

School of Information  
The University of Texas at Austin  
May 2005

GUIDELINES FOR THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM OF STUDIES

**I. Description and Purpose.**

A *Program of Study* is a statement describing the coursework that a student intends to complete during doctoral studies at the School of Information. It includes a time frame for taking the coursework as well as a correlation of that coursework with the formal degree requirements of the School of Information. As such it plays the role of a planning document for the student and an agreement between the student and his or her committee. Its objectives are:

- 1) to help the student focus his or her study and research goals in a realistic manner;
- 2) to correlate the student's coursework choices with the formal degree requirements of the School of Information;
- 3) to help the student plan his or her coursework with an eye to efficient progress toward the degree; \
- 4) to serve as a base for evaluating a student's progress;
- 5) to provide an administrative record of such goals for future reference by the student, the student's committee, and others in the school.

**II. Implementation.**

- 1) **Consultation with a student's committee.** A *Program of Study* should be devised by a doctoral student in consultation with members of his or her committee and with other university faculty who are in a position to provide sound advice about it.
- 2) **Correlation with formal study requirements.** A *Program of Study* should be devised in light of the study requirements of the Ph.D. degree in the School of Information. [See Degree Requirements at <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/programs/php.php> where such requirements are explained in detail.] Here, the requirements in summary consist of:
  - a. Minimal formal coursework
    - i. School of Information theory seminars (6 hours)
    - ii. School of Information electives (12 hours minimum)
    - iii. Elective courses from outside the School (9 hours minimum)
    - iv. Methods courses (12 hours minimum)
  - b. Additional preliminary studies (for those without a master's degree). Exceptional students may be admitted to the doctoral program without having a master's degree. Those students must complete a minimum of 18 credits in the School of Information within 12 months. These 18 hours should ordinarily include the core courses in the School of Information MSIS curriculum.
  - c. Other additional coursework. Formal coursework requirements as listed above are minimal. Typically, students will engage in additional coursework depending upon

their personal needs and their research goals. Such additional coursework should be planned with care, accommodating such needs but without unduly prolonging one's study.

- 3) **Differentiation from a *program of work*.** A *Program of Study* should be differentiated from what is called a *program of work* associated with a student's application for doctoral candidacy. Whereas the formal *Program of Studies* described here is a prospective planning document for coursework that a doctoral student intends to take, the *program of work* (only one part of the student's application for candidacy) is merely a retrospective list of courses taken to fulfill the formal requirements of the degree that serves to inform the Office of Graduate Studies that formal study requirements for the degree have been met. The *program of work* is a record of courses actually taken that apply directly to the degree requirements.
- 4) **Submission Timeliness.** A *Program of Study* should be submitted by the end of the second long semester in a student's studies if the student is studying full-time (9 hours or more in each semester) or by the end of 18 hours of coursework if a student is studying part-time.
- 5) **Approval.** A *Program of Study* shall be approved by the student's committee and presented to the GSC by the student's committee chair and adviser as a matter of communication and information. Afterwards, an approved copy of it should be placed in the student's administrative folder by the School of Information's Coordinator of Doctoral Studies.
- 6) **Changes.** A *Program of Study*, while a serious statement of what coursework a student intends to pursue and a time frame for pursuing them, can be changed in response to unforeseen personal crises, shifts in a student's focus over time, or the unavailability of courses. Changes should be made only after careful consideration, approved by a student's committee, and appended to the original *Program of Study* in a student's school administrative folder in the School of Information.

### III. Content.

A Program of Study should include the following specific sections, each one set apart with a separate heading.

- A. **Title Page.** Title Page consisting of the student's name, the title "Program of Study for Ph.D. Studies," School of Information, The University of Texas at Austin, the date submitted, and a line that states "Approved by [names of the student's committee, beginning with the committee chair] \_\_\_\_\_ [place for a date]."
- B. **Introduction.** A brief introductory section in which the student identifies himself or herself briefly, including academic and relevant experience, general interest area, and overall goals in pursuing doctoral studies.
- C. **Description of Coursework Themes.** A discursive section describing the theme or themes of the coursework the student intends to pursue. Each theme area should be

described with sufficient clarity to communicate its general character and why it is important to the student's overall goals.

**D. Course Listings.** Each course listed under a heading should include in tabular form its University/College alphanumeric abbreviation and name, the name of its instructor, what semester it will be taken and its number of credits. In cases where a course was already taken (for example, in the first two semesters), the letter grade received for the course must also be listed.

1. **Preliminary studies** (if required). A section entitled Preliminary studies that have been required by the committee either because the student has no master's degree or for other reasons. (18 hours for students without a master's degree.)
2. **Required seminars.** A section entitled Required Seminars, in which the required seminars of the School of Information are listed, when taken, the instructor's name, and the letter grade received, if any. (6 hours)
3. **School of Information electives.** Elective courses within the School of Information that the student plans to take other than those listed for preliminary studies. (12 hours minimum)
4. **Elective courses from outside the School of Information.** Elective courses from outside the School of Information that the student plans to take. (9 hours minimum.)
5. **Methods courses.** Coursework to be taken that pertains to research competencies and methodologies. This section should begin with a brief discussion of the rationale for the research competencies, methods courses to be taken, and other methods experiences, e.g., participation in faculty members' research. Courses and other research experiences listed here will include at least three graduate hours in quantitative methods and three in qualitative methods. The remaining six hours should support the student's intended areas of study. (12 hours)

An example of a hypothetical *Program of Study* follows beginning on the next page.

**Sarah Jones**

**PROGRAM OF STUDY**

School of Information  
The University of Texas at Austin

Submitted on [DATE]

Committee Approval:

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Name of Committee Member, Chair

Date

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Name of Committee Member

Date

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Name of Committee Member

Date

## INTRODUCTION

This statement outlines my coursework at the School of Information and how it fits into my program of study as a doctoral student. The courses (45 credits total) are diverse in disciplinary perspectives while maintaining a singular focus on information needs and information technology. The classes were selected to further develop my theoretical knowledge in the field, and to add greater depth in understanding the effects of information systems.

In 1996 I graduated from Southern Illinois University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and minors in French and Information Technology. I then spent five years working for Information Unlimited, a high-tech firm in Chicago, Illinois, especially concerned with recording the various information needs of the company's customer base and doing customized online information searches for customers. In 2002 I moved to Bloomington, Indiana, where I enrolled in the Master's program at the Indiana University School of Library and Information Science. I graduated from that program in 2005, after participating in several research projects that confirmed my interest in earning a Ph.D. degree. I enrolled in the Ph.D. program here at the University of Texas at Austin School of Information especially because of its strong program in user studies and information architecture.

## COURSEWORK THEMES

In my research I am interested in the dual nature of how users create "virtual worlds" through information technology while in the context of "real world" environments. Most research has either focused wholly on how users interact within the virtual, or on how the virtual mimics real world processes—my coursework provides the foundation for deeper investigation into this issue by focusing on two areas: user information needs and how the environment shapes our understanding of information.

### User Information Needs

The classes in this area have all focused on how individuals interact with information. From a theoretical perspective, how people use information is covered in Doty's Ph.D.-level seminar on the Users and Uses of Information. Furthering my perspective on how people approach information comes from Psychology of Learning—where a survey of how classical psychology, constructivism, and new theories of learning affect information processing. These information behaviors are then applied in the design of real-world systems with Information Architecture and an Individual Studies class. For the Individual Study project, I developed web-based communication tools for a class made up of students located in Texas and in China. I analyzed the students information needs, trained students to use these communication tools, and studied the effects of this virtual communication.

### Environmental Influence on Information

The environmental area courses look at information needs as they are shaped by our real world structures. Information is considered as it is managed in organizations (Owens) and as our legal system has come to define the changing nature of what constitutes information for evidentiary purposes (Leibrock). Other traditional information structures in flux are libraries, and Leggett's class brings forth these issues of scale and compatibility of digital information, and ways to

create understanding in these new environments. Information technology and its effects on people and organizations is further covered by Jarvenpaa's doctoral seminar—which discusses both epistemic and practical issues. And finally, how culture affects information understanding is captured in the Global Markets class, where the computer interface of a particular technology product is studied as it applies to the differing information needs of Chinese consumers.

## COURSE LISTINGS

### 1. Preliminary Studies (not required).

### 2. Required Doctoral Seminars (6 hrs):

Course No.	Course Name	Instructor	Semester taken	Grade
INF 391D.8 24-691	Intro to DRT 1	Harmon	Fall 2003	A-
INF 391D.9 24-290	Intro to DRT 2	Miksa	Spring 2004	A-

### 3. School of Information Electives (15 hrs):

Course No.	Course Name	Instructor	Semester taken	Grade
LIS 391D.1 45-525	Uses and Users of Information	Doty	Spring 2003	A
LIS 391D.3 45-995	Administration of Info Resources	Owens	Fall 2002	B
LIS W385T 89-625	Digital Libraries	Leggett	Summer 2003	A
LIS 385T 45-887	Information Architecture	Turnbull	Fall 2002	B
LIS 381 45-355	Individual Studies – Web site/message board developer for Asia class	Dillon & Leibrock	Spring 2003	A

#### 4. Elective Courses from Outside the School of Information (12 hrs.):

Course No.	Course Name	Instructor	Semester taken	Grade
EDP 380G.2 09-075	Psychology of Human Learning	Schallert	Fall 2003	B
LAW 397S 25-515	Digital Evidence	Leibrock	Fall 2002	A
MKT 382D 04-438	Global Markets: Asia	Leibrock	Spring 2003	B
MIS 381N.2 03-570	Information Systems Concepts and Readings	Jarvenpaa	Fall 2003	A

#### 5. Research Methods (12 hours)

The following research courses have been selected to balance the need for quantitative and qualitative methods. Since I'm interested in studying the relationships between technology and human interaction, the Research Methods in Information Systems course provided the foregrounding methods literature in how these issues have been approached previously. Looking at a specific quantitative technique, Borich's statistics class will be covering different types of multivariate analysis, which will be useful when conducting my own experiments, and for analyzing the results of other's work. Since the role of human interaction is important to my studies, Field and Observational Methods will provide the necessary background in ethnographic methods where I will learn the protocols for observing, surveying, and interviewing participants. And finally, Buckley's Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative methods class will help link the differences across these methods into a framework that can utilize the strengths of these research competencies.

Course No.	Course Name	Instructor	Semester taken	Grade
MIS381N.26 03-815	Research Methods in Information Systems	Chircu	Spring 2003	A
EDP 482K.1 09-100	Experimental Design and Statistics	Borich	Spring 2004	-
SOC 388K 42-395	Field and Observational Methods	Williams	Spring 2004	-
SOC 388M 42-400	Integrating Qual and Quant Methods	Buckley	Spring 2004	-