



# MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES (MAIS)

## GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

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## **MAIS DEGREE PROGRAM**

### **The Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) Program**

The Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) degree program provides an opportunity for OSU graduate students to formulate a program of study that integrates work from three separate disciplines to address a particular issue or problem, leading to an integration or synthesis of all three fields. The MAIS program at its most effective makes possible syntheses of intellectual traditions, faculty interests and expertise, and departmental resources from across the OSU campus. The objective of the program is to allow flexible opportunities for advanced study in an integration of multiple fields and disciplines appropriate to the specific needs of the individual student. The culminating experience for the MAIS is the thesis or research project in which the three fields are effectively integrated as a means of addressing the student's identified issue or problem.

### **MAIS Student Learning Outcomes**

The MAIS program seeks to train students to conduct original interdisciplinary research, or to produce a creative work, that incorporates knowledge from three fields of study. This includes:

- Mastery of substantive knowledge involving an interdisciplinary topic of focus.
- The ability to write and orally present a thesis or project that presents the work in a clear, organized, well-argued manner.
- An understanding of interdisciplinarity, which involves linking together and integrating information, knowledge, perspectives, theories and/or methods from multiple academic disciplines.
- The understanding and practice of ethical standards in research, writing and professional conduct.

At the time of your oral defense, your major professor will complete an assessment of how well your work reflects the achievement of these goals, and provide this information to the MAIS Director.

### **Coursework**

The MAIS degree requires a minimum of 49 graduate credits, (500 level or above), consisting of courses in your three fields of study, plus two required courses for all MAIS students. Classes can come from any department or program at OSU, provided your committee approves them as part of your program of study (for example, a class in Political Science on Gender and the Law might be an excellent fit for your field in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies). You will work with the MAIS Director and your faculty advisors to determine the courses you'll take.

In addition to the courses you take in your three fields of study, there are two additional courses on interdisciplinary study and research methods that are required for all MAIS students: IST 511 and IST 512.

- IST 511, Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies, is a one-credit course that brings MAIS students together in their first term to teach them how to complete their interdisciplinary program. Students will read about the nature and process of interdisciplinary study, design their program of study, access library and other university resources related to their fields of study, and work on synthesizing aspects of three differing fields.
- IST 512, Applying an Interdisciplinary Perspective, is designed to develop a research proposal and explore further how to synthesize three fields of study into a research goal. Students will develop knowledge and skills in theory, research methods, and practice of approaching problems, issues or events from an interdisciplinary perspective. The final work product from this course will be a thesis or project proposal.

## **Program of Study**

The program of study is your plan for earning the MAIS degree. It will include all the courses you will use toward your degree. The program must be completed and approved by your committee in a formal program meeting. This should be done by the time you have completed 18 credits.

The program of study, and instructions on completing it, are available at the Graduate School website. Some key points to keep in mind include:

- The MAIS degree requires a minimum of 49 credits. This includes 45 credits in your three fields of study and 4 credits of coursework on interdisciplinary study and research methods (IST 511 and 512).
  - A minimum of 9 credits in each of the three fields of study is required.
  - No more than 21 credits should be taken in any one field unless the total program exceeds 49 credits.
  - If you are writing a thesis, you must have 6-9 credits of Thesis (503) on your program of study. If you are completing a project, you must have 4-7 credits of Project (506) on your program of study.
  - No more than 3 credits of blanket-numbered courses (501, 502, 505, or 506) in each field of study may be used in the program. Thesis credits or project credits are exempt from this limitation.
- All programs of study submitted to the Graduate School must consist of at least 50% graduate stand-alone courses (numbered 500 and above). The remaining credits may be the 500 component of 400/500 “slash” courses.
- Students may be able to apply up to 15 transfer credits from other institutions and reserved credits (credits earned as OSU in graduate courses in excess of the requirements for a baccalaureate or postbaccalaureate degree) toward their program of study. This will require the approval of your committee and must meet all program of study requirements.
- There is no foreign language requirement.

Students can, with the approval of committee members, change their programs of study. Plans change, research topics change, courses get canceled, things happen. It is not uncommon for students to make changes to the program of study.

## **MAIS Committees**

Your graduate committee guides your coursework and research and serves as your final examining committee. MAIS students have a committee consisting of four faculty members: one representing each field of study, plus one Graduate Council Representative. The committee will be constituted by the student, who will ask faculty from each of the three fields of study and the GCR to serve on their committee. The committee member from your primary field of study will serve as your thesis/project advisor (also called major professor). Your major professor serves as your primary academic advisor, your principal thesis advisor, and the general mentor for your academic program and your research. You will also have one faculty member each from your second and third fields of study.

All MAIS students are required to include a Graduate Council Representative (GCR) on their committee. The GCR serves in the role of impartial committee member who advocates for the student and ensures that all rules governing committee procedures are followed.

Your committee will hold two formal meetings: one to approve your program of study, and a second for the oral defense of your thesis or project. All committee members, including the GCR, must be present at both of these meetings. Communicating with your committee (and especially your major professor) outside these meetings is essential. What you get out of your graduate school experience will in large part be determined by the relationships you form with these faculty.

### **Program of Study Meeting**

The program of study meeting is a key milestone in earning your degree. You should make the most of the opportunity to have all your committee members together and focusing on your work. This is the one time you will have them available to talk to as a group while you are still in the stage of mapping out your program and developing your research project. Use the meeting to discuss your research interests, the classes you're taking, and how all these elements fit together to help you meet your objectives. If you have a brief (or fully developed) proposal to provide your committee before the meeting, this will help them offer advice on focusing your research question, selecting research methods, choosing data sources, and determining the design of your research project.

### **Changing Fields of Study**

Students sometimes wish to change a field of study. This is permitted and is done by submitting a "Change of Degree/Major/Certificate" form on the Graduate School website. Be certain to talk with the MAIS Director and your major professor about your plans before submitting the form, as well as the faculty in the fields of study you are adding and eliminating.

### **Annual Review of Student Progress**

Each year every student in the MAIS program is required to have an evaluation completed of their academic progress. This annual review addresses the extent to which the student is making satisfactory academic progress. Satisfactory academic progress is typical and expected. It includes:

- Completion of courses with satisfactory grades.
- Timely removal of incomplete grades, typically within one term.
- Filing a Program of Study with the Graduate School, typically during the second or third academic term.
- Progress on the thesis or capstone project.

The annual review form can be obtained on the MAIS website. Students will complete the form, then meet with their major professor to discuss the student's academic progress. The major professor will complete the faculty review section, then both parties will sign the document and return it to the MAIS Program Director.

### **Thesis or Project**

Your MAIS graduate study will work toward the writing of a thesis or a project, integrating different fields of study to thoroughly explore a topic, question or problem in great detail. Your major advisor will work closely with you in selecting a topic, conducting research, writing and revising a thesis or developing a comprehensive project. Your committee members may also take an active role in directing your research and offering critiques of your written work. All of your committee members must be a member of the MAIS graduate faculty authorized to direct theses.

### Thesis

In general, a thesis can be defined as the written product of a systematic research study of a well-defined issue. The thesis will integrate work from all three fields of study, and will clearly identify the research question, state the major theoretical assumptions, explain the significance of the undertaking, review relevant literature, identify and

justify the sources for and methods of gathering information, analyze the information or data, present and discuss results, and offer conclusions and/or recommendations. Examples of MAIS theses can be found in the Scholars Archive.

### Project

A project is a significant academic and creative undertaking that demonstrates originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a justification, while integrating work from the three fields of study. The project generally presents a working deliverable that is also a significant scholarly effort. Projects take a variety of forms such as:

- Writing a novel or short stories
- Designing a website
- Producing a film
- Developing an action plan for an organization
- Developing a course or instructional manual
- Displaying an art exhibit
- Developing a database

The options are wide ranging for a project, and committees can have some latitude in deciding what qualifies. In addition, all projects, regardless of the form, should be accompanied by an academic paper that clearly explains the problem or topic you want to address. Your paper and the academic literature regarding this topic will specifically address the significance and theoretical understandings of the topic, and how your project speaks to the academic literature to address the problem or topic your project is focusing upon.

### **Final Defense**

The final defense of your thesis or project is an oral examination in which you will present your work and be examined by your committee. The examination is intended to test the student's ability to integrate and interpret material in the three fields of study with emphasis on the work presented in the thesis or project.

Final oral defenses should not be scheduled until the student has approval from the major professor, and all committee members are satisfied with the quality of the thesis or project. You must provide your committee a copy of your thesis or project at least two weeks prior to the defense.

In addition, you must have a minimum GPA of 3.00 on both your program and transcript, and all coursework with a grade of "I" appearing on the program of study must be completed before scheduling the final oral examination. The defense must be scheduled with the Graduate School using the Exam Scheduling Form on the Graduate School website. Submit this form at least two weeks before your defense.

The student should expect the final oral to take approximately two hours. At the conclusion of the examination, the committee members meet in private and vote on whether the student has passed the examination. In the event the thesis or project requires additional revision after the defense, you have two weeks to submit the revised work to your major professor.

Students must be registered for a minimum of three credits during the term in which they defend. This includes the summer term.

## **POLICIES**

### **Continuous Enrollment and Leaves of Absence**

All graduate students in a graduate degree program must register for a minimum of three graduate credits and pay fees, regardless of student location, every fall, winter and spring term, or be on an approved leave of absence, until all degree requirements are completed. You are not permitted to take a period of time off from being enrolled without being approved for a leave of absence. A graduate student intending to interrupt their studies for one or more terms and then resume studies following this interruption must apply for leave of absence to maintain graduate student standing in their degree program. If you do not enroll for credits and do not have an approved leave of absence, this is considered an unauthorized break in registration and you will relinquish your graduate standing at the University (the university will drop you as an active student). If you wish to have your graduate standing reinstated, you will be required to complete the online graduate admission application, pay the application fee, and register for three graduate credits for each term of unauthorized break in registration. A Leave of Absence form must be received by the Graduate School at least 15 working days prior to the first day of the term involved. Students on a leave of absence may not use any university facilities, make requests of faculty time, receive a fellowship or financial aid, or take OSU courses.

### **Grade Requirements**

The Graduate School requires that you maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 on all courses (including graded undergraduate courses) taken at OSU while enrolled in your graduate program, regardless of whether or not the courses are part of your formal program of study that you file with the Graduate School. You must have a minimum grade point average of 3.00 for all courses listed on your graduate program, including transfer courses. Courses can be repeated one time to achieve a better grade. The second, more recent grade will replace the first and be the grade of record.

An "I" (incomplete) grade is granted only at the discretion of the instructor. The incomplete that is filed by the instructor at the end of the term must include an alternate/default grade to which the incomplete grade defaults, if you do not make an effort to resolve the incomplete course work within one year of recording the incomplete. To remove the "I" grade, you must complete the deficiency within the allotted time and the instructor will then submit the appropriate grade. It is the student's responsibility to see that "I" grades are removed within the allotted time.

### **Student Conduct and Community Standards**

Graduate students enrolled at Oregon State University are expected to conform to basic regulations and policies developed to govern the behavior of students as members of the university community. The Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (SCCS) is the central coordinating office for student conduct-related matters at Oregon State University. SCCS supports the mission of the University by providing programs and services designed to meet the educational and developmental needs of students in relation to community standards, civility, accountability, diversity, respect and truth.

Choosing to join the Oregon State University community obligates each member to a code of responsible behavior which is outlined in the Student Conduct Code. The assumption upon which this Code is based is that all persons must treat one another with dignity and respect in order for scholarship to thrive. Violations of the regulations subject a student to appropriate disciplinary or judicial action.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

OSU students are expected to abide by the University's policy on academic dishonesty. Any incident of academic dishonesty is a serious breach of professional ethics and could result in dismissal from the program. Academic Dishonesty is defined as an act of deception in which a student seeks to claim credit for the work or effort of another person, or uses unauthorized materials or fabricated information in any academic work or research, either through the student's own efforts or the efforts of another. It includes:

- Cheating — use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information or study aids, or an act of deceit by which a Student attempts to misrepresent mastery of academic effort or information. This includes but is not limited to unauthorized copying or collaboration on a test or assignment, using prohibited materials and texts, any misuse of an electronic device, or using any deceptive means to gain academic credit.
- Fabrication — falsification or invention of any information including but not limited to falsifying research, inventing or exaggerating data, or listing incorrect or fictitious references.
- Assisting — helping another commit an act of academic dishonesty. This includes but is not limited to paying or bribing someone to acquire a test or assignment, changing someone's grades or academic records, taking a test/doing an assignment for someone else by any means, including misuse of an electronic device. It is a violation of Oregon state law to create and offer to sell part or all of an educational assignment to another person (ORS 165.114).
- Tampering — altering or interfering with evaluation instruments or documents.
- Plagiarism — representing the words or ideas of another person or presenting someone else's words, ideas, artistry or data as one's own, or using one's own previously submitted work. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to copying another person's work (including unpublished material) without appropriate referencing, presenting someone else's opinions and theories as one's own, or working jointly on a project and then submitting it as one's own.

## **The Graduate School**

The Graduate School is an administrative unit at OSU that works with graduate students and graduate programs to support students and faculty in all aspects of graduate education. It ensures compliance with all university policies, as well as program requirements and guidelines, and provides resources to students to ensure their success. From the Graduate School website: "Our mission is to help you obtain your goals, graduate, and establish a successful path in life. Our staff is here to help and it is your job to understand your responsibilities as a graduate student." Check with the MAIS Director or the Graduate School if you have any questions about MAIS or OSU policies and requirements.

## **STUDENT SERVICES**

### **Health and Wellness**

Your health and wellness are vital to your education and the quality of your work, besides being an essential part of a happy life. If you are struggling and are not sure where to turn after reviewing the resources below, please reach out to someone who can help, such as your family and friends, your major professor, the MAIS Director, your fellow students, Student Health Services (SHS) or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).



SHS provides comprehensive primary health care, disease prevention and treatment services, and extensive health promotion for OSU students. Many services are covered by student fees and thus are free of charge. Call 541-737-WELL to set up an appointment. CAPS provides counseling, consultation, outreach and education to OSU students, faculty, and staff in order to facilitate academic success, mental health, and personal development and to promote a culture of positive mental health at OSU. Email to set up an appointment (CAPS@oregonstate.edu) or visit their office in 500 Snell Hall.

Many people believe that stress, lack of sleep, and social isolation are all just a normal part of being a graduate student, but that is absolutely not true. Graduate school is about discovery, challenging yourself and those around you, and becoming a professional who can make real contributions in your field. This process does take a significant amount of work and it can be stressful at times, but it should never feel hopeless, unsustainable, unending, or unmanageable.

A graduate degree program is a complicated balancing act between your academic pursuits, supporting yourself, and creating a sustainable life. It is common for students to lose steam now and then, especially as they hit obstacles or ruts in their research. It is also common for students to worry about their progress or to feel overwhelmed by their to-do list. Recharging your mental batteries by allowing yourself to relax and pursuing activities unrelated to your graduate program are vital for coping with the stress of graduate school. Keeping a healthy perspective is critical to your well-being. Remember, nobody does great work when they are burned out.

Some students worry that their friends and professors will have less respect for them if they are 'caught' doing anything other than working on their research. However, students (and faculty) aspire to a work/life balance that keeps them healthy and focused, even while working hard. Make sure you...

- Take breaks for exercise and rest
- Take breaks for meals
- Schedule daily time to maintain relationships with friends and family
- Sleep 7-9 hours per night

It is also important to be kind to yourself and communicate with your peers. Do not beat yourself up for feeling stressed, tired, frustrated, or uncertain. It happens. Talk about it to your fellow students. They are an excellent source of support, commiseration, and perspective.

### **Office of Equity and Inclusion**

The Office of Equity and Inclusion is committed to success for the entire campus community through equality, fairness, and understanding. The Office of Equity and Inclusion has three areas of focus:

- Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity
- Community and Diversity
- Women's Advancement and Gender Equity

Contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion at 541-737-3556 or visit their office in 526 Kerr.

### **Discrimination and Harassment**

The OSU Office of Equity and Inclusion defines sexual harassment as the following: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when,

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or education.
- Submission to or reject of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment of education-related decisions affecting such an individual.
- Such conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive that it has the effect, intended or unintended, of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance because it has created an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment and would have such an effect on a reasonable person of that individual's status.

Employee conduct directed towards a student – whether unwelcome or welcome – can constitute sexual harassment under OAR.

There are two confidential resources to discuss reporting options: Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence (CARDV) provides 24/7 confidential crisis response at 541-754-0110 or 800-927-0197, and OSU Sexual Assault Support Services is available weekdays at 541-737-2131.

### **Services for Students with Disabilities**

OSU supports and complies with the rights of individuals with disabilities under federal law. Any student who has special needs because of documented disabilities, should contact Student Services as soon as possible. Requirements and/or procedures will be modified on a case-by-case basis as deemed necessary and appropriate. Special accommodation, such as examination processes, can only be modified if the necessity to do so is made known to Student Services prior to the administration of such processes. Every effort will be made for reasonable accommodation.

### **International Students**

Additional conditions and regulations govern international students on a non-immigrant student visa (F-1 or J-1 visa). If you have questions that are not addressed online, you may schedule an appointment with the International Student Advising and Services office ([isas.advisor@oregonstate.edu](mailto:isas.advisor@oregonstate.edu)).

### **Student Multimedia Services (SMS)**

SMS provides multimedia facilities, equipment, and technical support for students producing and presenting academic work. They offer the following services:

- Equipment loan (laptops, cameras, projectors, etc.)
- Poster and thesis printing (free to students)
- Multimedia support
- Video editing and dubbing