

The University of Iowa International Programs

GUIDE TO GRADUATE STUDY **M.A. in INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES** **INTERNATIONAL STUDIES EMPHASIS**

1111 University Capitol Centre

(319)335-0368

Email: ip-intlstudies@uiowa.edu

Web Site Address: <http://international.uiowa.edu/international-studies/>

Dr. William M. Reisinger

Associate Provost and Dean of International Programs

Downing A. Thomas

Associate Dean of International Programs

Martha Greer

International Studies Coordinator

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Part I: Overview of the Program of Study

The Graduate College, in conjunction with International Programs, offers a Master's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis in International Studies. The M.A. is administered by the Associate Dean of International Programs (IP) in consultation with the International Programs Executive Committee.

The Master's degree is designed to appeal to exceptional students who have identified an area of international interest and who are suited to a flexible, tailor-made program of graduate study on international issues. The program is designed for students who seek an interdisciplinary approach to graduate study; students with a clear disciplinary direction should apply to a standard disciplinary program. The M.A. is an academic degree, not a professional certification; however, students whose employment prospects will be increased by an academic degree in international studies are encouraged to apply.

The distinctive feature of this program is that it is designed to be student-based and responsive to individualized interests. The program is flexible enough to appeal to the needs of a variety of students and to adapt quickly to changing world political processes, institutions, and cultural trends. To take full advantage of this flexibility, students must be able to articulate their interests and needs clearly and coherently. They do this through careful consultation with their faculty advisor and M.A. committee members.

Each year we enroll a small number of highly qualified students who can benefit from the close personal advising of our faculty. Our International Programs affiliated faculty hold primary appointments in colleges and departments throughout the university and maintain close affiliation with International Programs. Students in our M.A. program are encouraged to draw widely on faculty, courses and resources of the entire university.

Part II: Application and Admission

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this M.A. program, we recommend that interested students contact the International Studies Coordinator at 319-335-0368 or ip-intlstudies@uiowa.edu to discuss their academic objectives.

Students who may want to later pursue a disciplinary Ph.D. should consult with the department that will grant that degree well in advance to be sure the M.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies (International Studies) will qualify them for admission to the program.

ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

Students interested in the Interdisciplinary Studies M.A. in International Studies must meet the [Graduate College Admissions Requirements](#)

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Students are admitted to the Interdisciplinary M.A. in International Studies once per year

- Fall semester – February 15 all application materials must be received
- Spring semester – no admissions
- Summer session – no admissions

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- A. Be certain this program is appropriate for you
- Read the [M.A. Handbook](#) carefully
 - Contact the International Programs Associate Dean, 319-335-0368 or ip-intlstudies@uiowa.edu , about your area of interest.
 - Use [ISIS](#) to search for courses to support your intended program of study.
 - Use the [International Studies Mentors Directory](#) to learn about faculty at the University who are engaged in work related to your intended research area.
 - Create your Preliminary Plan of Study and Rationale (see page 5 for additional instructions)
- B. Download the application. You may *not* apply for our program online; instead you must download the [Graduate College Application Packet](#)
- C. Refer to the correct program on every form:
- You are applying to the “Interdisciplinary M.A. with an emphasis in International Studies.” This exact wording must be used on your application in each area asking for your program of study.
 - Your letters of recommendation should refer to this specific program as well. Please tell those writing letters for you indicate that you are applying to the “Interdisciplinary M.A. with an emphasis in International Studies.” You should fill out the [recommendation release form](#) and give it to each person writing a letter for you along with a stamped envelope addressed to International Programs at the address listed below.
- D. Send to:
- Office of Admissions
The University of Iowa
107 Calvin Hall
Iowa City, IA 52242-1396 USA
- Application for Graduate Admissions—Items A-C
 - Application for Graduate Admissions—Items G-J (please sign and date)
 - Application fee
 - Official academic records
 - Official GRE score report
 - Official TOEFL score report, if applicable
- E. Send to:
- Associate Dean
International Programs
The University of Iowa
1111 University Capitol Centre
Iowa City, IA 52242 USA
- Application for Graduate Admissions—Items A-C
 - Application for Graduate Admissions—Items D-F
 - Include the Statement of Purpose (Item E) on a separate sheet
 - Official academic records
 - Three letters of recommendation
 - Preliminary Plan of Study and Rationale (see page 5)

PRELIMINARY PLAN OF STUDY AND RATIONALE

International Programs wants to be sure that your interests can be supported by the faculty members and course offerings available at The University of Iowa. The Preliminary Plan of Study and Rationale is required of all applicants to the Interdisciplinary M.A. with an emphasis in International Studies so that both prospective students and the admissions committee can determine if the University and this program are a good fit for the student's academic goals.

The Preliminary Plan of Study and Rationale should be 2-3 pages in length and should address the following:

- Why will an interdisciplinary degree serve you best? Are you certain that there is not a degree program already available elsewhere at the UI or at another institution that is more specific to your interests and a more direct route to your future educational or career path?
- What two or more disciplines do you believe could be woven together to meet your needs?
- Given the requirements for the degree, as outlined in Part III, what courses at The University of Iowa would you take to attain this degree? (Please include alternates, as well).
- Include a course plan that meets the requirements and shows how you would complete the program in two years (including the required international research).
- Explain how this course plan forms an intellectually coherent and defensible program, meets your objectives, and prepares you to meet your future educational or career goals.
- Soon after you begin your M.A. program, with the assistance of the Associate Dean of International Programs, you will need to form a Faculty Advisory Committee to advise you on courses and to supervise your thesis. Which faculty members have you contacted to discuss courses that you might take? What faculty members would be potential members of your advisory committee and why? See “**Making the Most of Faculty Advising**” (p.10).

FINANCIAL AID

Although International Programs cannot guarantee graduate assistantships or teaching assistant positions for each of our M.A. students, students are encouraged to apply for positions within our program. Recent assistantships have included, but are not limited to, the Office for Study Abroad, Office of International Students and Scholars, International Studies and academic programs, and a teaching assistantship for an undergraduate course. If you would like to be considered for an International Programs assistantship:

- Submit to Diana Davies, Director, International Programs, The University of Iowa, 1111 UCC, Iowa City, IA 52242 USA, the [Application for Graduate Awards](#) by February 1.
- If you are admitted to the M.A. program, contact Diana Davies (diana-davies@uiowa.edu) to indicate your interest in a position. Include a copy of your resume and a one-page cover letter.

Students should also acquaint themselves with the [Guide for Financing Graduate Education](#) provided by the Graduate College.

Part III: Degree Requirements

- Students must fulfill all [Graduate College requirements](#).
- A thesis or final project is required for all M.A. students.
- Students must complete 36 semester hours of graduate-level coursework (coursework at or above the 100-level), at least 33 s.h. of which must be graded coursework (thesis hours are not graded).
- A maximum of 12 s.h. of coursework may be transferred from another institution or other UI graduate program.
- 24 s.h. of coursework for the M.A. must be earned after admission to the Interdisciplinary M.A. with an emphasis in International Studies program, with at least 8 s.h. in residence and on campus.
- A minimum of 21 s.h. of coursework through formal classroom teaching (excludes independent study, research, thesis, and special projects) is required.
- No more than 9 s.h. of independent study, research, and thesis hours will count toward the 36 s.h. minimum for degree.
- Students must maintain a minimum of a 3.0 UI GPA and a 3.0 transfer GPA in all coursework applied to their degree.

The requirements for the M.A. can therefore be summarized as follows:

Graduate-level seminars.....	9 s.h.
Foreign Language Study.....	4-6 s.h.
International Research.....	0-6 s.h.
Additional coursework.....	12-23 s.h.
Thesis or Final Project.....	0-3 s.h.
Total.....	<hr/> 36 s.h.

Each requirement is explained in more detail below.

Plan of Study

Your Plan of Study will guide your work in the program. A preliminary Plan of Study must be submitted with your application. During the student's first semester, the Plan of Study must be revised and reviewed by the student in close consultation and with the approval of the student's advisory committee. Plans of study can be changed at the student's discretion, but only after the committee has formally met and approved changes in writing.

Your Advisory Committee

At the beginning of the first semester, the student will work with the Associate Dean to choose a formal advisory committee comprised of at least three faculty members. Members of the committee can be drawn from any colleges in the university, but the Graduate College requires special permission be obtained in advance if a member of a student's M.A. committee is not a tenure-track or tenured faculty. One of the three committee members will serve as the student's primary advisor and will chair the committee. Students should meet with their advisors at least once a semester, prior to registering for the following term, to discuss progress and choose courses. Additional consultations/meetings with advisors and committee members should take place as needed to assure smooth progress through the program.

Graduate-Level Seminars—9 s.h.

Three seminars at the 200- or 300-level must be completed over a period of two years; of these, no more than two may be taken in a single discipline or department. At least two seminars must be completed while in residence at the University of Iowa. A seminar is a small, discussion-based course. Not all “200-level” courses in all departments or colleges are seminars.

Foreign Language Study—2 semesters, 4 s.h. minimum

Students must complete at least two semesters of study in a foreign language while enrolled in the Master’s program, earning a minimum of 4 s.h. Students may choose to apply up to 9 s.h. of foreign language coursework towards the minimum 36 s.h. required for the Master’s degree. A student’s faculty committee may impose additional language training if required for a successful field-based research, internship, or study abroad experience.

Only coursework numbered at the 100-level or above will apply toward the 36 s.h. minimum for degree. However, some language courses needed by a student to prepare for their research abroad may be offered below the 100-level. In this case, a student may fulfill the language requirement with courses below the 100-level, but will need additional coursework to reach the 36 s.h. minimum for degree.

Language study while abroad is permissible, but only in conjunction with research while abroad.

Many students enter the University with competency in one or more languages other than English. Students may not present previous coursework or competency as fulfillment of the foreign language requirement.

Study of a language through the [ALLNet program](#) may be used to satisfy the language requirement, if approved in advance by the student’s faculty committee. Generally course credit is not available through ALLNet, in which case a student will need additional coursework to reach the 36 s.h. minimum for degree.

International Research (8 weeks and 0-6 s.h. of credit)

To develop ideas for the thesis or final project OR to conduct research necessary to complete the thesis or final project, each student must undertake a minimum of eight weeks of work or study abroad, an international internship, or international research, as approved by your advisor in consultation with your advisory committee or the Associate Dean as necessary. Students may choose to earn academic credit for their international research by registering for 187:205 International Graduate Research for up to 6 s.h. Paid positions abroad may not be considered for academic credit and as such will not fulfill this requirement. For the purposes of this requirement, the United States could be considered to be an international site of study for foreign students. Undergraduate study abroad experiences may not be used to fulfill the foreign study, internship, or research requirement. International Programs offers some competitive fellowships, such as the Stanley Awards for international research, and assists students in applying for intra-University and external sources of funding, but the responsibility lies with the student to secure necessary funding and visas.

Additional Coursework—12-23 s.h.

In consultation with their faculty committee, students select additional coursework to enhance and inform their research and focus area. This coursework must have an international focus and be directly relevant to the student’s Plan of Study and Rationale. The number of semester hours required in

additional coursework is dependent on the hours earned through research, foreign language study and thesis hours.

Thesis or Final Project—0-3 s.h.

Students must complete a written thesis or a project under the supervision of the faculty committee. This thesis or project will be based on original research conducted abroad. Theses should constitute a written contribution to scholarship suitable for publication. In special cases, a project with written documentation may be the most appropriate demonstration of the student's research. Examples of acceptable projects include original artistic works, successful organizational efforts, and web-based or media-based publications. Preparing a project in lieu of a written thesis requires specific written approval from the student's committee prior to its submission. Theses and projects will be defended in an oral examination by the advisory committee. All students must present the results of their theses or projects formally in a public forum. In the case of creative works, the project may be presented as an exhibition, performance, or in some other appropriate manner approved by the student's committee. The Associate Dean will help students schedule this public presentation, usually in the student's final semester.

Students are responsible for contacting their committee members to schedule a defense of the thesis/final project. The defense is an oral examination by the student's faculty advisory committee on the thesis or final project. The advisor should notify the Associate Dean of the student's satisfactory completion of the defense.

Part IV: Benchmarks

In the first semester:

- Meet with the Associate Dean to discuss the formation of your faculty committee.
- Formalize your three-member faculty committee, including naming a chair
- Complete 9 s.h. of course work (in at least two departments or disciplines)
- Meet with the International Studies Coordinator to review overall Plan of Study
- Begin work on language requirement

In the second semester:

- Meet with your Advisory committee to plan your international research project
- Complete 18 s.h. of course work
- Complete language requirement
- Consider scheduling a [Research Consultation](#) at the Main Library

In the third semester:

- Meet with the Associate Dean to discuss and amend as needed your Plan of Study
 - Meet with International Studies Coordinator to verify all degree requirements will be met by the end of your fourth semester and to review paperwork required for thesis deposit and defense
 - Meet with the faculty advisory committee to discuss thesis plans
 - Complete 27 s.h. of course work
 - Plan your thesis or final project
 - Prepare a proposal and reading list with the advice of your committee
 - Prepare a calendar of deadlines and stages of preparation to ensure the completion of research, international research, writing, and revision in time to submit the thesis to meet the deadline for the date you plan to graduate (consult with the director of your advisory committee)
 - You may wish to sign up for an independent study with one of your faculty advisors to make progress toward the thesis
 - Check to be sure all of your committee members will be available in the semester when you need to schedule your defense
- Read the [Thesis and Dissertation Preparation](#) manual on the Graduate College website and direct any procedural questions to the International studies Coordinator

In the fourth semester:

- Meet with the Associate Dean for a final evaluation of your requirements and to discuss the scheduling of your presentation of research
- Meet with the International Studies Coordinator to complete required paperwork for the Graduate College
- File an “application for degree” form with the Office of the Registrar
- Complete 36 s.h. of course work
- Present your research in a public forum
- Make a “first deposit” of your thesis to the Graduate College
- Defend your thesis
- Make a “final deposit” of your thesis to the Graduate College

Part V: Making the Most of Faculty Advising

THE ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE DEAN OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

Through your first semester in the Master's Program, the Associate Dean of International Programs will serve as your advisor. Once you begin to settle into course work, however, you will need to create a three-person faculty advisory committee, with the assistance of the Associate Dean. At least two of the three faculty members must be from different disciplines since this is an interdisciplinary degree. Throughout your pursuit of the M.A., the Associate Dean will provide your registration number each semester (required to enroll online for courses) and will be available to help you navigate through the degree.

THE ROLE OF THE FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Faculty advisors play a crucial role in the M.A. degree. Most practically, your faculty advisors will direct your final project, whether it takes the form of a written thesis, research project, or creative project. Your advisors can also help you to plan your course schedule each semester. Your advisors will be happy to discuss the relevance of specific courses to your goals; issues in your field; appropriate Study Abroad programs; as well as internships, graduate, or professional training; and career opportunities.

Relationships between advisors and students vary a great deal, depending on the two people involved. However, there are things that students can do and that advisors can do to ensure that whatever form the relationship takes, the mentoring relationship will be useful and productive for both parties involved.

CHOOSING FACULTY ADVISORS

Your goal is to find three faculty advisors who are knowledgeable in your fields of study, are accessible, interested in your work and your future plans, and will provide helpful resources and readers as you prepare your thesis or final project. Therefore, it makes sense to develop a short list of faculty members who meet the following criteria:

- Teaches and conducts research in your interdisciplinary areas
- Is someone with whom you have already taken a class so that you know each other's interests and abilities
- Has shown he or she is knowledgeable and helpful when you have been in his or her class
- Will be working on campus during the semester when you'll undertake your thesis or final project
- Is a person you find intellectually engaging and inspiring

ASKING A FACULTY MEMBER TO SERVE AS YOUR MENTOR/CHAIR OF YOUR COMMITTEE

Think of approaching a potential advisor as part of your professional preparation. When someone comes to you and asks you to serve in a position of responsibility—whether that involves coaching a Little League team or chairing a volunteer committee—what do you want to know before you answer? Most of us are willing to take on responsibilities as long as we're assured that the people we'll be working with are serious, committed, well-organized, hard-working, willing to answer questions and help solve problems, and capable of "following through." If you communicate that you are this kind of student, you're likely to get an excellent response when you ask a faculty member to serve as an

advisor or mentor. So how do you communicate that you will contribute as well as receive when it comes to an advising/mentoring relationship?

- Try to choose an advisor from the professors with whom you've taken a class or two since you already have a working relationship with this person.
- E-mail ahead to tell the professor that you would like to meet with her or him to discuss the possibility of serving as your International Studies M.A. advisor. Be sure to ask when the professor's office hours are (since this is the time faculty members reserve especially for students) and to ask what day and time would be most convenient to meet.
- Be punctual. If you must be late (or miss) an appointment, call well in advance to inform the professor of your change in plans.
- If you've already started a project with this professor in a previous class that you would like to develop into a thesis (the ideal scenario), bring along a copy of the paper or project to discuss with your professor.
- Be prepared. Sit down ahead of time and make a list of your objectives, your questions, your plans, and your expectations.
- If you are still in your first year of the degree, bring a copy of the courses you've taken so far, a list of questions you have about the professor's field of study and a tentative topic for your thesis project.
- If you are getting ready to focus on the thesis (or final research or creative project), do some reading on the topic you'd like to propose before the appointment so that you'll have a stronger sense of the research questions you'd like to ask and of the research that has already been done on the topic.

WHAT KINDS OF SUPPORT DOES A MENTOR PROVIDE?

When you approach a mentor, be as clear as you can about your expectations and your needs. Be reasonable in those expectations, of course, but try to clarify what kind of support you hope to receive from an advisor. Faculty members enjoy working with motivated students, but they are usually juggling teaching, advising, research projects, multiple deadlines, and many committee responsibilities locally, nationally, and internationally. They will find it very helpful to know what your needs and expectations will be so that they can honestly tell you whether they have the expertise and the time to assist you.

SERVING ON YOUR THESIS COMMITTEE

Minimally, a faculty advisor will need to agree either to direct or to serve as a committee member of the three-person advisory committee supervising your thesis or project. Directing a thesis will entail:

- Helping you to shape a strong topic, set of research questions, and a reading list
- Meeting with you several times (perhaps bi-weekly) during the semester in which you will work most actively on the thesis to advise you through stages of research, writing, and revision
- Reading and evaluating your final thesis

SERVING AS A DISCIPLINARY MENTOR

Since each of your advisors will be knowledgeable about different areas of expertise (at least two of the three must be from different disciplines), they will be excellent resources when you seek information about course work, appropriate plans of study, research strategies, and paths to future educational or career goals.

WRITING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

If you seek fellowships, internships, or, later, employment, you will need letters of recommendation from several faculty members. You can help your faculty advisors (or other letter writers) write a strong letter for you, again, by being prepared. Therefore, if you need letters of recommendation, these suggestions will help:

- Request letters of recommendation WELL in advance of deadlines (a month in advance, for example).
- Put together a clear, accessible, and tidy packet of useful information for your letter writers. Be sure to include your contact information (email, address, phone, home address).
- Provide clear information about the purpose of the letter. If you are applying for a fellowship, provide a description of the fellowship (with criteria) along with any necessary instructions and forms the letter writer will need. If you are applying for a job or for further education, again, provide a copy of the advertisement, job description, or graduate or professional program (with a web address for the business or program if available).
- Provide clear information about yourself, your abilities, and your accomplishments. For example, provide a transcript and a resume (include jobs you've held, rewards you've received, volunteer activities, positions of responsibility, special courses or training).
- Include a copy of your own application letter so that your professor can see which details you wish to emphasize.
- If the application requires a "personal narrative" or any other statement of your abilities or goals, include a copy for the professor.
- Make this process as easy as possible for all your letter writers! Fill in any forms that you must submit (with your name, address, etc.) and provide addressed and stamped envelopes.

Eventually, you will also need to decide which of your faculty advisors is best positioned to serve as the director of your thesis and, therefore, the chair of your committee. This decision will depend on whose interests align most clearly with the direction your research takes (and on whom you suspect will be your strongest advocate as you apply for further education or employment).

ADVICE FOR FACULTY ADVISORS TO INTERDISCIPLINARY M.A. STUDENTS WITH AN EMPHASIS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Students may wish to provide copies of this section to potential mentors before asking them to serve on their committee.

International Programs is deeply grateful to the many faculty members across campus who have expressed willingness to serve as advisory committee members to our International Studies M.A. students. To avoid overburdening faculty members, we also want to clarify what being a faculty advisor for the International Studies M.A. involves.

- We value your time and encourage you to limit your commitment to no more than 2 graduate advisees in International Studies in one semester.
- We ask that you be available to meet with M.A. advisees during your office hours or during appointments the two of you schedule at mutually convenient times.
- One of the pleasures of the mentoring relationship is the opportunity to welcome new students into one's own discipline. Whether in discussions of your field or as a member of an advisory committee, we encourage you to help students:
 - Form provocative research questions
 - Plan strategies to make the required 8 weeks of international research most productive
 - Learn the process for conducting interdisciplinary research related to your field (for example, standard reference works, bibliographies, major journals and web resources, key concepts and thinkers, methodologies)
 - Learn useful steps in developing a research or creative project by sharing your own steps in generating an idea, conducting research, developing an argument, using and documenting sources, and revising your work
 - Understand the criteria for evaluating projects in your field.
- We hope that you will also be willing to meet with your advisee once or twice a semester to discuss courses that would be useful to the student's own particular objectives, international research options, internships, future graduate or professional training, and career opportunities.
- We also hope that you will be willing to write your students letters of recommendation when necessary.

Please contact the Associate Dean of international Programs at ip-adean@uiowa.edu to discuss any questions or concerns.