# Program Contact Information

## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Mail Stop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><a href="mailto:mLair@gmu.edu">mLair@gmu.edu</a></td>
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<td>3-8762 (phone) 3-5585 (fax)</td>
<td>Enterprise 324</td>
<td>MS 5G3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CONCENTRATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Concentration</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Head</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Enterprise 313</td>
<td>1B3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Computational Social Science</td>
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<td>3-4640</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Energy and Sustainability</td>
<td>EAS</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:lreglia@gmu.edu">lreglia@gmu.edu</a></td>
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<td>James Buchanan Hall D215K</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Film and Video Studies</td>
<td>FAVS</td>
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<td>College Hall C100A</td>
<td>5DB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Folklore Studies</td>
<td>FLKS</td>
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<td>3-1178</td>
<td>Rob A 441</td>
<td>3E4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>HEDU</td>
<td>Dr. Jan Arminio</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jarminio@gmu.edu">jarminio@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>3-2064</td>
<td>Enterprise 313</td>
<td>1B3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Individualized Studies</td>
<td>INDV</td>
<td>Dr. Meredith Lair</td>
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<td>Rob B 346</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Neuroethics</td>
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<td>2A1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Religion, Culture, and Values</td>
<td>RCV</td>
<td>Dr. Randi Rashkov</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rrashkov@gmu.edu">rrashkov@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>3-2778</td>
<td>Rob B 447</td>
<td>3F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Social Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>SOCE</td>
<td>Dr. Graziella McCarron</td>
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<td>3-1484</td>
<td>Enterprise 410</td>
<td>5D3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>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>3-9365</td>
<td>Enterprise 408</td>
<td>5D3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>War and the Military in Society</td>
<td>WMS</td>
<td>Dr. Christopher Hammer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chamner@gmu.edu">chamner@gmu.edu</a></td>
<td>3-1250</td>
<td>Rob B 226B</td>
<td>3G1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Women and Gender Studies</td>
<td>WGST</td>
<td>Dr. Rachel Lewis</td>
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<td>3-2896</td>
<td>Johnson Center 239</td>
<td>5B6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Zoo &amp; Aquarium Leadership</td>
<td>ZAL</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please see Dr. Lair!
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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 their own creativity.

On behalf of all the concentration heads, our graduate coordinator, and myself, I wish you all the best for your first semester and all the semesters to come!

Dr. Meredith Lair
Director
I. 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 mission continues with the Individualized Studies concentration, but interdisciplinary "concentrations" have been added over the years. The concentrations have established curricula that provide greater structure and faculty support. At present, the Interdisciplinary Studies program consists of thirteen 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 third year, while three other concentrations, (Community College Teaching, Zoo & Aquarium Leadership, Film & Video Studies) are being phased out. The concentrations are also modified periodically to 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 six years, and more may come online in the future. 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 an “umbrella program” housed in the College of Humanities & Social Sciences that oversees the administration of its concentrations. Each concentration is administered 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 Interdisciplinary Studies 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.
The MAIS Degree: Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies

“MAIS” is a shorthand way to refer to the Interdisciplinary Studies program, but it also refers to the degree the program offers: a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in XXX. A graduate’s diploma will read "Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies," but unfortunately, the concentration will not appear on it. The concentration does, however, appear on the student’s official transcript. And of course, students are at liberty to frame their accomplishments—their concentration and any specialization within the concentration—as they like on their CV or resume.
II. Communication
Communication is essential to every academic endeavor, and it is even more important in a program as organizationally complex as Interdisciplinary Studies.

Personnel
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
5. other members of their project or thesis committee

Often, the concentration head will serve on a student’s committee. But as the program has grown and become more complicated, these roles are increasingly performed by separate faculty members. It is the student’s 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 students, via the program’s student listserv, about deadlines, events, and other opportunities of interest. 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 listserv members will not receive a lot of extraneous email. Students who have not been receiving email from the listserv should send an email to mais@gmu.edu asking to be placed on it.

Contact Information
Because Interdisciplinary Studies student files are maintained primarily in hard copy, we prefer to receive hard copies of forms, proposals, and projects. But sometimes providing materials in hard copy is not practical. Student should use their best judgment, and do the best they can!

Sending Documents to Interdisciplinary Studies
To send something to the Interdisciplinary Studies program, there are several 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 program office at Mail Stop SG3.
5. Send it by US mail to the MAIS office.
Mailing Address
The mailing address of the Interdisciplinary Studies program is as follows:

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

Contact information for the MAIS program administration and the concentration heads is on the first page of this guide.
III. Monitoring Degree Progress

**Patriot Web**
Students must monitor their progress towards their own degree, by using the tools the University makes available. There are many people who are willing to help with that (the student’s concentration head, research committee chair, and other faculty involved with the concentration), but in the end, it is the student’s job to pay attention, anticipate problems, and seek the program’s help for solutions.

To track degree progress, log into Patriot Web ([https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/](https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/)). Students should click on every link they can to understand the information that is available.

Click on Student Services >> Student Records to view the degree evaluation and the academic transcript.

**Academic Transcript**
The academic transcript is a semester-by-semester list of the courses taken and the grades and credits earned. Transfer courses will be listed at the top, and Mason courses will be listed in the order taken, top to bottom. Courses taken in non-degree status, prior to entry into a degree program, will be notated as “ND.”

The online transcript is useful for:
- Tracking GPA.
- Ensuring that professors are uploading grades as the student thinks they have earned them.
- Ensuring that transfer credits from other schools transferred to Mason correctly.
- Ensuring that transfer credits taken at Mason in non-degree status transfer into degree status.
- Ensuring that the degree has been conferred, which will result in a degree conferral date being inserted next to the name of the degree.

Despite its great utility, the Academic Transcript alone cannot demonstrate whether a student is making progress towards their degree. See below!

**The Degree Works Degree Evaluation**
The degree evaluation is the tool the Registrar and other administrative offices at Mason use to determine student progress towards the degree. Since that is the tool administrators will use to determine eligibility to graduate, it is in students’ best interest to use it as well!

Unlike the academic transcript, which displays *all* courses taken at Mason, the degree evaluation features only courses that are counting towards the degree. It is essentially a record of course work, but arranged by degree requirement rather than by semester. If there are courses missing or stationed at the bottom and not yet counting towards a degree requirement, students should take steps (outlined subsequently) to ensure that those credits are pulled into the appropriate category.
If there is a discrepancy between the courses taken and the courses counting towards the degree, students should contact their concentration head to sort it out. Chances are there is additional paperwork that needs to be done:

- To transfer in credits from another institution or from Mason non-degree status.
- To perform a substitution of one course for another.
- To get a requirement waived (rare).
- To notify the Registrar which credits should count towards a particular requirement.

Students should not worry if they do not know exactly what the problem is or which form to use to fix it. That is our job! It is the student’s 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 the MAIS program know before it is 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 Interdisciplinary Studies graduate coordinator must communicate those requirements to the Registrar. Which means that the student must communicate the design of their degree to the program.

The tool for doing so is the Curriculum Worksheet, available for download from the MAIS website and provided in hard copy in the orientation packet.

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!
IV. Three Levels of Policy
Every student at George Mason University must be familiar with various policies and procedures that will affect their education. Policies that can affect students exist at three different levels:

1. The University
   Learn University policies that affect all students & all graduate students. These are located under University Policies and the University Catalog.

2. The College
   Interdisciplinary Studies is housed in the College of Humanities & Social Sciences. Students should regard CHSS is their college, even if they take most of their courses from a unit in another college. Students should focus on CHSS policies that affect all students & all graduate students.

3. The Department/Program
   Interdisciplinary Studies has its own policies for MAIS students.

When researching a question about policy, students should look for answers at all three levels in order to get the clearest picture of the rules governing their degree. See below for more specific information about where to look.

What If Policies Conflict?
University policies tend to be very broad, because they affect every student and unit at the University. College policies tend to be more specific and restrictive, and program policies tend to be the most specific and restrictive. In general, if there is a conflict between policies on a given subject, the narrowest reading of the policy will prevail. This means that MAIS policy can trump CHSS policy, and both of those can trump University policy. If a student notices a policy conflict that affects them, they should notify the Interdisciplinary Studies program to get it sorted out.

University Policies
There are two essential places to learn about University policies: the University Policy website and the University Catalog.

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

The University Catalog: http://catalog.gmu.edu
Years 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 students on their first day of
school, they often fail to appreciate how central the catalog is to their daily lives and especially to the unfolding of their degree.

Students are advised to read the catalog in its entirety, and it is expected that they know what is in it, but they probably won’t. **There is, however, one section of the catalog that deserves every student’s undivided attention:**

Policies >> Academic Policies >> Graduate Policies, found here:  
http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/

**A Student’s Catalog Year**

The University Catalog is somewhat different year to year, because programs are 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, student life is governed by the catalog for the year the student enters their degree program at Mason.

The school year at Mason consists of Fall (70), Spring (40), and Summer (10) semesters, in that order. (Mason’s online records sometimes use a numerical code to indicate semester.) If a student first enrolled at Mason in Spring 2017, then their degree is governed by the 2016-17 catalog.

Catalog year is important to note in two places:

- **When using the University Catalog online**, pay attention to the year. The online catalog is always the present school year’s catalog. If a student entered the MAIS program in a previous year, they should revert to the appropriate archived catalog using the link at the top right of the Catalog’s main page. Unfortunately, catalogs from before 2017-18 are now archived with an online pdf. This unfortunate loss of functionality does not absolve students of their responsibility to follow the prescripts of the catalog particular to their catalog year.

- **When using Patriot Web** to check student records. There are some instances where the user must specify a catalog year, though this may not affect student users examining their own records. If someone other than the student is searching for a record, they should input the year the student first enrolled in the MAIS program at Mason, not the present year, or the student’s new catalog year if they updated it at some point. (Students can change catalog years to a newer catalog if they deem it advantageous to do so.)

**CHSS Policies**

As graduate students in the College of Humanities & Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary Studies students need to learn CHSS policies governing graduate students. These policies are housed in two places: the University Catalog and the CHSS website.
The University Catalog
http://catalog.gmu.edu/colleges-schools/humanities-social-sciences/#requirementspoliciescontent
This section of the catalog specifically discusses CHSS policies. Pay special attention to:
• Policies for All Students
• Policies for Graduate Students

The CHSS Website
http://chss.gmu.edu/graduate
There is great information on the CHSS website in general. To focus the 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
Students in the Interdisciplinary Studies program need to learn about program policies as well. In addition to this handbook, these policies are housed in three places: the University Catalog, the Interdisciplinary Studies website, and in some cases a website specific to the concentration.

The University Catalog
http://catalog.gmu.edu/colleges-schools/humanities-social-sciences/interdisciplinary-studies/
Go to Catalog Homepage >> Colleges & Schools >> CHSS >> Academic Units >> Interdisciplinary Studies
• For degree requirements, click on Programs >> Requirements.

The Interdisciplinary Studies Website
http://mais.gmu.edu
Though it is listed last, this should probably be the first stop!

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCENTRATION</th>
<th>WEBSITE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folklore Studies</td>
<td><a href="http://folklore.gmu.edu/">http://folklore.gmu.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td><a href="http://highered.gmu.edu/masters">http://highered.gmu.edu/masters</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroethics</td>
<td><a href="http://neuroethics.gmu.edu/">http://neuroethics.gmu.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice &amp; Human Rights</td>
<td><a href="http://socialjustice.gmu.edu">http://socialjustice.gmu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and Gender Studies</td>
<td><a href="http://wmst.gmu.edu/">http://wmst.gmu.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. MAIS Program Requirements

Program requirements consist of degree requirements (certain courses taken to satisfy certain requirements) but also transactions that every student is required to perform and deliverables that they are required to produce.

Program Degree Requirements

The requirements for Interdisciplinary Studies degree differ by concentration, but every MAIS degree requires the following:

1. At least 36 credits overall.
2. MAIS 796: Proseminar (1 credit).
   - Take within the first 9 credits of the degree or the first 2 semesters of coursework.
   - The only concentrations at present with an established equivalent for MAIS 796 is Computational Social Science. Students in all other concentrations must take MAIS 796.
3. A research methods class (3 credits; required for most concentrations).
   - Consult the specific degree requirements for a specific concentration to determine whether a research methods class is required.
4. MAIS 797: Proposal (1 credit).
   - Prerequisites are MAIS 796, 21 credits, and completion of a research methods course (if required).
   - Students must complete their research methods course before registering for MAIS 797. The two courses may not be taken concurrently.
5. MAIS 798: Project or MAIS 799: Thesis (1-4 credits).
   - See section VII for help determining how many project/thesis credits students are required to take.

Other Program Requirements

To facilitate careful degree planning and ensure consistency across every concentration, the Interdisciplinary Studies program requires every student to submit the following documents. Signed, original hard copies of documents are preferred, but soft copies can be submitted in a pinch. Failure to submit these items can delay or even prevent degree conferral!

1. To ensure degree compliance: Submit a completed Curriculum Worksheet.
   - It should be signed by the concentration head after consultation about degree planning.
   - Submit by the end of the 2nd semester in the program and then annually thereafter.
   - Worksheets should be legible, and course requirements and grades should be recorded precisely. Students should consult their online academic transcript to ensure accuracy.

2. To register for the proposal-writing course: Submit an MAIS 797 Registration Checklist signed by the student’s research committee chair to request registration for MAIS 797.
   - This document will notify the program of who will serve on the committee.
   - An up-to-date Curriculum Worksheet should be included if one is not on file.
3. **To register for project/thesis credits:** Submit an MAIS 798/799 Registration Checklist.
   - The checklist should be signed by the committee chair.
   - Submit a research proposal (project or thesis), in hard copy.
   - The proposal should have a proposal signature sheet signed by every member of the committee.

4. **To graduate:** Submit the final project/thesis with a signed signature sheet.
   - **PROJECT:** Students must submit projects in *hard copy* to the MAIS office. Non-traditional deliverables may be submitted on CD, DVD, or a thumb drive.
   - **THESIS:** Students must submit theses in *soft copy* to the MAIS director prior to acquiring her signature on the cover sheet in order to obtain her signature. (A hard copy of the thesis is not required by the program.) Submit a *hard copy* of the signature sheet. The final thesis and signature sheet must be submitted to University Dissertation and Thesis Service.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>Within the 1st 9 credits or 2 semesters of enrollment.</th>
<th>By the end of your 2nd semester of enrollment.</th>
<th>At least one semester before taking MAIS 797, no exceptions.</th>
<th>At least one semester before your project/thesis research.</th>
<th>Before registering for MAIS 798/799.</th>
<th>After most of your course work is done; 1-2 semesters before graduation.</th>
<th>Just before graduation. Congratulations!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take MAIS 796.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit a signed curriculum worksheet.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit revised &amp; signed curriculum worksheet annually.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ You must have an updated version on file to register for MAIS 797.</td>
<td>✓ You must have an updated version on file to register for MAIS 798/799.</td>
<td>✓ You must have an updated version on file to graduate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a research methods course (if required).</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take MAIS 797.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assemble your project/thesis committee.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit proposal &amp; signature sheet.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take MAIS 798/799.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit capstone project/thesis &amp; signature sheet.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ WHOOT!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Who Does What, at a Glance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO...</th>
<th>MAIS DIRECTOR</th>
<th>CONCENTRATION HEAD</th>
<th>PROJECT THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR</th>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orients new students?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps with degree planning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signs curriculum worksheets after ensuring accuracy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signs paperwork to make curricular exceptions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helps the student form a committee?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helps the student identify a research topic?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signs the MAIS 797 Registration Checklist?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approves the student’s project/thesis proposal?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs the MAIS 798/799 Registration Checklist</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serves as instructor of record for MAIS 798/799?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approves student projects?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Approves student theses?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is responsible for circulating paperwork and ensuring all of the above gets done?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attends graduation?</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troubleshoots any of the above?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Must be legible and accurate for MAIS to accept.
- Signature Order: 1) Student 2) Concentration Head 3) MAIS Director.
- Students coordinate this process and make requests.
- This is primarily the student’s responsibility, but faculty can help!
- Must be submitted with a CW signed by the concentration head.
- Signature Order: 1) Committee 2) Concentration Head 3) MAIS Director.
- Must be submitted with a CW signed by the concentration head.
- No dean’s signature required; MAIS stores finished projects.
- The concentration head reviews but doesn’t sign. Dean signs; UDTS stores.
- Students must be vigilant and monitor their online records!
- Contact mais@gmu.edu!
VI. The MAIS Core Curriculum
The MAIS degree has a small core curriculum, meaning, there are a small number of courses the program offers itself. All other courses that students take for their degrees will be offered by other units. The MAIS core includes 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 and should be taken after the research methods course required of the concentration. (Social Entrepreneurship does not require a research methods course.)

Proposal Components
Students will execute a research proposal appropriate to a CHSS Master's degree. Proposals typically include:

- A literature review.
- A statement of the problem to be addressed through the research process.
- A discussion of methodology.
- A discussion of the anticipated significance of the project or thesis.
- A plan of work.

Caveats
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 degree 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 works with their committee, or at least with their committee chair, while taking MAIS 797 so that the resulting document is in accordance with the committee's expectations.

Timing The Turnaround
Students need to factor the “turnaround” between finishing their proposal in MAIS 797, acquiring committee approval, and registering for MAIS 798/799. This process involves circulating the proposal to the entire committee, getting feedback from each member, executing requested changes, and recirculating the proposal until every committee member has signed off.
If a student completes MAIS 797 in the fall semester and expects to register for project or thesis credits (MAIS 798 or 799) in the spring, they should have an early and honest discussion with their committee about the "turnaround time" in between the semesters. That is, if the student does not finish the proposal until December, they cannot necessarily expect their committee members to review and provide feedback on the proposal in time to make the required changes and register for MAIS 798/799 before the start of spring semester in January. Please discuss the committee’s expectations and availability during that short and usually very busy window of time between the fall and spring semesters.

**INTS 595: Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning can include internships, study abroad, consultancy, etc., so long as the work is done during the semester a student is registered. (Students cannot earn experiential learning credit for work experience they have prior to entering the program.) An experiential learning course is required for Social Entrepreneurship students only; it is an option for everyone else!

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. But in most cases, the easiest course of action 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 posted on the MAIS website. The completed and signed contract should be submitted to the MAIS program office for processing.

**MAIS 798: Interdisciplinary Studies Project (1-4 credits)**

Projects may only be undertaken after completing MAIS 797: Proposal and submitting a hard copy of the project proposal that has been approved by every member of the committee, as well as the concentration head. Students who do projects are not required to maintain continuous enrollment until graduation.

**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 necessarily 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 must include a written portion that incorporates traditional elements of a research report like a literature review, a statement of the problem to be addressed by the work, a discussion of the methodology, and a discussion of the results and the project’s significance.

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 primary 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.
How many credits of MAIS 798 should a student 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 a Student Should Take*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 4 Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCT, FLKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSS, EAS, HEDU, INDV, RCV, WMS, WGST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAVS, NETH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJHR, SOCE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on the 2017-18 Catalog Year

How many project credits should a student take at once?
The answer to this varies by student. Students cannot achieve full-time enrollment status through project credits the way they can through thesis credits. The only way a student working on a project could achieve full-time enrollment status is by taking a full slate of credits to augment the project credits.

Students working on projects should be aware that, while they are not required to maintain continuous enrollment until graduation (as thesis students are), they will have to be enrolled during the semester they graduate. Students who take all of their project credits in their first semester of project writing often find themselves having to pay for an extra, unneeded credit in order to satisfy this University requirement.

What is the difference between a 1-credit project and a 4-credit project?
Generally speaking, a 4-credit project should involve more work than a 1-credit project. Students should discuss the specific expectations with their concentration head.

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>Project Committee Member #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Committee Member #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a member of the graduate faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a member of the graduate faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a member of the non-graduate faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a member of the graduate faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a member of the non-graduate faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a working professional in a related field (must have at least a master’s degree)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**What is the procedure for acquiring project signatures?**

Students should circulate their own signature sheets. Interdisciplinary Studies 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 the student to obtain the signatures of all of committee members, then the concentration head. When the student submits the final project to Interdisciplinary Studies, they must also submit the signature sheet (with original signatures) 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)**

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. 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 a student take?**

Here is a chart to illustrate the requirement that is stated in the University Catalog:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How Many Credits of MAIS 799 a Student Should Take*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Credits</td>
<td>4 Credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCT, FAVS, NETH</td>
<td>CSS, EAS, FLKS, HEDU, INDV, RCV, SJHR, SOCE, WMS, WGST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on the 2017-18 Catalog Year

**How many thesis credits should a student take at once?**

The answer to this varies by student. If it is in the student’s interest to be full-time enrolled while doing thesis work, then 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 students to maintain continuous enrollment until graduation. This means students have to be registered in the semester they graduate as well as every semester since they 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.
**What is the difference between a 1-credit thesis and a 4-credit thesis?**
A 1-credit thesis is the same as a 4-credit thesis. Both should be substantial pieces of research.

**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.*

**What is the procedure for acquiring thesis signatures?**
Students should circulate their own signature sheets.

University Dissertation & Thesis service will send out explicit timelines for thesis submission near the end of every semester. In addition to the committee’s signatures, students 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 students should consult with their concentration head to see if they would like to approve it.

To obtain the MAIS director’s signature, students must email a soft copy of the thesis to mais@gmu.edu, then work with the MAIS graduate coordinator (or the director) to arrange for signature. Usually this means dropping off the signature sheet, then picking it up later. To obtain the Dean’s signature, students must go to specially designated office hours that the dean’s office will announce near the end of the term.

UDTS will only accept signature sheets that are complete and signed in **black** ink. Only one signature may be scanned; the rest have to be original.

**Project or Thesis Defense**
Some concentrations require students to defend their project or thesis. Students should consult with their concentration head about whether a defense will be required.
VII. 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

Students should start thinking about who they would like to work with on their capstone project or thesis committees early in their academic careers. 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.

Students should make the decision to ask a faculty member to serve on their committee based on professional considerations like scholarship, work experience, and teaching credentials.

What does "Graduate Faculty" Mean and How to Tell?

Committee chairs of both project and thesis committees must be members of the graduate faculty, and all members of a thesis committee must be graduate faculty. The term "graduate faculty" is defined in the catalog here: http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/

It may also be found by going to the http://catalog.gmu.edu >> Academic Policies >> Graduate Policies.

The policy reads as follows:
“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 it is not clear whether a faculty member is graduate faculty, just ask them. It is better to ask than to labor under a false impression.
Making the Request
Students should present themselves in the best possible light when asking a faculty member to serve on their committee, especially as chair. Full-time Mason faculty have heavy teaching, research, and service loads, and they are not obligated to accept more students than they can comfortably handle. Taking on a student (or turning one down) is not likely to change a faculty member's salary or performance evaluation for better or worse. So it is in the student’s interest to present themself as an accomplished, well-informed professional with interesting ideas, who can take criticism, and who will not create problems by missing meetings, blowing deadlines, ignoring feedback, or doing shoddy work.

Information to Provide
The main issue a faculty member must determine is whether they are a good fit for the committee. To that end, students should offer information about themselves and their work.

Information to provide if the faculty member does not know the student:
- A brief summary of the student’s relevant professional and educational biography.
  - Relevant course work (highlights only).
  - Relevant professional experience, including internships or other experiential learning.
  - Honors, awards, or distinctions such as an unusually high GPA (all graduate students must maintain at least a 3.0, and GPA’s above 3.5 are typical).
  - Relevant professional or educational goals.

Information to provide in every request to every prospective committee member:
- A description of the research topic or the kind of work the student plans to do.
- A draft of the proposal, if they have one. (Every committee member has the right to ask for changes.)
- An offer of a writing sample, to be provided upon request.
- The names of other members of the committee and the committee chair.
- A timeline for the process of completing the project/thesis.
- An explanation of why they would be a good fit for the topic, based on knowledge of their publications and research and teaching interests. (Students should not ask a faculty member to work with them without researching them first!)

This information will help the faculty member determine whether the student’s work is interesting to them and also whether they have the necessary expertise to be helpful.

If the request takes place in person, the student could bring hard copies of a 1-page CV or resume, a writing sample, and/or a draft of the proposal. If the request takes place via email, the text could include an offer to send these items upon request. It’s best not to load an email down with attachments if you don’t know the faculty member and/or they are not expecting them.

Increasing the Odds
The ideal way to make this request is in person, in office hours, while talking about research ideas. (In this case, students should have hard copies of their materials at the ready.) Treat the appointment like a job interview: arrive on time, be prepared, and dress appropriately.
Just as with a job cover letter, any written correspondence should be proofread for clarity, accuracy, grammar, and typos. Students should only handle these transactions using their Mason email accounts.

Whether in person or over email, the student should give the faculty member time to think about the request.

**Following Up**
If the student gets a "yes" in person, or there was some other followup (like taking a class, asking later, or arranging an independent study), the student should follow up with a polite email reiterating the arrangement in order to confirm that both parties left the meeting with the same understanding. All correspondence with faculty should be conducted using Mason email addresses, and students should proofread their text for errors before sending.

**Notifying the MAIS Program**
Students will inform the Interdisciplinary Studies program of the composition of their committee when they seek registration for MAIS 798/799 credits. They should enumerate their committee chair and members on the [MAIS 798/799 Registration Checklist], available for download from the program website.

If the student’s committee chair changes after registering for MAIS 797: Proposal, the student should notify the Interdisciplinary Studies program.

**Ensuring an Informed Committee**
Interdisciplinary Studies committees are staffed by faculty from throughout the University, and some committee members may be serving on an MAIS committee for the first time. Students can assist their committees by encouraging them to explore the MAIS website, especially the tab “For Faculty,” which contains information about projects, theses, and procedures. There are also two handouts available for download that summarize guidelines for project and for thesis. Students can download this handout and share it with their committees or direct their attention to it by sharing the links in an email.

Students can also provide their committee chairs/members with contact information for the concentration head and/or the Interdisciplinary Studies director, in case they have further questions or concerns about their role.
VIII. MAIS Program Procedures

One of the goals of the Interdisciplinary Studies administration is to ensure consistency and rigor across all concentrations, while also helping students as they make their way through the program. With so many students in so many different concentrations, managing the program can be difficult. What follows is a set of procedures designed to achieve these goals.

MAIS Paperwork 101

- In general, every form might require both the 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." Start there. Other forms are controlled, and students will have to ask the MAIS graduate coordinator for help.

- Copies of signed forms will remain in the student's 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 Buchanan 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 has not 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 to start tracking it down.

Registering for MAIS 796: Proseminar

The only prerequisite for MAIS 796 is that a student be declared in the Interdisciplinary Studies program. This course is closed to ensure that only Interdisciplinary Studies students can register for it. To request registration, students should email the MAIS graduate coordinator to say that they would like to take the course. The coordinator will lift the restriction, and the student will be able to register via Patriot Web. All students are required to take MAIS 796 in their 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 correct worksheet, discuss degree planning with their concentration head, get their concentration head's signature, and submit a signed original in hard copy to the MAIS office.
**Curriculum Worksheets & Catalog Year**
The concept of “catalog year”—the academic year a student starts their degree—was discussed previously. Please note that the worksheet posted on the website is based on the current catalog year’s degree requirements. If a student entered the program in a prior year, then they will want to review the degree requirements for the year that they entered the program. The Interdisciplinary Studies program provides each student with a hard copy of the appropriate curriculum worksheet at orientation, so students can print several copies of this form and use it as a template in subsequent semesters. This will ensure that the degree requirements on the curriculum worksheet mirror the requirements of the student’s catalog year.

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

**Curriculum Worksheets: The Key to the Degree**
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 a student has taken, or plans to take, will count towards specific degree requirements.

Think of the curriculum worksheet like a key: every little node has to line up perfectly to turn the lock. Like a key, the curriculum worksheet needs to be correct—accurate course names and numbers, dates, grades—so that the program can communicate correctly to the Registrar how the degree should be configured. If students do not submit a curriculum worksheet regularly, then the MAIS program cannot ensure that the Registrar will know, when it is time for graduation, how the courses are supposed to count. This can delay degree conferral!

**Substituting One Class for Another**
It is very common for MAIS students to have to make course substitutions. To request a course substitution:

1. The student should discuss the substitution with their concentration head before they take the course.

2. After they have registered for the course, they should fill out the Sub/Waiver Form on the Registrar’s website.
3. Next, they should print the Sub/Waiver form and submit it to their concentration head for signature. (There is no separate line on the form for the concentration head’s signature, so they will share a line with the MAIS director.)

4. They should submit the original, signed hard copy of the Sub/Wavier 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 submitting the form to MAIS, the student should check their online degree evaluation to see if the transaction is complete. If the answer is No, they should first contact the Registrar to see if the paperwork is pending. If the Registrar does not have it, then the student should contact the MAIS graduate coordinator, who will track it down.

**Getting a Requirement Waived**

If for some reason a concentration head feels that a requirement should be waived, they will initiate the Sub/Waiver Form to do so. Students should follow the steps for course substitutions (above), but fill out the waiver section of the form, then submit it to the MAIS office.

**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 an internship course offered by another unit.

**To register for INTS 595 through the Interdisciplinary Studies program**

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.

Registering 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 signed by the concentration head 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.

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 provide their committee chairs’ names and email addresses on the Project/Thesis Registration Checklist.
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 an original copy of the proposal and the Proposal Signature Sheet with the committee members' signatures to the appropriate concentration head for signature.

5. The student must submit a hard copy original 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 is 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 & signed 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 with a Project 😊

Congratulations! It is 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 with a project:
1. The student must file their intent to graduate with the Registrar via Patriot Web.
   - If a student misses the usual deadline, they must file a late intent-to-graduate.
   - If a student files their intent to graduate but then does not graduate, they must withdraw it.
   - Visit the Registrar’s website for more information, under Students >> Graduation.

2. The student must make sure they have completed all MAIS degree & program requirements.

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

4. The student must share the project with their concentration heads and have them approve it by signing the Project Signature Sheet.

5. 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. If the project includes a non-traditional deliverable, such as a film, it must be provided on a CD, DVD, or thumb drive—something that can be stored in a folder. **No binders or folders, please!**

6. Students must submit a hard copy original of the signature sheet to the MAIS director for signature.

7. The student should check their transcript to ensure that their committee chair has uploaded a grade for the final semester of MAIS 798.

8. Attend graduation! Congratulations!
**Graduating with a Thesis 😊**

Congratulations! It is 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.
   - If a student misses the usual deadline, they must file a late intent-to-graduate.
   - If a student files their intent to graduate but then does not graduate, they must withdraw it.
   - Visit the Registrar’s website for more information, under Students >> Graduation.

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 thesis to their committee members and obtain their signatures on an original copy of the Thesis Signature Sheet, available for download from the MAIS website.

4. The student must follow all procedures with University Dissertation & Thesis Services (http://thesis.gmu.edu).

5. The student must submit a soft copy of the completed thesis to the MAIS director for review.

6. The student must submit a hard copy original of the signature sheet to the MAIS director for signature. Thesis students will need to retrieve this document in order to take it to the dean’s office for signature prior to submission to UDTS.

7. Thesis students will need 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.

8. The student should check their transcript to ensure that their committee chair has uploaded a grade for the final semester of MAIS 799.

9. Attend graduation! Congratulations!
IX. Convocation, Commencement, & Degree Conferral
The University provides two opportunities for students to celebrate their graduation, and they are welcome to participate in both.

Convocation
CHSS Convocation is the college’s celebration of degrees. It is divided between humanities and social sciences, with Interdisciplinary Studies students celebrating at the same event as the humanities. This ceremony is usually held in the evening and provides an opportunity to have one’s name called and to walk across the stage.

Commencement
University Commencement is a University-wide celebration. It does not provide an opportunity to hear one’s name called and to walk across the stage. However, students do turn their tassels at commencement, and it is at graduation that a student officially graduates. (Graduation is different than degree conferral.)

Degree Conferral
Both CHSS Convocation and University Commencement are purely ceremonial affairs. They are wonderful opportunities to honor student achievement and celebrate with family and friends. However, neither ceremony is connected to the process of degree conferral, which determines if and when a student receives their diploma. (Diplomas are mailed well after both ceremonies.)

The Grace Period
Before conferral, every degree must be carefully scrutinized by degree auditors in the Registrar’s office. This is not an automated process! The Registrar has a 6-week grace period after the end of classes by when students or programs must submit paperwork to get degrees in order. This grace period serves two functions: 1) it enables students with Incomplete (IN) grades to complete them, and 2) it gives the Registrar’s degree auditors time to do their work. The grace period is NOT an opportunity for students to submit coursework late. All coursework, including projects or theses, must be submitted by the end of the final exam period!

How Students Can Help
Students should not panic if there is a delay between the submission of their final project/thesis grade and the conferral of their degree. The MAIS graduate coordinator monitors this process very carefully. Contact Interdisciplinary Studies if there are concerns. The MAIS graduate coordinator will generate any paperwork necessary to get a student’s credits in order. The #1 thing students can do to ensure this process goes smoothly is to make sure they have a signed, up-to-date Curriculum Worksheet on file. Thank you for your patience in this period, between graduation and degree conferral!
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 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!