – written exam (depending on teaching contents, this may imply an artistic form of expression)
- P *Projektarbeit* – project work
- T *Teilnahmeverpflichtung (ohne Benotung)* –attendance mandatory (without assessment)
- iP *Lehrveranstaltung mit immanentem Prüfungscharakter* – course with continuous examination

### Master examination

Admission to the master examination (prerequisite: acquisition of 90 ECTS minimum) requires that the final paper of each subject (written work, scientific-artistic papers such as seminar papers) refer to the master programme Interface Cultures. The master examination consists of the following parts:

- written theoretical thesis (may be written in English)
- practical master project
- oral presentation of the practical master project (may be held in English)

The grade of the master thesis is calculated proportionately from the grade of the written thesis (one quarter), the grade of the practical master project (one quarter), the grade of the oral board examination (one quarter) and the grade point average of all completed modules of the master programme.

The oral examination is the final board examination. The thesis supervisor is a voting member of the examination board.

The board examination relates to the subject of the master thesis. Admission to the examination requires the positive assessment of the theoretical master thesis and the practical master project. The subject of the master thesis must be developed in consultation with the thesis supervisor. Completion must be possible within a period of six months.

Overall assessment of the final examination:

In addition to the assessment of individual courses, students receive an overall grade of “passed” if every subject has been completed successfully, or “failed” if this is not the case. If no subject was assessed with a grade worse than “gut” (good) and at least half of all subjects were graded “sehr gut” (very good), the overall assessment is “mit Auszeichnung bestanden” (passed with distinction).

## § 5 Admission requirements

Admission to the programme requires a bachelor’s degree in one of the following fields of study: media design, media technology, time-based media, interactive media, communication design, mobile computing, software engineering, hardware or software systems engineering, computer science, communications engineering, bioinformatics, media, film and television studies, or a comparable programme at an academic institution. Based on the submitted application documents, the admission board decides which applicants are invited to an admission interview.

In any case, artistic aptitude must be verified in the course of an admission interview including the presentation of work samples.