INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES (MAIS):

STUDENT HANDBOOK

~ 2016-17 ~
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I. WELCOME!

Welcome to the Interdisciplinary Studies program at George Mason University! We are delighted you decided to enroll in this unique program, which encourages students to make the most of Mason's vast array of courses, our faculty's expertise, and your own creativity. On behalf of all the concentration heads, our graduate coordinator, and myself, I wish you all the best for your first year!

Dr. Christopher Hamner  
Interim Director, Fall 2016

Dr. Meredith Lair  
Director
II. THE INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES PROGRAM

History of the Program
The Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) program at George Mason University is about 35 years old. It started out as a single program that enabled students to construct a custom Master's degree tailored to their individual needs. This part of the MAIS mission continues with the Individualized Studies concentration, but interdisciplinary "concentrations" have been added over the years. These established curricula provide students with greater structure and faculty support. At present, the Interdisciplinary Studies program consists of twelve established concentrations plus Individualized Studies, which still enables students to design their own degree.

The Interdisciplinary Studies program is one of the most dynamic on campus. One concentration, Social Justice & Human Rights, is only in its second year, while two other concentrations, Zoo & Aquarium Leadership and Film & Video Studies, are being phased out and are no longer accepting new students. And three other concentrations, Energy & Sustainability, Neuroethics, and Social Entrepreneurship, have been modified for the 2016-17 school year to better reflect Mason faculty strength, student needs, and the demands of the job market. We are constantly working to ensure that these degree pathways function in the best interest of our students.

The design of the Interdisciplinary Studies program enables new concentrations to be created with relative ease, making MAIS an "incubator" for new degree programs at George Mason. For example, the M.A. in Anthropology was once an MAIS concentration. As a result, the program continues to grow. Four concentrations have been added in the last five years, and more may come online for the 2017-18 school year. Growth and change are constants in the Interdisciplinary Studies program, but our emphasis on excellence and creativity remains consistent!

Organization of the Program
Interdisciplinary Studies is housed in the College of Humanities & Social Sciences. MAIS is an umbrella program that oversees the administration of all thirteen concentrations. Each concentration is run by a concentration head with scholarly expertise in the disciplines addressed by the concentration. In some cases, the concentration head is the same person, or a member of a team of faculty, who designed the concentration in the first place. The concentration heads are a great first stop when students have questions of an intellectual or advising nature.

The Interdisciplinary Studies program is located in Enterprise 324 alongside some of CHSS’s other interdisciplinary programs (Cultural Studies and African & African American Studies). The MAIS director oversees the program as a whole, serving as both unit director (equivalent of a department chair) and graduate director for the MAIS students. The director also supervises the graduate coordinator, who runs the program's day-to-day operations. The MAIS director is also the concentration head for the Individualized Studies concentration.

In the fall of 2016, the interim MAIS director is Dr. Christopher Hamner. In spring 2017, Dr. Meredith Lair will return as director. The graduate coordinator is Morgan Fisher.
The MAIS Degree: Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies
Students in the Interdisciplinary Studies program are working towards an MAIS, or Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in XXX. The diploma will read "Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies," but the concentration will not appear. It does, however, appear on the official transcript. The MAIS convocation ceremony is part of the larger College of Humanities & Social Sciences convocation.
III. COMMUNICATION

Personnel
Communication is essential to every academic endeavor, and it is even more important in a program as organizationally complex as Interdisciplinary Studies.

Every MAIS student will have to communicate with several different people:
1. the MAIS graduate coordinator
2. the MAIS director
3. their concentration’s head
4. their project or thesis committee chair

Often, the concentration head and project/thesis committee chair are the same person. But as the program has grown and become more complicated, these roles are increasingly performed by separate faculty members. It is your responsibility to reach out to the faculty overseeing their degree programs and to keep everyone looped into conversations about their progress.

Student Listserv
The Interdisciplinary Studies program is also trying to communicate with you, via our student listserv. This listserv is maintained by the graduate coordinator and the MAIS Director. They are the only people who can send messages to the listserv, so you will not receive a lot of extraneous email. If you have not been receiving email from the listserv, please send an email at mais@gmu.edu asking to be placed on it.

Contact Information
If you need to send something to the Interdisciplinary Studies program, you have a couple of options:

1. Drop it off at the MAIS office (Enterprise Hall 324).
2. Scan/Email it to mais@gmu.edu.
3. Fax it to the MAIS office at 703-993-5855.
4. Send it through intercampus mail to the MAIS office at Mail Stop 5G3.
5. Send it by US mail to the MAIS office.

The mailing address of the Interdisciplinary Studies program is as follows:

Interdisciplinary Studies
George Mason University
4400 University Drive MS 5G3
Fairfax, VA 22030

You’ll find the contact information for the MAIS program administration as well as all of the concentration heads on the following page.
## Interdisciplinary Studies Student Handbook

**August 25, 2016**

### MAIS PROGRAM – CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Mail Stop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interim Director (FA ’16)</td>
<td>Dr. Christopher Hamner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chamner@gmu.edu">chamner@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X8762 (phone; leave a message)</td>
<td>Robinson B 226B</td>
<td>MS 5G3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director (SP ’17)</td>
<td>Dr. Meredith Lair</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mLair@gmu.edu">mLair@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X2159</td>
<td>Robinson B 346</td>
<td>MS 5G3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Coordinator</td>
<td>Ms. Morgan Fisher</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mais@gmu.edu">mais@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X8762 (Phone)</td>
<td>Enterprise 324</td>
<td>MS 5G3</td>
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### CONCENTRATION

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<th>CONCENTRATION</th>
<th>CODE</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Community College Teaching</td>
<td>CCT</td>
<td>Dr. Jan Arminio</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jarminio@gmu.edu">jarminio@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X2064</td>
<td>Enterprise 313</td>
<td>1B3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Computational Social Science</td>
<td>CSS</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Energy and Sustainability</td>
<td>EAS</td>
<td>Dr. Lisa Breglia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lbreglia@gmu.edu">lbreglia@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X9184</td>
<td>Mason Hall D215K</td>
<td>6B4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Film and Video Studies</td>
<td>FAVS</td>
<td>Mr. Ben Steger</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bsteger@gmu.edu">bsteger@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X5091</td>
<td>College Hall C100A</td>
<td>5DB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Folklore Studies</td>
<td>FLKS</td>
<td>Dr. Joy Fraser</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jfraser3@gmu.edu">jfraser3@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X1178</td>
<td>Rob A 441</td>
<td>3E4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Higher Education</td>
<td>HEDU</td>
<td>Dr. Jan Arminio</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jarminio@gmu.edu">jarminio@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X2064</td>
<td>Enterprise 313</td>
<td>1B3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Individualized Studies</td>
<td>INDV</td>
<td>Dr. Hamner (FA ’16)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chamner@gmu.edu">chamner@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X8762</td>
<td>Rob B 226B</td>
<td>5G3</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Lair (SP ’17)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mLair@gmu.edu">mLair@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X2159</td>
<td>Rob B 346</td>
<td>5G3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Neuroethics</td>
<td>NETH</td>
<td>Dr. Nadine Kabbani</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nkabbani@gmu.edu">nkabbani@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X4406</td>
<td>Krasnow 233</td>
<td>2A1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Religion, Culture, and Values</td>
<td>RCV</td>
<td>Dr. Randi Rashkover</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rrashkov@gmu.edu">rrashkov@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X2778</td>
<td>Rob B 447</td>
<td>3F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Social Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>SOCE</td>
<td>Mr. Aaron Miller</td>
<td><a href="mailto:amille2@gmu.edu">amille2@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>703-277-7715</td>
<td>Mason Enterprise Ctr</td>
<td>1B6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Social Justice &amp; Human Rights</td>
<td>SJHR</td>
<td>Dr. Paul Gorski</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pgorski1@gmu.edu">pgorski1@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X9365</td>
<td>Enterprise 408</td>
<td>5D3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 War and the Military in Society</td>
<td>WMS</td>
<td>Dr. Hamner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chamner@gmu.edu">chamner@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X1250</td>
<td>Rob B 226B</td>
<td>5G3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Women and Gender Studies</td>
<td>WGST</td>
<td>Dr. Angie Hattery</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ahattery@gmu.edu">ahattery@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X2897</td>
<td>JC 240K</td>
<td>5B6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Zoo &amp; Aquarium Leadership</td>
<td>ZAL</td>
<td>Mr. German Perilla</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gperilla@gmu.edu">gperilla@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>X2252</td>
<td>Enterprise 416A</td>
<td>5D3</td>
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IV. HOW DO I TRACK MY DEGREE PROGRESS?

That's a great question, and we're so glad you asked! It is your responsibility to track your progress towards your degree. There are a lot of people who are willing to help you with that (your advisor/committee chair, your concentration head), but in the end, it's your job. Here's how you do it:

Patriot Web home page (https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/) >> Log in
We recommend you click on everything in there to familiarize yourself with what is available.

>> Student Services >> Student Records
Focus on your Degree Evaluation and your Academic Transcript.

Academic Transcript
Your academic transcript is a semester-by-semester list of the courses you have taken and the grades and credits you have earned. Transfer courses will be listed at the top, and Mason courses will be listed in the order you take them, top to bottom. You should use this tool to track your GPA, to ensure that your professors are uploading your grades as you think you have earned them, and to make sure that all of your transfer credits (from other schools but also from Mason, if taken in non-degree status) arrived and transferred correctly.

Despite its great utility, the Academic Transcript alone cannot tell you whether you are making progress towards your degree. See below.

The Degree Works Degree Evaluation
The degree evaluation is the tool the Registrar and other administrative offices at Mason will use to determine your progress towards your degree. Since that's the tool the people who will decide whether you can graduate will use, it's in your best interest to use it as well!

Unlike the academic transcript, which displays all of the courses you have taken, the degree evaluation features only the courses that are counting towards your degree. It is essentially a record of your course work, but your courses will be arranged by degree requirement rather than by semester. If you see courses at the bottom that are not yet counting towards your degree, you should take steps (outlined subsequently) to ensure that those credits get pulled into the appropriate category.

If there is a discrepancy between the courses you have taken and the courses counting towards your degree, you should contact your concentration head to sort it out. Chances are there is additional paperwork that needs to be done:
- to transfer in credits from non-degree status
- to perform a substitution
- to get a requirement waived
- to notify the Registrar which credits should count towards a particular requirement

Don't worry if you don't know exactly what the problem is or which form to use to fix it. That's our job. It's your job to be aware, to submit an updated Curriculum Worksheet (available for download on the MAIS website) to us once a year, and to let us know before it's too late that something is amiss.
The Degree Evaluation for Individualized Studies Students

Individualized Studies students design their own curriculum, in consultation with their faculty advisor and the INDV concentration head. In order to "populate" the degree evaluation with the correct requirements, the MAIS office must communicate those requirements to the Registrar.

The tool for doing so is the Curriculum Worksheet, available for download from the MAIS website.

Once the student submits a signed Curriculum Worksheet to the MAIS office for approval, the MAIS graduate coordinator will forward it to the Registrar. The Registrar will then create a custom degree evaluation that reflects the students' personalized curriculum. If a student fails to submit a completed curriculum worksheet to the MAIS office, neither the student nor the Registrar will have any way to track the student's progress towards the degree (read: no graduation).
V. UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE, AND PROGRAM POLICIES

Every student at George Mason University must educate him- or herself about the various policies and procedures that will affect their education. Policies that can affect you as a student exist at three different levels:

• **The University**
  - Learn the University policies that affect all students & all graduate students.

• **The College**
  - Interdisciplinary Studies is housed in the College of Humanities & Social Sciences, so CHSS is your college, even if you take most of your courses from a unit in another college.
  - Learn the CHSS policies that affect all students & all graduate students.

• **The Department/Program**
  - Your program is Interdisciplinary Studies, which has its own policies for students.

If you have a question about something, you should look for answers at all three levels in order to get the clearest picture of the rules governing your degree. This section will get you started.

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

There are two essential places you need to go learn about University policies:

1. **The University Policy Website:** [http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu)
   If you want to know whether you're allowed to stalk people, drive a motorcycle to the university, or bring your dog to campus, this is where you go. (Answers: No, Yes, and It Depends.)

2. **The University Catalog:** [http://catalog.gmu.edu](http://catalog.gmu.edu)
   A long, long time ago, every student at the University received a hard copy of the University Catalog when they first enrolled in classes. This massive book listed all of the policies and procedures for the University, each college, and each program, as well as all of the courses available at Mason. This document still exists, but only online. Because no one hands it to you on the first day of school, many students fail to appreciate how central the catalog is to their daily lives.

   While you are advised to read the catalog in its entirety, and it is expected that you know what's in it, you probably don't want to. There is one section that deserves your undivided attention:

   Academic Policies >> Graduate Policies:
NOTE: Your Catalog Year
The University Catalog is somewhat different year to year, because programs get added and deleted, new courses are created, and policies sometimes change. These changes only occur once a year, and new rules do not affect current students. That is, your life as a student is governed by the catalog for the year you entered the MAIS program at Mason. This is important to note in two places:

- **When you check the University Catalog online**, pay attention to the year. The online catalog is always the *present* school-year's catalog. If you entered the MAIS program in a previous year, you should revert to the appropriate archived catalog using the drop-down menu.

- **When you log into Patriot Web** to check your records. There are some instances where it will ask you what your catalog year is. You should put in the year you first enrolled in the MAIS program at Mason, not the present year, or your catalog year if you updated it at some point. (Yes, you can change catalog years to a *newer* catalog if you deem it advantageous to do so.)

Note that the school year at Mason consists of Fall, Spring, and Summer, in that order. For example, if you first enrolled at Mason in Spring 2012, then your degree is governed by the 2011-12 catalog.

CHSS POLICIES
As a graduate student in CHSS, you need to learn CHSS policies governing graduate students. These are housed in two places:

   This section of the catalog specifically discusses CHSS. Pay special attention to:
   - Policies for All Students
   - Policies for Graduate Students

2. **The CHSS Website**: [http://chss.gmu.edu/](http://chss.gmu.edu/)
   There is a ton of great information here; go crazy! But to focus your search, use the green dropdown menu for “Current Students,” then "Graduate students.” Focus especially on:
   - Forms for Graduate Students
   - Policies
   - Graduation Checklist
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES (MAIS) POLICIES
As a graduate student in the Interdisciplinary Studies program, you need to learn about our policies as well. In addition to this handbook, these are housed in two places:

1. The University Catalog: http://catalog.gmu.edu/preview_entity.php?catoid=29&ent_oid=3832
   If you don't want to type all that in, go to Catalog Homepage >> College of Humanities & Social Sciences >> Interdisciplinary Programs: Interdisciplinary Studies
   • For the degree requirements, scroll all the way to the bottom and click on the link for "Interdisciplinary Studies, MAIS."

2. The Interdisciplinary Studies Website: http://mais.gmu.edu
   Though it's listed last, this will probably be your first stop. That's ok. Just keep in mind that CHSS and University policies might affect your decision-making as well.

3. Concentration Websites: Variable!
   Some concentrations have their own websites, which offer even more focused information for students:

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<tr>
<th>CONCENTRATION</th>
<th>WEBSITE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Computational Social Science</td>
<td><a href="http://www.css.gmu.edu/node/1">http://www.css.gmu.edu/node/1</a></td>
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<td>Film and Video Studies</td>
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VI. MAIS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Program requirements consist of degree requirements (certain courses you take to satisfy certain requirements) but also transactions that you are required to perform and deliverables that you are required to produce.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Before you applied to the Interdisciplinary Studies program, you no doubt researched the requirements for the MAIS degree. Because they are articulated more clearly online, both in the University Catalog and on the MAIS website, we won't revisit the particulars of every concentration here.

In general, however, every Interdisciplinary Studies student is required to do the following:

1. Earn at least 36 credits in the distribution areas appropriate to their concentration.

2. Pass MAIS 796: Proseminar or an established equivalent within the first 9 credits of the degree and within the first 2 semesters of course work.
   • The only concentrations with an established equivalent for MAIS 796 are Folklore Studies and Computational Social Science. Students in all other concentrations must take MAIS 796.


4. Complete the appropriate number of credits of MAIS 798: Project or MAIS 799: Thesis.

OTHER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Every Interdisciplinary Studies student is also required to do the following paperwork. We prefer to receive signed, original hard copies of your documents, but soft copies can be submitted in a pinch. *Failure to perform these tasks can delay or even prevent your graduation!*

1. Submit a completed and signed Curriculum Worksheet to the MAIS office by the end of your second semester.

2. Submit a completed and signed updated Curriculum Worksheet to the MAIS office annually thereafter.

3. Submit a signed MAIS 797 registration checklist to the MAIS office prior to registering for MAIS 797.

4. Submit a signed Capstone Project/Thesis Committee Form, with signatures, to MAIS.

5. Submit a research proposal (project or thesis), signed proposal signature sheet, and signed MAIS 798/799 registration checklist to the MAIS office prior to registering for MAIS 798/799.

6. Submit a completed capstone project/thesis and a signed project/thesis signature sheet in hard copy to the MAIS office prior to graduation.
### Timetable to Degree Completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIS Program Requirements</th>
<th>Just before graduation, Congratulations!</th>
<th>After most of your coursework is done; 1-2 semesters before graduation.</th>
<th>Before registering for MAIS 798/799.</th>
<th>At least 1 semester before your project/thesis research.</th>
<th>By the end of your 2nd semester of enrollment.</th>
<th>Within the 1st 9 credits or 2 semesters of enrollment.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take MAIS 796.</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit completed &amp; signed curriculum worksheet.</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit revised &amp; signed curriculum worksheet annually.</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take MAIS 797.</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemble your project/thesis committee.</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit proposal &amp; signature sheet.</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take MAIS 798/799.</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit capstone project/thesis &amp; signature sheet.</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VII. The MAIS Core Curriculum

The MAIS degree has a small core curriculum, meaning, we have a small number of courses we offer ourselves. They include an introductory proseminar to be taken in the first year in the program (MAIS 796); a proposal writing course (MAIS 797); and the credits students earn while working on their capstone project (MAIS 798) or thesis (MAIS 799).

MAIS 796: MAIS Proseminar (1 credit)
This course is designed to introduce students to the Interdisciplinary Studies program, to create a sense of community among new students, to educate students about interdisciplinarity, and to help them plan their degrees.

MAIS 797: Interdisciplinary Studies Proposal (1 credit)
This course is designed to facilitate the proposal research and writing process. All students will execute a research proposal appropriate to a CHSS Master's degree, including a literature review, a statement of the problem to be addressed through the research process, a discussion of methodology, and a discussion of the significance of the project or thesis. Students should anticipate doing a great deal more work for this course than 1 credit would suggest, so it is important to factor that into your planning. Satisfactory completion of MAIS 797 does not equal submission of an approved proposal, because students still have to seek formal approval from their committees through a process external to MAIS 797. Ideally, a student would work with their committee, or at least their committee chair, while taking MAIS 797 so that the resulting document is in accordance with the committee's expectations.

A NOTE ON TIMING:
If you complete MAIS 797 in the fall semester and expect to register for your project or thesis credits (MAIS 798 or 799) in the spring, you should have an early and honest discussion with your committee about the "turnaround" in between the semesters. That is, if you do not finish your proposal until December, you cannot necessarily expect your committee members to review and provide feedback on your proposal in time for you to make their required changes and register for MAIS 798/799 before the start of spring semester in January. Please discuss their expectations and availability during that short and usually very busy window of time between the fall and spring semesters.

INTS 595: Experiential Learning (Required for SOCE students only; an option for everyone else!)
One concentration, Social Entrepreneurship, requires students to do experiential learning (read: internship, consultancy, etc.) for credit as part of their degree. Social Entrepreneurship students can register for any graduate-level University internship course to fulfill this requirement, depending on who the instructor of record is and the requirements of the department offering the course. In most cases, the easiest course will be to register for INTS 595 through the MAIS program. Students have to broker an agreement with a faculty member to oversee this course using the contract on the MAIS website. While experiential learning is required of SOCE students, students in other concentrations may wish to pursue this option. They should talk to their concentration head about how it could factor into their degree.
MAIS 798: INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES PROJECT (1-4 CREDITS, DEPENDING ON CONCENTRATION)
Projects may only be undertaken after completing MAIS 797: Proposal and submitting to the MAIS office a hard copy of the project proposal that has been approved by every member of the committee, as well as the concentration head.

What is a project?
A project can be many things:
- A traditional research project that is smaller in scale than a thesis and/or does not rely on the collection of original data.
- A deliverable with a practical component, such as a curriculum design, a business plan for a non-profit organization, or a documentary film. For non-traditional deliverables such as these, students should anticipate including a written portion that incorporates traditional elements of a research report like a literature review, a statement of the program, their methodology, and the significance of the results.

If students choose to do a project rather than write a thesis, the catalog reminds us, "The same quality of work is expected of students regardless of their chosen option." Also, even if the deliverable of a project is not text-based, the student will still have to document their work in a format (text, CD, DVD) that can be stored in a folder in the MAIS office. Lastly, every MAIS student is working on a CHSS Master's degree; you will have to write something!

How many credits of MAIS 798 should I plan to take?
Here is a chart to illustrate the requirement that is stated in the University Catalog:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Many Credits of MAIS 798 Should I Plan to Take?*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCT, FLKS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on the 2016-17 Catalog Year

Who may serve on a project committee?
Here is a chart to illustrate a typical project committee:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who May Serve on a Project Committee?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Committee Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a member of the graduate faculty.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do I get signatures on my project signature sheet?
MAIS projects are handled internally; they do not go to University Dissertation & Thesis Service. The project signature sheet is downloadable from the MAIS website. It requires that you obtain the signatures of all of your committee members, then your concentration head. When you submit the final project to MAIS, you can submit the signature sheet for signature by the MAIS director. This project signature sheet does not require the dean’s signature.

MAIS 799: INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES THESIS (3-4 CREDITS, DEPENDING ON CONCENTRATION)
Theses may only be undertaken after completing MAIS 797: Proposal and submitting to the MAIS office a hard copy of the thesis proposal that has been approved by every member of the committee, as well as the concentration head.

What is a thesis?
A thesis is a rigorous piece of research that requires the collection of original data and is presented in a traditional, formal, written format. The guidelines and deadlines for thesis submission are set by the University and administered by the University Dissertation & Thesis Services, so thesis writers should make note of UDTS requirements early in the process. [http://thesis.gmu.edu](http://thesis.gmu.edu)

How many credits of MAIS 799 should I plan to take?
Here is a chart to illustrate the requirement that is stated in the University Catalog:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Concentrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Credits</td>
<td>CCT, FAVS, NETH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Credits</td>
<td>CSS, EAS, FLKS, HEDU, INDV, RCV, SJHR, SOCE, WMS, WGST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on the 2016-17 Catalog Year

Students should register for 3 credits their first semester of MAIS 799. For subsequent semesters, they can maintain full-time status by registering for a single credit of MAIS 799. It is not advisable for students to register for more than 3 credits of thesis in their first semester of thesis writing, because the University requires you to maintain continuous enrollment. This means you will have to be registered in the semester you graduate and every semester since you first registered for thesis credits. Students who take all of their thesis credits in their first semester of thesis-writing often find themselves having to pay for an extra, unneeded credit in order to satisfy this University requirement.

Who may serve on a thesis committee?
The answer to this does not need a chart: all thesis committee members must be members of the graduate faculty.
How do I get signatures on my thesis signature sheet?
University Dissertation & Thesis service will send out explicit timelines for thesis submission near the end of every semester. In addition to your committee’s signatures, you will also need the MAIS Director’s signature, and the signature of the CHSS Associate Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs, in that order. The thesis signature sheet does not require the concentration head’s signature, but you should consult with your concentration head to see if s/he would like to approve it. To obtain the MAIS director’s signature, you must email a soft copy of the thesis to mais@gmu.edu, then work with the MAIS graduate coordinator to arrange for signature. Usually this means dropping off the signature sheet, then picking it up later. To obtain the Dean’s signature, you must go to specially designated office hours that the dean’s office will announce near the end of the term.
VIII. PUTTING TOGETHER A PROJECT OR THESIS COMMITTEE

Putting together a project or thesis committee is one of the most important responsibilities a student has.

Choosing Committee Members
You should start thinking about who you would like to work with on your capstone project or thesis committee now. You don't have to decide now, but it doesn’t hurt to think about it. There are a few ways to research potential committee members:

- Talk to other students about their experiences.
- Read online faculty biographies.
- Read what the faculty have published.
- Talk to the faculty member during office hours or via email.
- Take a class or independent study with the faculty member you are considering.

What does "Graduate Faculty" Mean and How Can I Tell?
The term "graduate faculty" is defined in the catalog here: http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=29&navoid=6153
You can also find it by going to the http://catalog.gmu.edu >> Academic Policies >> Graduate Policies.

The definition is in the third paragraph from the top: "The graduate faculty consists of all George Mason University tenured and tenure-track faculty. Other Mason faculty members, as well as individuals from outside the university, may be appointed to the graduate faculty by the Provost for a specified duration of time."

Students should not count on a non-graduate faculty member being made a member of the graduate faculty just to work with them.

Some adjunct, term, and administrative faculty are members of the graduate faculty, but others are not. If you can't tell if a faculty member is graduate faculty, just ask them. It is better to ask than to labor under a false impression.

Making the Request
Keep in mind that most Mason faculty have heavy teaching, research, and service loads. Faculty are not obligated to accept more students than they can comfortably handle, and taking you on as a student, or turning you down, is not likely to change a faculty member's salary or performance evaluation for better or worse. The key, then, to making a successful request is in presenting yourself as an accomplished, well-informed, professional student with interesting ideas, who can take criticism, and who will not create problems by missing meetings, blowing deadlines, ignoring feedback, or doing shoddy work.

The best way to make this request is in person, in office hours, while talking about your research ideas. Be polite, prepare to "audition" for the part by offering a writing sample or other example of your work, and give the faculty member time to think about it. If you get a "yes" in person, follow up with a polite email reiterating the arrangement so that you can confirm that you and the faculty member left the meeting with the same understanding.
Doing the Paperwork
In order to communicate the composition of your committee to the MAIS program, and to ensure that each member of the committee is aware that they have agreed to serve, students will circulate the Capstone Project/Thesis Committee Form (available for download from the MAIS website) for signature from the committee members, the committee chair, and the concentration head. Once all the signatures have been obtained, this form should be submitted to the MAIS office.
IX. MAIS PROGRAM PROCEDURES

One of our goals in the Interdisciplinary Studies program is to ensure consistency and rigor across all concentrations, while also helping students as they make their way through the program. As you might imagine, with so many students in so many different concentrations, Interdisciplinary Studies can be difficult to manage. As a result, we have a particular set of procedures in place for students to follow.

Below you'll find the major transactions that every student will have to perform.

**MAIS PAPERWORK 101**

- In general, every form might require both your concentration head's signature and the MAIS director's signature. Many forms are available to students on the Registrar's website ([http://registrar.gmu.edu](http://registrar.gmu.edu)) under "Forms." You can go there to start the process. Other forms are controlled, and you will have to ask the MAIS graduate coordinator for help.

- Copies of signed forms will remain in your file in the MAIS office. The MAIS graduate coordinator will forward the signed originals to the appropriate office. Most paperwork goes through the dean's office (the Associate Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs in Mason Hall) on its way to the Registrar.

- It is the student's responsibility to follow up after an appropriate waiting period (about 10 business days) by checking their online records in Patriot Web (Degree Evaluation, Academic Transcript).
  - If the transaction hasn't posted, the student’s first call should be to the Registrar to see if the paperwork arrived but is awaiting processing.
  - If the answer is No, then the second call is to the MAIS graduate coordinator to ask her to start tracking it down.

**REGISTERING FOR MAIS 796: PROSEMINAR**

The only prerequisite for MAIS 796 is that you be a student in the Interdisciplinary Studies program. This is a closed course to ensure that there is enough space in the class for MAIS students who need it. To have the restriction lifted in order to register is easy: just email the MAIS graduate coordinator to say that you’d like to take the course, the restriction will be lifted, and you will be able to register via Patriot Web. If you do not register for MAIS 796, it’s likely no one will hassle you about that, because it's your responsibility to register for required courses. It's best to just take the class when it will be most useful to you: in your first or second semester in the program.
CURRICULUM WORKSHEETS

Curriculum worksheets are available for download from the Interdisciplinary Studies website. There is a different curriculum worksheet for each concentration. It is the student's responsibility to download and fill out the worksheet, get their concentration head's signature, and submit a signed original in hard copy to the MAIS office.

Please note that the worksheet posted on the website is based on the current catalog year’s degree requirements. If you came into the program in a prior year, then you will want to review the degree requirements for the year that you started the program. The easiest thing to do is print several copies of the curriculum worksheet in your first semester in the program, then use them as templates in subsequent semesters. This will ensure that the degree requirements on the worksheet mirror the requirements of your catalog year.

The first version of your curriculum worksheet will be a best-case-scenario projection of your degree program. Because course offerings can be difficult to predict, it is very common that you and your concentration head will have to work out alternatives. Students should submit a revised and signed curriculum worksheet in hard copy on the annual anniversary of the first one they submit. You will also need to have a current version on file by the time you register for MAIS 797 and again when you register for MAIS 798/799.

The curriculum worksheet is a planning document, but it is also an essential communication tool. The MAIS office submits the CW, along with other forms, to the Registrar to communicate how the courses you have taken or plan to take are supposed to fall amongst your various degree requirements. If you do not submit a CW regularly, then we cannot ensure that the Registrar will know, when it’s time for you to graduate, how your courses are supposed to count. **This can result in a delay in conferring your degree!**

SUBSTITUTING ONE CLASS FOR ANOTHER

It is very common for MAIS students to have to make course substitutions. To do a course substitution:

1. Discuss the substitution with your concentration head before you take the course.
2. After you have taken the course, fill out the Sub/Waiver Form on the Registrar’s website.
3. Print the Sub/Waiver form and submit it to your concentration head for signature. (There is no separate line on the form for the concentration head’s signature, so s/he will share a line with the MAIS director.)
4. Submit the original, signed hard copy of the Sub/Waiver form to the MAIS office. That concludes the student’s role in the process! From there, the director will sign, and the form will be sent to the dean’s office for signature. The dean’s office will forward the form to the Registrar.
5. About 10 days after you submit the form to MAIS, check your online degree evaluation to see if the transaction was completed. If the answer is No, contact the Registrar to see if your paperwork is pending. If they do not have it, contact the MAIS graduate coordinator, who will track it down.
GETTING A REQUIREMENT WAIVED
If for some reason you and your concentration head feel that a requirement should be waived, you will use the Sub/Waiver Form to do so. Follow the steps for course substitutions (above), but fill out the waiver section of the form.

REGISTERING FOR AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING COURSE
One concentration, Social Entrepreneurship, requires students to acquire an experiential learning experience (read: internship, consultancy, etc.) as part of their degree, but students in other concentrations might be able to do this as well. Students have two options for getting credit for an internship: to take INTS 595 with an instructor willing to serve as advisor, or to take another internship course.

To register for INTS 595:
1. The student will broker an experiential learning opportunity and get it approved by their concentration head.
2. The student will find a faculty member willing to serve as instructor of record.
3. The student will ensure that an updated curriculum worksheet is on file in the MAIS office.
4. The student will fill out the Experiential Learning Contract, found on the MAIS website.
5. The student will submit the signed original to the MAIS program.
6. The MAIS graduate coordinator will submit the Individualized Section form to the School of Integrative Studies for signature, then to the Registrar.

To register for an internship course offered by another department:
1. The student will broker an experiential learning opportunity and get it approved by their concentration head.
2. The student will find a faculty member willing to serve as instructor of record.
3. The student will approach the appropriate administrator (most likely graduate coordinator or director) for the department that offers the course.
4. That unit will arrange for registration.
5. The student should fill out the Experiential Learning Contract and submit it with signatures to MAIS, so that we know how the requirement is being fulfilled.
REGISTRATION FOR MAIS 797: INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES PROPOSAL
MAIS 797 is a controlled course, meaning that students will have to ask the MAIS graduate coordinator to lift the registration restriction for them to register.

To register for MAIS 797:

1. The student will ensure that an updated curriculum worksheet is on file in the MAIS office.

2. The student will form a project/thesis committee or at least acquire a committee chair.

3. The student will submit a completed MAIS 797: Proposal Checklist, available for download on the MAIS website, in hard copy to the MAIS office.
   • This document requires a signature from the chair of the committee.
   • This document requires the signature of the concentration head.

4. Once the MAIS graduate coordinator has verified all of the items on the checklist, she will lift the registration restriction for the class.

5. At that point, the student will have to log into Patriot Web and register for the class.

FORMING A COMMITTEE
Using the techniques discussed earlier, students will broker relationships with three Mason faculty to form their committees. This can be done at any point in the student’s process. At the very least, students must have a committee chair by the time they take MAIS 797: Proposal. Then they must have the entire committee in place before registering for MAIS 798: Project or MAIS 799: Thesis.

To formalize the process of committee formation, students will circulate the Capstone Project/Thesis Committee Form for signature from the committee members, the committee chair, and the concentration head. Once all the signatures have been obtained, this form should be submitted to the MAIS office. Students cannot register for MAIS 798/799 until they do so.
SUBMITTING A PROJECT OR THESIS PROPOSAL
MAIS 797: Interdisciplinary Studies Proposal is a 1-credit course designed to facilitate the creation of a draft of a project or thesis proposal. Successful completion of the course is just the beginning of the process of submitting the proposal.

To submit a proposal (procedures are the same for project and thesis):

1. The student must submit the proposal to their committee chair for review and execute any required changes.
2. When the committee chair indicates the proposal is ready to share with the other committee members, the student must submit the proposal to them and execute any required changes.
3. The student must circulate an original copy of the Proposal Signature Sheet, available for download on the MAIS website, to all committee members.
4. The student must submit a copy of the proposal and the Proposal Signature Sheet with the committee members' signatures to the appropriate concentration head to MAIS.
5. The student must submit a hard copy of the final proposal and a hard copy original of the signed Proposal Signature Sheet, including the concentration head's signature, to the MAIS office for the director's signature.

REGISTERING FOR MAIS 798/799
Once the student has met all the course prerequisites and submitted the proposal and signature sheet (see above), it's time to register for MAIS 798 (Project) or MAIS 799 (Thesis).

To register for MAIS 798 or MAIS 799:

1. The student must submit a completed MAIS 798/799 Checklist, available for download on the MAIS website, in hard copy to the MAIS office.
   • This document requires the signature of the student's project or thesis committee chair.
2. The student must submit a hard copy of the project or thesis proposal to MAIS.
3. The student must submit a Proposal Signature Sheet with the signatures of the committee members and the concentration head to MAIS.
4. Once the graduate coordinator has double-checked that all requirements have been met, s/he will create an individualized section of the appropriate course and submit a request to the Registrar's Office for the student to be registered for the class.
GRADUATING
Congratulations! It's time to graduate! You are now responsible for initiating the graduation process with the Registrar and ensuring that all degree requirements have been met.

In order to graduate:

1. The student must file their intent to graduate with the Registrar via Patriot Web.

2. The student must make sure s/he has completed all MAIS degree & program requirements.

3. The student must circulate a final version of the capstone project or thesis to their committee members and obtain their signatures on an original copy of the Project Signature Sheet or the Thesis Signature Sheet, available for download from the MAIS website.


5. The student must obtain their concentration head's signature on the Project Signature Sheet. (PROJECT ONLY)

6. The student must submit a hard copy of the completed project to the MAIS office in a format that is easily kept in a folder. CDs and DVDs are ok; thumb drives are not. No bulky binders or folders, please. (PROJECT ONLY)

7. The student must submit a soft copy of the completed thesis to the MAIS director for review. (THESIS ONLY)

8. All students must submit a hard copy original of the signature sheet (thesis or project) to the MAIS director for her signature. Thesis students will have to retrieve this document in order to take it to the dean's office for signature prior to submission to UDTS.

9. Thesis students will have to acquire the dean’s signature prior to submitting the thesis to UDTS. The dean’s office will announce office hours for when to get the signature. (THESIS ONLY)

10. The student should check their transcript to ensure that their committee chair has uploaded a grade for the final semester of MAIS 798/799. If the grade remains "IP" (for "In Progress"), the student should follow up with their instructor about submitting a final grade (S for "Satisfactory," NC for "No Credit.")

11. Attend graduation! Congratulations!
X. BEST WISHES FOR YOUR DEGREE PROGRAM & BEYOND
Completing an advanced degree is a momentous achievement and one of the few accomplishments in life that cannot be taken away from you. We hope that your experience in the Interdisciplinary Studies program is a positive one and that your degree helps you to accomplish your personal and professional goals.

We also hope that you will stay in touch with the Interdisciplinary Studies program and let us know how you are doing! MAIS Alumni have an important role to play in modeling the possibilities inherent in successful completion of the degree, mentoring students coming along behind them, and promoting the Interdisciplinary Studies program and especially George Mason University through their future endeavors. So please keep in touch by updating your contact information with mais@gmu.edu and sharing news of where your degree has taken you.

You may be leaving the University, but you will always be a part of Mason Nation!