



# TEXAS

The University of Texas at Austin  
School of Information

School of Information

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# MSIS Program Handbook

MSIS Graduate Program Degree Requirements

Rev. 04/27/2020

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## Overview

Information has been described as the new oil. It is a global resource that requires harvesting, organization, design and delivery. Information science is the discipline of the age, and those with the requisite skills are in short supply. Our Masters offers you a pathway to a successful career, now and into the future. Our MSIS degree is an accredited, terminal professional qualification for this new world. Our curriculum builds on what you know, positions you for the world of work, and will accelerate your career prospects for a leadership role in the years ahead.

## Curriculum

Our curriculum is designed to support both general and specific educational goals, allowing students to tailor the program to their interests or to follow a prescribed curriculum for specific certification. It is impossible to list all the specialist roles that may be filled by graduates of our program, but we do emphasize general areas of research and practice within the School of Information:

- Archival Studies
- User Behavior
- Digital Libraries
- Health Informatics
- Information Work and Workers
- Human-Computer Interaction (aka User Experience)
- Information Architecture
- Organization and Retrieval of Knowledge and Information
- Development and Management of Collections and Services
- Preservation and Conservation of Physical and Digital Artifacts
- History and Management of the Cultural Record
- Information Policy, Ethics, and Advocacy
- Social Informatics

## Overview of Degree Requirements

The master's degree program entails 36 semester hours of coursework. All students must take three semester credit hours of core courses during their first year of studies. Thirty credit hours of electives are to be taken from the range of courses offered by the School of Information and/or a mix of courses within the School of Information and elsewhere at UT Austin<sup>1</sup>. Finally, each student must complete the Capstone Experience under one of the Capstone Experience Courses.

## Accreditation and Credentials

The University's program for the degree of Master of Science in Information Studies has been accredited by the American Library Association. (The ALA does not concern itself with accrediting programs in information studies in levels other than the master's degree.) The programs for certification of learning resources personnel have been accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and approved by the Texas Education Agency. Our MSIS is recognized by the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society for appropriate professional preparation in HCI and Human Factors, and by numerous professional associations as a terminal academic credential in information science.

## Courses

Courses in the Master of Science in Information Studies curriculum have three elements:

1. Core - Required course that all School of Information students must take early in their program (3 semester credit hours)
2. Electives - Elective courses (30 semester credit hours)
3. Capstone Experience - A Capstone experience course (3 semester credit hours)

### Core (3 semester credit hours)

- The single core course is INF 380E: Perspectives on Information
- Students are strongly encouraged to complete the core requirement in their first semester of the program. To fulfill the requirement, students must earn a grade of B or better.

### Elective courses (30 credit hours)

Electives may be selected from the range of graduate courses offered in the School of Information as well as courses offered elsewhere at UT-Austin. Students may take up to twelve (12) graduate credits or up to nine (9) upper-division undergraduate credits at UT-Austin outside the iSchool, with the permission of their advisors. No more than six (6) upper-division undergraduate credits may be from any one department. Students may not count any iSchool undergraduate courses toward their iSchool graduate degrees. A student may also take up to six (6) semester credit hours of Individual Studies without special permission of the Graduate Study Committee.

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## Capstone Experience (3 semester credit hours)

Students must complete one of the following options as an exit course only in their final semester:

- a. INF 388L: Professional Experience and Project
- b. INF 398R: Master's Report
- c. INF 698A / 698B: Master's Thesis (requires enrollment over two semesters, one in which you study and the other in which you write)

Capstone courses are offered on a credit/no-credit basis, including creation of an electronic portfolio, which will be folded in with the aggregated Capstone. All other courses for the MSIS must be completed for a letter grade.

## Student Responsibility

A student is responsible for knowing the requirements for the degree or nondegree program that they are pursuing and for enrolling in courses that fit into that program. The [Graduate School Catalog](#) is the official catalog for all graduate students, and nothing in this admissions packet should be construed as prevailing over the requirements and procedures stated in the Catalog.

## Assistance for International and Minority Group Students

Consultation and assistance for international students are available not only from the School of Information faculty and staff, but also from the University's [International Office](#). Similarly, a faculty member serves as the School of Information Minority Liaison Officer and is available for consultation and assistance on any matters of concern to School of Information minority group students and staff.

## Eligibility to Enroll in Courses

All School of Information students are encouraged to explore the many resources that such a large university as UT Austin offers. To facilitate this, the School of Information cross-lists several courses each semester from other schools and colleges. The School of Information places no limitations on a student enrolling in cross-listed courses, though some other units on campus may do so, so be sure to check that there are no limitations. There are restrictions, however, on the courses that may be credited toward the Master of Science in Information Studies or other degree. Students should consult their faculty advisor or the Graduate Advisor about these restrictions.

## Scheduling of Classes

In order that persons who work full-time may have the opportunity to enroll in School of Information courses, the School endeavors to offer a substantial portion of its courses at times in late afternoons and evenings over a period of three to four academic years. The courses offered at such times include the courses required for the Master of Science in Information Studies.

## Grades and Grading

The faculty of the School of Information uses the following guidelines in grading:

Grade	Numeric Value	Description
A+		Superior achievement. An exceptionally high degree of mastery of the course material. Not recognized by the University.
A	4.00	Excellent. High degree of mastery of the course material.
A-	3.67	Excellent. Distinguished work.
B+	3.33	More than satisfactory.
B	3.00	Satisfactory. Effective Fall 2019, MSIS students must earn a grade of B or better in the MSIS core course, INF 380E Perspectives on Information, in order for the courses to apply to the master's degree. A grade of B- does NOT satisfy this requirement; nor can it be applied as an elective.
B-	2.67	Barely satisfactory, borderline work.
C+, C, C-	2.33	These grades represent unsatisfactory work, and may indicate the instructor's reservations as to the student's ability to meet course requirements.
D	1.00	Unacceptable work. Ordinarily indicates the instructor's strong reservation as to the student's ability to meet course requirements leading to a graduate degree.
F	0.00	Unacceptable and failing.

### ***The symbols credit (CR) and no-credit (NC)***

If you are working toward the MSIS degree, the only course you are allowed to take on a Credit-No Credit basis is the capstone/exit course (see MSIS Course Guidelines [http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/courses/msis\\_course\\_guidelines.php](http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/courses/msis_course_guidelines.php)), which will apply toward your degree candidacy. If you are working toward the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Information, no more than 20 percent of the hours to be applied toward your degree may be taken on a Credit-No Credit basis.

To earn a mark of "credit," a graduate student must have completed the course work at a level equivalent to a grade of C or better.

### ***The symbol for incomplete (X)***

The symbol X may be reported in case you have not completed all the assignments in a course before its conclusion. You must complete the work within the following long semester (Spring or Fall) in order for the instructor (with approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies) convert the symbol X into a letter grade.

An incomplete is given sparingly at the instructor's discretion. An incomplete is intended to be used only if you have been unable, for a legitimate reason, to complete some portion of the course, such as a term paper or special project. It may not be given to allow a student to do extra-credit work to raise a grade.

For more information on standards of work, please consult the University of Texas at Austin General Information catalog (<http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi11-12>).

### **Maximum Course Load**

The maximum course load for a graduate student is 15 semester credit hours in the fall or spring semesters, eight semester credit hours in any one summer term, and no more than 12 semester credit hours combined in the two terms of a summer session. The University's Graduate School considers full-time loads to be a minimum of nine semester-hours in a long semester and a minimum of three semester-hours in each summer session.

### **Assignment of Faculty Advisor**

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor (not the same as the Graduate Advisor) to work with during each registration period to plan the individual's program of study, and with whom the student may consult at any time about academic, professional, or personal matters. Faculty advisors are generally assigned during [new student orientation](#).

### **Distance Education**

The iSchool does not offer a complete master's degree to students at a distance. There are, however, a varying number of mostly or fully Web-based courses. To learn which UT iSchool courses use a substantive Web-based component, examine the semester course schedules.

### **Standard of Work and Continuance in the Graduate School**

In order to remain in the University's Graduate School, students must maintain a "B" average in all upper-division and graduate coursework undertaken. If a student makes less than a "B" average in a given semester or summer session, the dean of Graduate Studies will send a warning letter advising that continuance in the University is in jeopardy. During the next semester or summer session of enrollment, the student's overall grade average must be raised to at least a "B" or be subject to dismissal from the University at the end of the term.

**Time Limit**

Students must complete all requirements for a graduate degree program at the University of Texas at Austin within one six-year period. The School of Information imposes the same requirement on its non-degree programs. Coursework more than six years old is lost; it may be reinstated only in exceptional circumstances by special permission of the dean of Graduate Studies, upon recommendation of the School of Information Graduate Studies Committee.