Contact Us

UBC CERTIFICATE IN BIOMEDICAL VISUALIZATION AND COMMUNICATION
Extended Learning
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We acknowledge that the UBC Vancouver campus is situated on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Musqueam people.

This program handbook is current as of September 2020. Note that future editions of this handbook may contain changes to program requirements and policies.

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Program Overview

The UBC Certificate in Biomedical Visualization and Communication is an integrated skills program that blends scientific knowledge, critical thinking, co-creativity, teamwork, and communication skills built on empathy and active listening. It’s one of only a handful of programs in North America that provides the skills needed for this emerging field. It’s also the first program of its kind on the West Coast.

A unique aspect of the curriculum is a focus on diversity and inclusivity in biomedical communications. Throughout the program, students learn how to recognize and address the needs of diverse communities, including Indigenous, racialized and other groups that face barriers to healthcare information.

ABOUT UBC FACULTY OF MEDICINE
THE HIVE

The HIVE is a multidisciplinary hackspace for innovation and visualization. Launched by Dr. Claudia Krebs, an instructor and advisor for the certificate program, the HIVE leverages the potential of emerging media to improve the educational experience for all learners in the Faculty of Medicine and around the world. The space is built on the power of collaboration and fosters an inclusive environment where students, faculty and staff build teams to disrupt and modernize learning. Teams create media using 2D, 3D, and Extended Reality (XR) technologies that can be used in all learning environments.

ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR DIGITAL MEDIA

The Master Digital Media program was created through a unique partnership of four leading academic institutions—University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, Emily Carr University of Art + Design and British Columbia Institute of Technology—and leaders from the digital media industry. Through this partnership, a curriculum was developed that corresponds to industry needs and prepares students for high-level roles in new and expanding digital media markets.

ABOUT UBC EXTENDED LEARNING

We believe that learning is a continuous, lifelong endeavour. Education — at any stage of life — should be flexible, innovative and accessible. We work with UBC faculties to create and deliver programs that meet the career and personal needs of our communities, including alumni, current UBC students and learners of all ages. Together, we provide outstanding learning opportunities, bringing UBC excellence in academics, teaching and research to the communities we serve, and strengthening UBC’s contribution to society, industry and government.
Program Format and Curriculum

FORMAT, LENGTH AND CURRICULUM

The program is 100% online, and consists of four 12-week courses and one capstone project course, all offered over one calendar year. Students take two courses each in terms 1 and 2, and the final project in term 3.

Each of the four courses is delivered by modules, released weekly, that include online lectures, readings, videos, exercises and assignments, and total 30 hours of online learning per course. The capstone course is a collaborative team project in which students participate in daily online working group sessions and scrums, and a weekly video check-in with their instructor. Virtual group project presentations take place at the end of the term.

Students can expect to spend 4-5 hours or more per course, per week completing the modules and assignments, reflecting on their learning, visual journaling, participating in virtual anatomy labs (in Human Structure and Function) and online group discussions. Each module must be completed in full before progressing to the next module.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

FOUNDATIONS OF BIOMEDICAL VISUALIZATION AND COMMUNICATION

Biomedical concepts can be incredibly complex and difficult to communicate. Yet, our survival depends on at least some of us understanding and conveying the intricacies of how the human body works, how disease spreads or how to perform surgery.

The power of sharing and disseminating information and of storytelling within healthcare is foundational to shaping the patient experience.

In this course, you learn how to communicate biomedical concepts clearly and effectively to a range of diverse audiences, from students to patients to health professionals. Focus on:

- analyzing how people retain information and learn
- developing strategies to make information relevant and memorable
- practising and honing your skills in active, empathetic and respectful listening and communicating
- cultivating your visual sense for best conveying complex information for a target audience.
Throughout the course, you collaborate with the instructional team to explore:

- the essential tools of visual biomedical communications for diverse audiences that are culturally appropriate and trauma informed
- visual modalities for collaborative problem solving in a biomedical setting
- responsible and meaningful communication and facilitation techniques to build understanding and trust between clients, audience and you
- retrieving and the appropriate use of source materials, including principles of copyright, in order to create accurate, ethical and accessible visual communication
- the various needs of diverse communities, including Indigenous, racialized and other groups that face barriers to healthcare information, and how to develop appropriate and effective materials to meet these needs
- the paramount need for inclusive, empathetic and anti-racist, anti-oppressive approaches to allow for effective human-centered communication.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1:** How People Learn  
**Week 2:** Making Marks: Introduction to Visual Communication  
**Week 3:** Art Fundamentals of Communication  
**Week 4:** History of Biomedical Communication (Past, Present, Future)  
**Week 5:** Listening 1: Sharing Stories  
**Week 6:** Listening 2: Diversity, Stigma, Vulnerability, Empathy  
**Week 7:** Trust and Truthiness 1: Building Trust Through Communication  
**Week 8:** Trust and Truthiness 2: Information Sourcing  
**Week 9:** Ethics in Biomedical Communication  
**Week 10:** Storyboarding and Comics  
**Week 11:** Multimedia: The Medium is the Message  
**Week 12:** Tying it all Together

**MANAGING CREATIVITY**

The objective of this course is to support teams of individuals to nurture, manage and direct their creative impulses that emerge from collaborating.

Students work and play together, and in the process:

- develop collaborative habits to improve communication, listening and adaptability
- assimilate tools to strategically manage their work within a team-based context
- stretch beyond their own creative boundaries using a variety of improvised activities
- integrate tools, projects and approaches they learn from other courses toward their own creative processes
- deepen self-awareness of their own creative process and those of others.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1:** Tools to Jumpstart Collaboration with Others  
**Week 2:** Collaborating Visually  
**Week 3:** Understanding Creativity in Collaborative Design  
**Week 4:** Practise Listening and Responding  
**Week 5:** Unpacking the Design Brief  
**Week 6:** Improving Team Culture at a Distance  
**Week 7:** The Art and Craft of Iterative Prototyping  
**Week 8:** Identifying Problems and Proposing Solutions  
**Week 9:** Task Distribution, Prioritization and Scoping  
**Week 10:** Gaps, Pivots and Bad Ideas  
**Week 11:** Tools to Improve Team Presentations  
**Week 12:** The Importance of Retrospectives in Agile
HUMAN STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

The goal of this course is not only for you to understand the human body, but to build a rich biomedical vocabulary that you can use confidently with your audience. Practise the skills needed to conduct research online and critically evaluate biomedical and anatomical facts.

In this course, the anatomical structures and physiological principles of the major body systems are presented using a virtual 3D anatomy tool pioneered by instructor Dr. Claudia Krebs and her team. Faculty of Medicine biomedical education materials are used as well.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- understand the basic structures and functions of the human body
- use medical language comfortably and confidently that’s adapted for your audience comfortably and confidently
- acquire the skills to research and disseminate medical information from a place of understanding and confidence.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Introduction to Human Anatomy (Orientation) and Embryology
Week 2: Foundations of Physiology
Week 3: Musculoskeletal System 1 – Upper Limb
Week 4: Musculoskeletal System 1 – Lower Limb
Week 5: Thorax 1 – Circulatory System
Week 6: Thorax 2 – Respiratory System
Week 7: Abdomen 1 – Anatomical Overview, Foregut
Week 8: Abdomen 2 – Midgut and Hindgut, Foundations of Digestion
Week 9: Renal System and Fluids
Week 10: Pelvis and Perineum Anatomy
Week 11: Anatomy of the Head and Neck
Week 12: Central Nervous System, Pain
Week 13: Summary, Overview, Discussion

USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN (UX)

What does it mean to design? Who is a designer? Design is, at its heart, about identifying problems and responding with a solution. As Nobel Laureate Herb Simon noted, design is to “change existing situations into preferred ones.” And anyone who proposes a solution is essentially a designer.

In digital health and science communications, it’s critical to ensure that proposed ideas and solutions are not only viable, but also useful and valuable to your audience. To create more meaningful and relevant products and services, design thinking can help us define (and redefine) the problem space, challenge our assumptions, identify opportunities for solutions, and most importantly, help us deeply understand the people who will be using our products, interfaces and experiences. This strengthens not only the quality and efficiency of you and your team’s ideas, but helps to ensure an experience that responds to your customers’ needs, expectations and pain points.

In this foundational design thinking course, we will learn about how you can strengthen the quality of your ideas, quickly iterate through possible concepts, and validate your solutions.

We will explore the topic of design from four lenses. These lenses closely align to the different stages of the iterative design process.
Clarity: Ways of seeing and framing the problem

Communication: How to gather different perspectives to deepen our understanding of the problem and the people who are impacted

Collaboration: Aligning, defining and prioritizing ideas to move into possible solutions

Creation: Making and prototyping solutions that successfully respond to the problem

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

• understand the foundational principles of design thinking including:
  • explaining human-centered design methodology
  • describing the benefits and value of empathy
  • defining the problem or opportunity (probing for “why”) before solving
  • methods for ideation
• apply user experience design principles to envisioning products and services
• distinguish between different methods of validating ideas (user research)
• generate and visualize design ideas, including customer journeys and user workflows
• communicate rationale for design solutions

COURSE OUTLINE

Design
Week 1: What is Design?

Design + Clarifying
Week 2: Ways of Seeing
Week 3: Defining the Problem
Week 4: Importance of Ideation and Validation

Design + Communicating
Week 5: Design Definition
Week 6: Design Ideation
Week 7: Design Documentation

Design + Collaborating
Week 8: Defining Success
Week 9: Crafting Vision Statements

Design + Creating
Week 10: Designing Fast and Slow
Week 11: Heuristics
Week 12: Wrap-up

BIOMEDICAL VISUALIZATION AND COMMUNICATION PROJECT

The capstone project of the UBC Certificate in Biomedical Visualization and Communication integrates and applies the skills, processes and learnings you acquired in Foundations – Seeing, Listening, Communicating, Human Structure and Function, Managing Creativity and User Experience Design.

The project consists of creating a design proposal and prototype for a true-to-life client with a biomedical visualization and communication need. It is up to the students to determine the media and the design best suited for the delivery of a clear prototype using engaging visualization and a communication strategy. This project offers students an opportunity to collaborate with the greater community, including organizations external to UBC, clinical partners and researchers.
Students are expected to complete the projects as a group using the communication and interpersonal tools they have gained the previous two terms. Each group is responsible for creating and managing their own workflow and setting weekly goals. Weekly check-ins with their instructor are mandatory. Projects are due by term end, and are expected to be an accurate biomedical concept.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- access and use the social and visual communication tools needed to excel as a biomedical communicator
- work effectively in teams as serial collaborators.

The course deliverable is a project proposal and prototype. These are assessed with a rubric that evaluates how each group is able to integrate and apply the knowledge acquired in the preceding four courses.

Deliverables include:

- final project design documentation
  - project goals and objectives
  - research methods
  - project journey journal and ideation
  - prototype iterations
  - final product design and instructions
- prototype – this can be either a “paper prototype” or a minimally viable product (MVP)
- final team presentation – the team can choose which media to use for this
- peer review to assess the collaboration and management of group creativity.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1:** Introduction to the Project

**Weeks 2-11:** Team Work and Weekly Check-ins with Faculty Supervisors

**Week 12:** Final Project Presentation and Reflection

**CHANGES TO CURRICULUM**

The learning objectives, subject areas, topics, instructors and assignments that make up the certificate may change over time to reflect the needs of program participants, new work in the field of biomedical visualization and communication, and the best use of university resources.

The program may also change in duration, number of instructional hours, or requirements for completion. As the curriculum changes, the total cost of the program may also change to reflect the actual costs of program delivery.

In the event of major program changes, you will be notified of options for completing the program, either under up-to-date or older requirements.

**INSTRUCTORS**

Our instructors include specialists, educators and pioneers in biomedical visualization and communication, interactive and human-centered design, creative collaboration, journalism, and graphic and visual arts. All hold master’s degrees or higher, and are experienced in adult education.

**LAURA BALLAY, MDes,** is an Assistant Professor of Professional Practice at the Master of Digital Media Program where she focuses on teaching industry-relevant design
and human computer interaction courses. She was the director of the master’s program at the Human Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon University School of Computer Science.

Laura has worked at the intersection of human-centered design and technology for the past 20 years, and has deep expertise in creative leadership, defining product strategy, and validating customer needs. She runs a strategy and insights consultancy that helps organizations discover opportunities for innovation.

Laura received a Master of Interaction Design from Carnegie Mellon University.

**PAIGE BLUMER, MS**, is a biomedical visualization specialist at the Hackspace for Innovation and Visualization in Education (HIVE), curating online and virtual educational materials for UBC’s medical and health professional undergraduate programs.

As a kinesiology student, she noticed the lack of visuals in science and medical education. Her experiences inspired Paige to obtain her certificate in Art Fundamentals from Sheridan College. In 2013, she worked as a junior medical illustrator with the McGill University Health Centre Patient Education Office, creating visual patient education materials that empowered patients to manage their health and recovery upon discharge from the hospital.

She is a graduate of the Master of Biomedical Visualization program from the University of Illinois at Chicago. As a student, she researched adverse childhood experiences. For her master’s thesis, she created a website called AcesMadeVisible, which aims to teach young healthcare professionals about the physiological toll childhood trauma has on the brain and body.

**KATHRYN GRETSINGER, MJ**, is an associate professor at the UBC School of Journalism, Writing and Media where she teaches a range of journalism courses, including Integrated (Digital) Journalism, Global Reporting and Reporting in Indigenous Communities. She collaborates with professionals, faculty and students at the UBC Emerging Media Lab, where she also acts as a senior advisor to UBC President Santa Ono.

Kathryn has helped create award-winning audio and digital work at the local and national level in Canada. She’s a recipient of the UBC Killam Teaching Prize, and was named one of North America’s top innovative journalism educators in 2018.

She works as a coach and trainer with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and is working on a joint Canada and USA journalistic collaboration on mental health issues.

**DR. CLAUDIA KREBS, MD, PhD**, has been teaching neuroanatomy and gross anatomy to MD undergraduates, biomedical engineering students and allied health professions at UBC for more than a decade.

At UBC, she has worked on integrating technology and novel visual approaches in the classroom. She’s particularly interested in the integration of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR), as well as examining the impact of AR and VR on student learning.

In 2017, Dr. Krebs created the HIVE (Hackspace for Innovation and Visualization in Education), a multidisciplinary space for innovation in biomedical education. The HIVE team has created educational Extended Reality (XR) apps, such as the HoloBrain and the Pocket Pelvis, that have been adapted as learning resources.
Together with UBC colleagues, she has published a neuroscience textbook with a set of accompanying flashcards that’s used in classrooms around the world. With anatomy educators from across UBC and from partner universities, she’s creating open educational resources for neuroscience and anatomy for the global community, including videos, e-books and interactive web materials. All of these materials are available on two websites she curates, www.neuroanatomy.ca and www.clinicalanatomy.ca.

Dr. Krebs has received numerous teaching awards, including the 2018 Killam Teaching Prize.

SARAH LEAVITT, MFA, has developed and taught undergraduate and graduate comics classes for the UBC Creative Writing program since 2012. Sarah’s interests include memoir comics, comics about health issues, formal experimentation in comics, and the benefits of studying and creating comics for all students, from dedicated cartoonists to those who use comics as a tool for brainstorming and problem solving.

She is the author of the graphic memoir Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer’s, My Mother, and Me, which has been published in Canada, the US, the UK, Germany, France and Korea, and was a finalist for the Writers’ Trust Non-Fiction Prize in 2010. Her memoir is part of the curricula in health and literature courses from Canada to the UK to India, and is considered an essential text in the growing genres of graphic medicine and comics and health. Tangles has been included in a number of exhibitions, notably at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum and the National Library of Medicine, and is being developed as a feature-length animation.

Sarah is working on her next project, a series of watercolour comics about grief and loss. More of her work can be found at sarahleavitt.com and on Instagram at @sarah_leav.

PATRICK PENNEFATHER, PhD, is an assistant professor at UBC Theatre and Film, co-appointed at the Master of Digital Media (MDM) Program, and a faculty in residence at UBC’s Emerging Media Lab. Patrick teaches improvisation and sound design across media and collaborates on the design and research of mixed reality (MR) prototypes.

He has mentored multi-disciplinary teams co-constructing scalable digital prototypes with more than 50 companies and organizations. He regularly investigates the user experience of MR experiences, composes for a variety of media, and consults dance and theatre makers in extending the reality of their physical stages.

Patrick has facilitated workshops internationally, and has co-published in a variety of journals within the fields of Extended Reality (XR), Virtual Reality, MR and Agile application development. In the field of medicine, he has co-published a paper with Dr. Claudia Krebs exploring the role of XR in visualizations for use in medical education.
WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS AND TIME COMMITMENT

The certificate is demanding, but very rewarding. It is designed to be a part-time program for working professionals, offering flexibility along with weekly commitments and deadlines. Students can expect to set aside a minimum of 4-5 hours per course, per week.

The first four courses consist of weekly online modules that include activities such as reading, watching videos and online lectures, online discussion forums, written and sketchbook reflections, and individual and group assignments. During the capstone project, students can expect to participate in daily working group sessions and scrums, and a mandatory weekly video check-in with their instructor. Virtual group project presentations will take place at the end of the term.

In order to meet deadlines and commitments, we ask that students not be without computer access for more than three days during a term.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

The program focuses on formative assessments with a pass/fail rubric for the individual courses. Students complete weekly assignments for each course and provide self-reflections. For group work, students are required to assess team members’ contributions.

The final project is assessed with a rubric that evaluates how each group is able to integrate and apply the knowledge acquired in the preceding four courses.

GRADUATION CRITERIA

Students must successfully complete the program requirements, and final project presentation.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

In order to participate in the Biomedical Visualization and Communication program, students need to have access to a computer, a digital pen and tablet, an email account and the internet.

Students are provided with access to UBC’s online learning application Canvas. See Canvas technology requirements and the student’s guide to Canvas for more information.

You will be provided with a version of Adobe® Creative Suite if you do not own an edition. Please visit Adobe Creative Cloud for the system requirements to run Adobe applications.
Admission Requirements

The program is open to applicants of all nationalities, regardless of residency or citizenship status in Canada. We recommend applicants who live outside of Canada live in a time zone in which they can ensure they can join live online discussions and video chats to facilitate group work.

To accommodate learners from a variety of backgrounds, admission requirements for the UBC Certificate in Biomedical Visualization and Communication are broad. You must:

- have a minimum of two years’ post-secondary education
- be motivated to enrol in this program by relevant professional or personal experience or interest.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Your online application must include:

1. A letter of intent (maximum 500 words): You should outline your motivation and interests for pursuing the program, your current experience, what you feel you will gain from the program, what strengths you bring and how the program contributes to your future personal and/or professional goals.

2. A copy (official or unofficial) of your diploma, degree or certificate.

To ensure you can participate fully in the program, you’ll need to read, write and speak comfortably in English. While you don’t need to prove English language proficiency, we recommend an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 6.0, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) internet-based score of 80, or equivalent.

COURSE REGISTRATION AND PAYMENT

When you submit your application and pay the application fee, you will receive an email within six business days to confirm we’ve received your application and that it’s complete. If you are accepted into the program, you will receive an email with instructions on how to pay your non-refundable deposit. The deposit must be paid within 10 business days to secure a place in the program.

All fees are in Canadian dollars and are subject to change. Fees may be paid by Visa®, Mastercard®, cash, money order or certified cheque.

The program fee includes all courses, Adobe® software and professional art supplies.
A virtual anatomy lab is held through a Virtual Reality (VR) app (currently under development) or a WebVR link.
Program Policies

ENROLMENT
Meeting minimum requirements does not ensure admission to the certificate program. Admission to this program is expected to be competitive and available seats are limited. Before applying to the program, we would be happy to discuss your eligibility, prior experience and the relevance of the program to your goals. Please contact us at 604 822 1444 or by email at info.exl@ubc.ca.

LOCATION OF PROGRAM
This program is 100% online. Face-to-face seminars may be planned when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

WITHDRAWAL AND CANCELLATION POLICIES
Many of our expenses are incurred within the two-week period before the certificate begins. Our cancellation policy reflects the fact that we can recover few of these expenses in the event of late cancellations. UBC Extended Learning may sometimes cancel certificates due to insufficient enrolment or other reasons. If this occurs, a full refund is processed and sent to you automatically. UBC Extended Learning does not guarantee that a particular certificate will be offered at a particular time.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE PROGRAM BEFORE THE PROGRAM START DATE
You may withdraw from the program up to 10 business days prior to the program start date but should notify UBC Extended Learning in writing of the reasons for the withdrawal. Tuition fees are 100% refundable, less the non-refundable deposit.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE PROGRAM AFTER THE PROGRAM START DATE
You may withdraw from the certificate program at any time but must notify the program staff in writing of the reasons for the withdrawal. Tuition fees are non-refundable.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
UBC is committed to academic integrity and takes academic misconduct seriously. Penalties for cheating, plagiarizing or other academic misconduct may include dismissal from the program or course with a failing grade and no refund of fees. Read more about UBC’s policy.
DISABILITY-RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

Should you require disability-related accommodations for your course, please contact us six (6) weeks before the certificate start date or as earliest as possible. UBC works to create an inclusive learning environment in which all students can achieve success. Any student with diverse needs requiring additional services or support, please contact the UBC Centre for Accessibility.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

UBC fosters positive learning environments that respect the diversity of individuals and apply standards in keeping with appropriate conduct in professional workplaces. Students are expected to adhere to professional standards of behaviour. In particular, the ability to work respectfully in a team environment and with other students, instructors and staff is essential. UBC reserves the right to require a student to withdraw from a program at any time for unsatisfactory professional conduct. In such cases, there will be no refund of tuition.

USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Participants must abide by the UBC Responsible Use of Information Technology guidelines.
Administration

PROGRAM STAFF
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UBC Extended Learning
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Paige Blumer, Biomedical Visualization Specialist
The Hackspace for Innovation and Visualization in Education, Faculty of Medicine
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ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Dr. Claudia Krebs, MD, PhD, Professor of Teaching, Cellular and Physiological Sciences, UBC

Larry Bafia, Director Master of Digital Media Program, Centre for Digital Media

Paul Rea, MBCHB, MSC, PhD, DipFMS, MEd, Professor of Digital and Anatomical Education, University of Glasgow

Jason Organ, MA, PhD, Assistant Professor of Anatomy & Cell Biology, Indiana State University

Kathryn Gretsinger, MJ, Associate Professor of Teaching, Graduate School of Journalism, UBC

Laura Ballay, MDes, Assistant Professor of Professional Practice, Centre for Digital Media

Sarah Jeavitt, MFA, Adjunct Professor, Creative Writing Program, UBC

Patrick Pennefather, MFA, PhD, Assistant Professor, Film & Theatre, UBC and Centre for Digital Media

Richard Smith, MA, PhD, Professor, School of Communication, Simon Fraser University