



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

SCHOOL OF  
information

School of Information

1616 Guadalupe Suite #5.202

Austin, Texas 78701

Phone: 512-471-3821 Fax: 512-471-3971

E-Mail: [info@ischool.utexas.edu](mailto:info@ischool.utexas.edu) Web: [www.ischool.utexas.edu](http://www.ischool.utexas.edu)

# MSIS Program Handbook

MSIS Graduate Program Degree Requirements

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

## Overview of Degree Requirements

The master's degree program entails 40 semester hours of coursework. All students must take nine semester credit hours of core courses during their first year of studies. Twenty-seven 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 his or her 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 should be viewed in terms of three elements:

1. Core - Required courses that all School of Information students must take early in their program (9 semester credit hours)
2. Electives - Elective courses (27 semester credit hours)\*
3. Capstone Experience - A Capstone experience course plus concurrent registration in INF 181E (4 semester credit hours)

### Core (9 semester credit hours)

All students must take the following courses during their first year of studies (9 semester credit hours):

- [INF 380C Information in Social and Cultural Context](#)

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the specific curriculum requirements and policies of the School of Information, please refer to the [complete MSIS degree requirements, policies, and curriculum](#)

- [INF 380E Perspectives on Information](#)
- [INF 397C Understanding Research](#)

### **Elective courses (27 credit hours)**

Electives are to be taken from the range of courses offered by the School of Information, elsewhere at UT Austin, or via the WISE Consortium. Students may take up to twelve (12) graduate credits OR up to nine (9) upper-division undergraduate credits at UT-Austin outside the School with the permission of their advisors. No more than six (6) upper-division undergraduate credits may be from any one (1) department.

Students may not count any iSchool undergraduate courses toward their iSchool graduate degrees. A student may also complete up to six (6) semester credit hours of Individual Studies without special permission of the GSC.

### **Capstone Experience (4 semester credit hours)**

Each student must complete his or her Capstone Experience under one of the Capstone Experience Courses. The student must also be registered concurrently in INF 181E - Individual Studies in Electronic Portfolio.

Students in the School Librarian Certification Program may meet the Capstone requirement by completing the Practicum in School Libraries course.

Please see the complete listing of courses and tentative course schedules when planning a course of studies.

- [181E - Individual Studies Electronic Portfolio](#)

### **Student Responsibility**

A student is responsible for knowing the requirements for the degree or nondegree program that he or she is 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.

## 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](#).

## 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 such courses, though some of those other units may do so. 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, evenings, and Saturdays 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 & Grading

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

Grade	Numeric Value	Description
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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. MSIS students must earn a grade of B or better in the MSIS core courses (below) in order for the courses to apply to the master's degree. A grade of B- does NOT satisfy this requirement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INF 380C: Information in Social and Cultural Context</li> <li>• INF 380E: Perspectives on Information</li> <li>• INF 397C: Understanding Research</li> </ul>
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 courses you are allowed to take, on a Credit-No Credit basis are INF 181E, Individual Studies in Electronic Portfolio and any one exit or experience 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)) that 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 OF 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 filing of the symbol X, the instructor may (with approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies) convert the symbol X into a letter grade. This updated policy became effective Fall 1997.

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-hours in the fall or spring semesters, eight semester-hours in any one summer term, and no more than 12 semester-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.

### **Summer Session**

All of the School's degree and nondegree programs may be completed by attendance in summer sessions. School librarians often prefer this option. Courses are offered in two terms of 5 weeks each. Summer session schedules are available for distribution early each spring.

### **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, peruse the semester course schedules.

You may also qualify to register for a course offered through WISE, web information science education <http://www.wiseeducation.org>, a consortia of top-tier information schools who offer high quality courses at a distance. See WISE @ UT <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~wise/> for more information.

### **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.

## **Beta Phi Mu**

Graduates of the School who have earned a grade-point average of at least 3.75 may be considered for membership in the Beta Eta Chapter of Beta Phi Mu, the international honor society in library and information science. Membership brings with it both the recognition of high academic achievement and the opportunity to participate in local Chapter meetings and meetings held in conjunction with the American Library Association. Beta Phi Mu faculty members also host a luncheon each semester for students who have maintained 4.0 grade-point averages while in the School of Information.

## **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.