HCIM

Master of Science in Human-Computer Interaction
at the University of Maryland College of Information Studies (UMD iSchool)

The HCIM program prepares students to create innovative technologies that transform the way people connect to information. Our students learn to design, evaluate, and implement new information technologies and interfaces that are usable and appealing. Through an interdisciplinary curriculum—with perspectives from information studies, computer science, engineering, design, education, psychology, and the social sciences—students are uniquely prepared to leverage information technology for positive social impact, develop interfaces for users of all ages and abilities, and apply modern design methodology.

This innovative curriculum blends theory, practical skills, and hands-on learning with industry partners, preparing our graduates to apply their skills directly and immediately in their careers. HCIM graduates go on to careers in UX/UI and interaction design, usability analysis, user research, visual design, product design, technology development, technology project management, technology evaluation, and more.

#9 IN THE USA
HCI Masters Program

#19 IN THE USA
UMD as a Public Research University

TOP FACULTY
ACM Distinguished Faculty

HCIL
World–Famous Research Lab

HCIM is a STEM OPT certified program

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ischool.umd.edu   @iSchoolUMD

CAREER PATHS

As technology becomes increasingly integral to our daily lives, there is a growing need for skilled information technology professionals who can create easy-to-use, meaningful technologies for diverse populations. Our graduates are qualified to meet a range of industry and government workforce needs, including user experience designers, user interface developers, technical project managers, and technology evaluators.

Industry, government, and nonprofits all need employees who understand HCI and who have skills in areas including user needs assessment, evaluation of new technologies, and participatory design. These skills are not only applicable to industry; many doctoral programs are looking for master's students who have a firm grounding in research methods, technology development, and more.

Common career paths for HCIM graduates:

- **User Experience Designer**
- **Interaction Designer**
- **User Researcher**
- **User Experience Researcher**
- **Information Architect**
- **Visual Designer**
- **User Interface Designer**
- **Usability Analyst**
- **Product Designer**

Graduates work for top private companies and government organizations such as Google, Capital One, American Airlines, Blackboard, Deloitte, PlayStation, Cisco, PBS, PayPal, FINRA, NIH, IBM and more.

"Professors at the iSchool taught me not only the fundamentals of UX design, but also how to be an advocate for design."

- Jenny Hottle, HCIM Alumna, Product Designer for the *New York Times*

Jenny, after graduating with her HCIM degree in 2018, landed her dream job at the *New York Times*—combining her passions for UX design and journalism.

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CURRICULUM & FOCUS AREAS

The HCIM program requires 30 credit hours of academic work to be completed with a minimum 3.0 GPA within five calendar years from the first semester of registration. Our program is typically completed in two years by full-time students, while offering flexibility to accommodate part-time students and working professionals.

Our core curriculum provides students with a grounding in the fundamental concepts and approaches of human-computer interaction, introducing key tools and methodologies in the field. This sequence of courses is intended to familiarize students with HCI theory and provide hands-on opportunities to put that theory into practice.
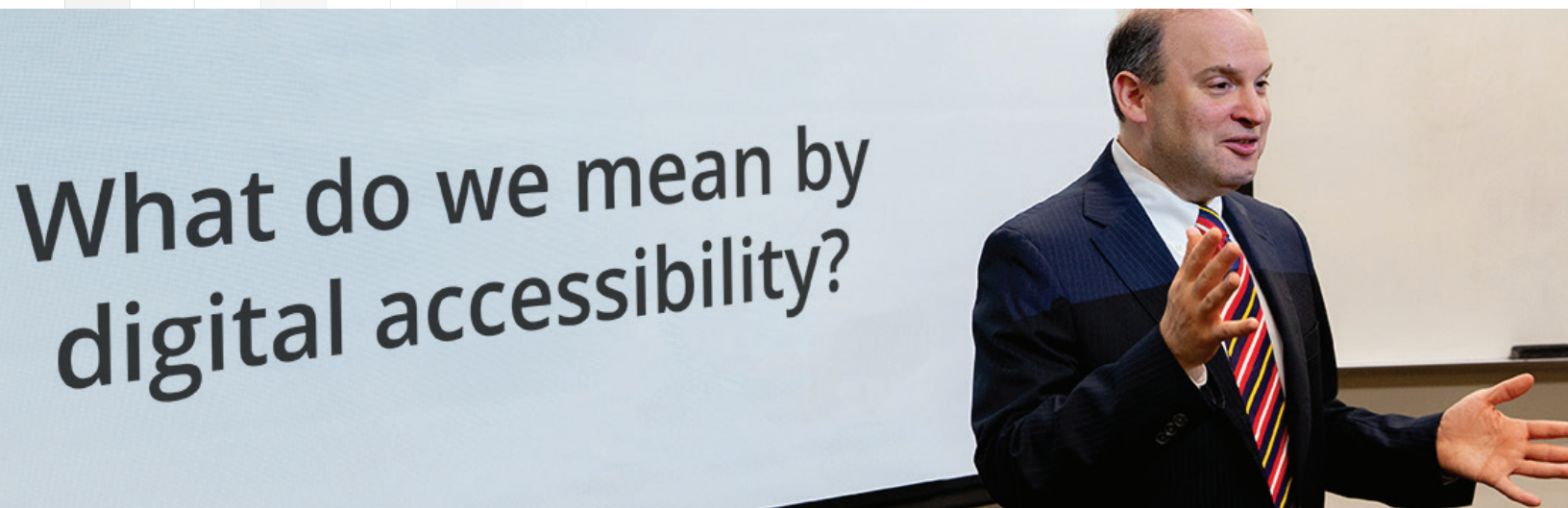
All students must complete either a thesis or a capstone project.

Capstone
The two-semester Capstone option involves working in assigned groups to interact with clients, conduct user research, and prototype designs for real-world contexts. It is especially suited for students who anticipate working in the industry and want to gain practical experience in the roles of project management, user research, UX design, and technology evaluation.

Thesis
The two-semester thesis option consists of a more self-directed, research-focused experience and culminates in the defense of a 70- to 100-page thesis. This option is ideal for students who plan to pursue a PhD or research-intensive career. If you are interested in this option, it's a great idea to get to know HCI faculty and their research specialties in Year 1, since you'll want to identify and ask a faculty member to supervise your thesis research at the end of the second semester for the following year.

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HANDS-ON LEARNING WITH INDUSTRY PARTNERS

At the UMD iSchool, we believe that one of the best ways to learn is to *do*. Our students have unmatched opportunities for applied learning. In addition to working on projects with hundreds of industry partners, our students are able to participate in real–world research at our college's internationally recognized research centers and labs.

Hands-on learning experiences with industry partners occur through course projects, capstones, participation in college events with industry speakers or sponsors, and internships. Industry partners include Adobe, Google, Microsoft, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Justice, and many more.

The college's world–renowned research centers and labs include:

- **The Social Data Science Center (SoDA)**
- **Center for Advanced Study of Communities and Information (CASCI)**
- **Computational Linguistics and Information Processing (CLIP)**
- **Digital Curation Innovation Center (DCIC)**
- **The Human-Computer Interaction Lab (HCIL)**
- **Trace Research & Development Center (TRACE)**

"This [Adobe internship] is exciting and challenging because our users are all designers. And, of course, the opportunity to work with some amazingly talented designers is the biggest perk of all."

–Ashrith Shetty, HCIM 2020, discussing his internship at Adobe where he worked on features for their product design tool, Adobe XD.

ADMISSIONS

UMD - Admission Requirements & Steps

- Complete the UMD Graduate School application. The Graduate School's Step-by-Step Guide is a helpful resource for prospective applicants.
- Upload transcripts for all undergraduate and graduate courses at each institution you have attended.
- Provide a Statement of Purpose describing your experiences and interests that will help you succeed in UMD's Master of Science in Human–Computer Interaction program.
- Submit the names and e-mail addresses of three academic or professional references.
- Upload a current resume or CV.
- Send GRE scores to the University of Maryland (optional for both domestic and international applicants). Use Institution Code: 5814; Department/Major Field code: 4701
- If you are a resident of the State of Maryland or believe you qualify as one, be sure to fill out the Maryland Residency section of the Graduate Application. If you have questions about Residency Classification, email resclass@umd.edu.
- Pay the application fee of $75 to the UMD Graduate School.
- You will be required to submit TOEFL, IELTS or PTE scores if you do not hold a degree from a U.S. institution or from one of the English speaking countries. Please check on the list of English speaking countries and options for providing evidence of English proficiency here.
  - Note: Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens but the TOEFL/IELTS/PTE is required.
  - See the Graduate School's English Language Proficiency Requirements for instructions on submitting scores. The University of Maryland's TOEFL Institution Code is 5814.
- Please note that your English proficiency scores (including listening, writing, reading, and speaking sub-scores) must satisfy the criteria for full enrollment to be accepted to the HCIM program. HCIM is a very rigorous program that requires an excellent command of the English language. Therefore, Bridge and Intensive English programs are not an option for applicants to the HCIM program. Please see the minimum English Proficiency Scores Requirements for full HCIM admission on the following page.

English Proficiency Scores Requirements

iBT TOEFL	Requirements for Full Enrollment
Total	96
Speaking	22
Listening	24
Reading	26
Writing	24

IELTS	Requirements for Full Enrollment
Overall	7
Listening	7
Reading	7
Writing	7
Speaking	6.5

PTE	Requirements for Full Enrollment
Total	68
Writing	68

HCIM - Additional Admission Requirements & Next Steps

- Submit the HCIM Supplementary Application
- Upload a PDF or link to your portfolio.
- Admission to the HCIM program is competitive. The admissions committee will evaluate applications holistically to assemble a diverse cohort consisting of roughly equal numbers of students with backgrounds, experiences, and skills in the social sciences, art/design, and computers/technology.
- Applicants are not required to have prior programming experience. Students who do not have an educational or professional background in computer science will be required to take a programming course, as many HCIM classes require facility with programming.
- Consult the HCIM FAQ for more information about the program and admissions.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is it possible to complete the HCIM on a part-time basis?
Yes. Some of our students choose to attend part time, taking 1 – 2 classes per semester and completing the program in 3 (or more) years instead of the typical 2.

Can I complete the HCIM coursework online?
No. While the iSchool does offer some online courses, most coursework, including HCIM core coursework, must be completed in person, on campus.

Can I complete the program in under two years?
No. Due to constraints of course sequencing and class scheduling, it would be extremely difficult for students to complete the degree in under two years.

Is it possible to work while completing the program?
Certainly. Many of our students hold part-time and even full-time positions during their studies. While we cannot guarantee when courses will be offered, we do our best to schedule classes at times that can accommodate working professionals' schedules. We do not recommend, however, that students who are working full time attempt to attend graduate school full time.

Do I need programming experience or a computer science degree?
No! We accept students from a wide range of academic majors, and some come in with no programming experience at all, while others have a significant academic or professional background in computer science. We feel strongly that students with all kinds of academic background and experience levels have valuable knowledge to bring to the conversation about HCI, and we are committed to developing an intellectually diverse cohort of students in our program.

Do you prefer that applicants have work experience somewhere before applying?
We don't have a preference regarding work experience. Some of our master's students have recently obtained their undergraduate degrees, while others come after working in their field for several years.

Tuition & Financial Aid Questions

How much does it cost to get a master's degree?
You can look up College Park graduate tuition and fees here. Please note that there are different costs for students classified as Maryland residents and students from out of state or other countries.

Do you provide scholarships or assistantships for incoming HCIM students?

As is true with most professional master's programs in the United States, students in our program are self-pay. While we have many highly qualified applicants, unfortunately, we do not have the institutional resources to offer scholarships or grants to our students. Current students fund the costs of the program through a combination of savings, loans, and work. In 2019-20, about 1/3 of our students were able to find graduate assistantships somewhere on campus during the academic year. Graduate assistantships are posted on ejobs.umd.edu. Some students find hourly employment at the Stamp Student Union, Eppley Recreation Center, or University Libraries. You can look at their home pages for hiring information.

What resources are available to help me learn about funding?

The HCIM Program team is focused on providing the best possible educational experience for students who enroll. Please note that we aren't able to serve as a centralized source for funding and hiring information for current or prospective students. However, we are happy to point you to these campus resources:

Tuition and fees
U.S students financial aid
International students financial aid

How do I get a paid research assistantship with a professor?

We do not have a central site to find research assistantships. Each professor manages their own research assistants. If you are interested in a particular professor's research, go to their home page, where they generally announce any volunteer or paid student openings and explain the specific procedures they expect students to follow before contacting them. Follow those instructions! Professors get many, many requests to fund students each year. Please be aware that it is extremely unlikely that you will get a positive response if you simply send out a generic email request and/ or show up at their offices. Take time to learn about research at UMD's iSchool so you can make connections where your interests and skills lie.

Application Requirements

Is the GRE/TOEFL required?

The TOEFL, IELTS, or PTE is required for international applicants who do not have a degree from a U.S. institution. For complete details on the University's TOEFL requirements, please see the Graduate School's page about international applications. The HCIM program no longer requires GREs for domestic or international applicants, although they may submit scores if they wish to do so.

What kind of GPA/test scores are you looking for?

The Graduate School requires that applicants must have earned a minimum 3.0 average GPA (on a 4.0 scale) in all prior coursework. Competitive GRE scores are typically in the the 40th percentile or higher for Verbal scores and in the 60th percentile or higher for Quantitative scores. The combined TOEFL score should be at minimum 100, and higher scores are preferable to succeed in the program. The minimum subscores indicated by the Graduate School are as follows: Speaking 22; Listening 24; Reading 26; Writing 24. While we give serious consideration to applicants' test scores, they are only one part of the application. The application review committee considers applications holistically, weighing all of the application materials carefully. In short, test scores matter, but they are only one part of your application.

What kind of students are you looking for?

When considering each cohort, we seek to admit a diverse group of students with varying perspectives and strengths in the areas of technology, social science, and design. We don't expect any applicant to be equally strong in all areas.

CONTACT US

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