

# Bachelor Thesis Media, Art, Design and Architecture

## Course Manual 2025-2026

|             |                                             |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Course code | L_AABAMKASCR                                |
| Period      | 3-6                                         |
| Credits     | 12 ects (3 ects colloquium + 9 ects thesis) |

### Thesis trajectory

The Bachelor Thesis and the Thesis Colloquium combined form the graduation trajectory (12 EC, 336 hours), the admission requirements for which are listed in the TER. **One track starts per academic year in January**, preceded by an **information meeting in November** and the submission of **topic proposals in December**.

### Target group

3rd year bachelor students Media, Art, Design and Architectuur who meet the entry requirements.

### Required prior knowledge

To start the thesis trajectory, third-year students must have completed all courses of the first year and second year (see Education and Examination Regulations (TER) MKDA).

### Additional information

**Please note:** Being enrolled in this course is **no guarantee** of actually being allowed to start the final thesis trajectory, as a final (or conditional) decision on this will not be made until January, based on the courses passed until then. Students hear at the end of January whether they will eventually be allowed to proceed.

The thesis trajectory can only be completed when the thesis is assessed with at least 6.0.

### Trajectory Objective

The thesis trajectory consists of two parts:

1. The **thesis colloquium** includes group exercises in doing research for and writing theses;
2. The actual **thesis** which is supervised by one of the teachers of MKDA.

### Ba thesis colloquium:

1. The student demonstrates that she/he is independently able to develop a work plan that serves as a starting point for the thesis and that meets the guidelines of the program.

This work plan addresses research into primary and secondary sources and methodologies relevant to the formulated thesis research, and includes a structured bibliography as the first phase for this thesis research.

2. The student is able to evaluate work of fellow students orally and in writing ('peer feedback').

### **Thesis:**

1. The student demonstrates the ability to independently and according to Academic Skills guidelines compose an academic text based on research methods commonly used in Media, Art, Design and Architecture, and can complete it within a defined period of time;
2. The student demonstrates an understanding of theories and (subject-related) methodologies in the chosen specialization, and to be able to apply them to one or more cases;
3. The student demonstrates that she/he is able to independently search relevant and reliable sources and academic literature in relation to the topic;
4. The student demonstrates that she/he can academically legitimate the text and compile a structured bibliography;
5. The student demonstrates having obtained academic skills for Bachelor year 3 in terms of the structure of the thesis and use of language, with correct incorporation of literature/bibliography.

### **Content trajectory**

As completion of the undergraduate MKDA programme, each student writes a **BA thesis**. The thesis is intended as a final test, which should attest to the knowledge and skills the student has acquired in the programme of MKDA. The thesis has the character of a written paper of 7,000 to 10,000 words (excluding notes, literature and appendices) and is largely written independently under the guidance of a supervisor. The thesis is a text composed on the basis of literature and/or source research and possibly some archival research (depending on the specialisation followed).

The BA thesis is a proof of the achieved final level of content and theory (300) in one of the specializations Media, Art, Design, and Architecture or in an interdisciplinary combination or MKDA in general.

For the BA thesis, the following ways of arriving at a **thesis topic** apply :

1. Selection list: In a plenary information session in autumn of the academic year of graduation, the programme informs students about themes and possible topics from which to choose within the student's specialization.
2. Course from the graduation programme: The student follows a research working group of the chosen track and can formulate a thesis topic on the basis of this course. The Problem / research question is in line with the subject matter of the relevant course, but is clearly different from that of the assignment carried out as part of that course.
3. Own choice of topic: exceptionally and only with the prior approval of the intended thesis supervisor, students may choose their own topic.

The **Ba thesis colloquium** involves reflection on the **formal aspects** of writing the bachelor's thesis during joint meetings in which the scope and trajectory of the thesis are explained and practised. During each meeting, a phase of the research and writing process is examined on the basis of examples. The Ba thesis colloquium runs parallel to the substantive thesis research, which is supervised by one of the MKDA lecturers. In the colloquium, the student learns how to set up and conduct a thesis research according to academic conventions; he or she learns to plan the research

and writing process and to present interim results. Moreover, the student learns to reflect critically on his/her own work and that of others ('peer review'). During the thesis colloquium, attention will also be paid to the different phases of the research and writing process so that the thesis can be completed within the given time frame.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- learning to select, delineate and substantiate a problem statement;
- learning to formulate a coherent set of research questions;
- learning to choose a research method;
- learning to select, analyse and process information sources;
- learning to plan the research and writing process;
- learning to structure and substantiate an argument;
- learning to give feedback on the work of colleagues (peer review).

Please note: Almost all of these points have been covered in the first or second year. The colloquium will therefore only refresh this knowledge. The emphasis will be on applying this knowledge in a Bachelor thesis.

#### **Colloquium meetings**

The colloquium consists of a total of four meetings. A (hybrid) information meeting will take place in November (27.11.2024, 15:30-17:15) at which the thesis process will be explained.

The meetings take place in February (2 meetings), and March (1 meeting) and last 2 or 4 hours (see VU Timetable). Attending these meetings is compulsory. Students are also expected to make an active contribution, which is only possible if everyone prepares well.

#### **Programme & important dates**

##### **26 November (15:30-17:15)**

Info meeting

*Explanation of the thesis colloquium and thesis in general including timetable.*

##### **10 December (23:59)**

*Submission date two proposals with justification via Canvas.*

##### **Last week before the Christmas break**

*Announcement of supervisors and approved topics*

##### **First weeks of January**

*Explore approved proposal.*

##### **20 January (23:59)**

*Submission date<sup>1st</sup> version of contract & work plan to supervisor (copy on Canvas)*

##### **10 February (11:00-12:45, HG 05A24)**

*Colloquium 1: Problem and research question statement; theory and method; work plan and thesis.*

*(Preparation see Canvas Session 1)*

##### **17 February (11:00-12:45, HG 15A33)**

*Colloquium 2: thesis contract, assessment form and analysis of sample theses.*

##### **26 February (23:59)**

*Submit thesis contract and final work plan to supervisor via **OnStage** (only if the work plan has been approved and all signatures have been placed.). The correct **form** can be found with the assignment on the thesis Canvas site.*

**10 March (23:59)**

Colloquium: Submission date<sup>1st</sup> version introduction on Canvas (assignment - peer review)

**16 & 17 March (Lecture + work groups peer feedback)**

Colloquium 3 and peer seminars per track: *discuss each other's introduction, method and literature*. Introduction chapters should be submitted via Canvas by 11 March at the latest (see above). Discuss progress. (For detailed description of the assignment and what to deliver & prepare: see Canvas Colloquium 3).

**24 March (23:59) Submit improved version introduction to supervisor (via Canvas)**

[**Note:** the supervisor expects a revised version of the introduction, carefully argued and formatted, making it clear that the thesis colloquium has been actively followed. If the introduction is clearly 'not finished', argumentatively unfounded, or sloppy, the supervisor may refuse feedback and recommend that the student discontinue the thesis process].

**1 May (17:00): submit 1<sup>st</sup> complete draft version to supervisor (mail + OnStage)**

**1 June (17:00): submit final version to supervisor and 2<sup>nd</sup> reader for assessment (mail + OnStage)**

**30 June (17:00): submit rewritten version to supervisor and 2<sup>nd</sup> reader for assessment (mail + OnStage)**

**Important**

All necessary forms, manuals, hints and tips are on Canvas for the relevant dates. Study them carefully. While writing, already use the correct layout, typography and notation for references (do not assume you will have time to do this afterwards). Also make sure your language and writing style is, correct, faultless, objective, clear and scientific. Do not write in telegram style, but as you were taught in ACVA. Try to work as effectively as possible by documenting your research well. For example, always write down the full details of books and articles as per the guidelines; write down full names of authors etc. and of your primary sources, write down the most important details.

**Plagiarism**

If you do not include proper references in your work, you could be accused of plagiarism: passing off others' work, ideas or arguments as your own. Plagiarism is regarded as fraud and is taken very seriously in the academic world. If you commit plagiarism during your studies, you could face serious punishment including exclusion from a course or even expulsion from the university. For academics, plagiarism can mean the end of their career.

The following are clear examples of plagiarism:

- Handing in somebody else's work as if it is your own.
- Copying passages, long or short, from a source without acknowledging it.
- Using AI tools (like ChatGTP)

But the following also count as plagiarism:

- 'Borrowing' somebody else's words or ideas without acknowledgement.
- Making just a few changes to a text, graph or diagram and then claiming it as your own.
- 'Forgetting' to put quotation marks around a literal quote.
- Including an incorrect or incomplete reference, so that the source cannot be traced.

- Not including a reference every time you draw upon a particular source; this is equivalent to passing off part of the information used as your own work.
- Using so many words or ideas from a source that they make up the bulk of your paper – even if you do credit the source!

When in doubt, please refresh your knowledge on plagiarism by studying the online Libguide courses of our Library, see: <https://libguides.vu.nl/c.php?g=329901&p=2215149>