



**METRO STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

**Masters of Individualized and Interdisciplinary  
Studies (MA/MS)**

**Program Handbook**

**College of Individualized Studies**

**Academic Year 2024-25**

## Contents

Mission, Vision, and Values.....	3
The program reflects the mission of Metro State University. ....	3
Applying to the Graduate Program in Individualized and Interdisciplinary Studies.....	3
Minimum Admissions Requirements.....	3
Application Deadlines.....	4
Application Instructions.....	4
Application fee .....	4
International Students Only .....	5
Program Design .....	5
Course Work Overview.....	5
Sequence.....	7
Transfer Credits.....	7
Part-Time Graduate Studies.....	7
Digital Literacy.....	7
Academic Advising .....	7
Advisee's responsibilities.....	8
Required Courses.....	8
IDST 600 Research and Planning .....	8
IDST 600 Learning Outcomes.....	8
Individualized Studies Capstone .....	9
Types of Capstone Projects:.....	9
Capstone Registration Process: .....	9
Capstone Proposal: .....	10
Preparing for the Individualized Capstone Course.....	10
Continuous Registration .....	11
Capstone Completion .....	11
FDIS 698 DESCRIPTION .....	11
Learning Outside the Classroom.....	11

Independent Studies and Internships .....	11
Faculty-Designed Independent Studies (FDIS).....	12
Student Designed Independent Studies (SDIS).....	12
Internships .....	12
Graduation Clearance.....	12
Academic Standing Policy .....	12
Academic Probation, Dismissal and Reapplication.....	12
Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP).....	12
Appeal of Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Removals from the Program .....	13
Reactivating into the CIS MA/MS Program .....	13
Time to Completion.....	13

## Mission, Vision, and Values

The Graduate Program in Individualized Studies promotes the college's founding mission of allowing highly motivated and self-directed learners primary authority over their educational journeys. Students identify and articulate their unique individualized educational and professional goals, and through various opportunities, engage in transformative learning. The College supports the acquisition of knowledge, research, and experiential learning that leads to civic and community engagement, work in social justice, and new perspectives to address complex issues in a rapidly changing, and globalized world.

Metropolitan State University is committed to making education accessible to busy working adults. This graduate program, designed to help students succeed in meeting their individual educational objectives, offers:

- Flexible program completion guidelines.
- Opportunities for independent study and internships
- Opportunities to include a limited number of graduate study credits from other institutions.

### Program Mission.

The program welcomes and encourages diversity in students, faculty, and topics of study, capitalizing upon a range of backgrounds and life experiences.

Courses are affordable and offered in formats and at times convenient for working adult learners, maximizing accessibility.

This is a student-centered program, leading each student towards academic success through an individualized plan of study based on graduate courses across the university, augmented with internships and student-designed study.

The program is situated squarely within the context of lifelong learning, welcoming students to post-baccalaureate study and preparing them to continue that study throughout their lives.

## Graduate Program Application

### Minimum Admissions Requirements

Applicants must demonstrate evidence of readiness for graduate study including an earned baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution (or equivalent) with a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale).

Applicants with competence-based transcripts and no calculated GPA **will be** considered.

Exceptions to this GPA standard may be made based solely upon the CIS Admissions Committee's recognition of special circumstances for the lower GPA and the candidate's clear demonstration of additional compensatory strengths. In the case of a GPA lower than 3.0 you may submit a supplementary letter along with the admissions essay addressing the reasons for the lower GPA and your plan to be successful in graduate school.

Admission is not guaranteed.

## Application Deadlines

Admission deadlines for resident and non-resident (international students) are as follows:

Deadline for fall semester: August 1

Deadline for spring semester: December 1

Deadline for summer semester: April 1

Applications received by the deadline will be reviewed by the CIS Admissions Committee, which will report its decision to each applicant within three weeks. Applications received after deadlines can still be considered, however, the notice of acceptance will be based on when the graduate applications committee schedules its meetings throughout the academic year.

Admission is based on meeting several qualifying criteria, detailed below. In addition, every semester there will be a limited number of seats available. If you meet the criteria but are not admitted due to limited space, the Admissions Committee may grant deferred admission.

## Application Instructions

All application materials become the property of Metropolitan State University and are not returned. All application materials must be received in the Graduate Studies Office by the application deadline and will be made available to the CIS Admissions Committee for review.

The Admissions Committee will make decisions only if your application is complete. Note that if you are completing a four-year program you may apply to the graduate program if you are in your final year; however, you cannot start the graduate program until you have finished your bachelor's degree.

Please note: depending on your focus area there may be additional admission requirements at a later time. Please see the Course Work Overview section of this handbook.

Metro State University is participating in the common application for graduate programs (GradCAS). Applications are only accepted via the CAS website.

Specific application requirements for individual programs can be found on each program page in CAS. Carefully read the instructions that appear throughout the application pages. You can only submit your application once. If you need to update information you have submitted, please notify [graduate.studies@metrostate.edu](mailto:graduate.studies@metrostate.edu)

## Application fee

A nonrefundable \$38 fee is required for each application.

Applications will not be processed until this fee is received.

Active-duty military, veterans, and Metro State alumni can receive an application fee waiver. Contact [graduate.studies@metrostate.edu](mailto:graduate.studies@metrostate.edu).

## International Students

International students in the US or abroad, on any type of visa are required to provide additional application information by the deadline.

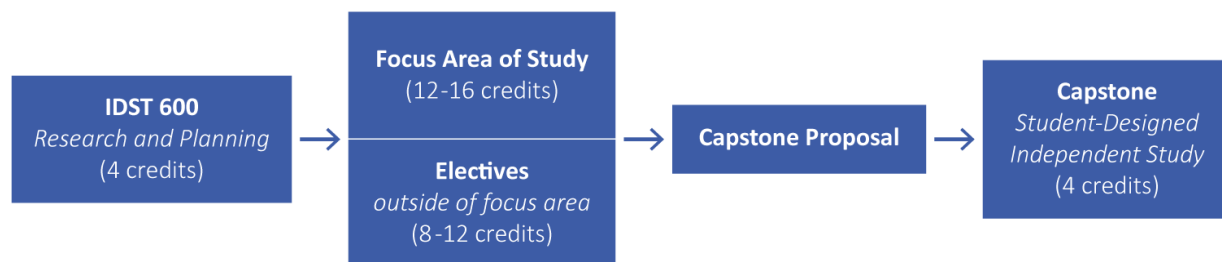
Please visit [International Student Services graduate admissions](#) for details.

Questions about the application can be sent to [graduate.studies@metrostate.edu](mailto:graduate.studies@metrostate.edu) (preferred) or call 651.793.1302.

Questions about the program in general, please contact Professor Gemma Puntì, Graduate Program Director, at [Gemma.Punti@metrostate.edu](mailto:Gemma.Punti@metrostate.edu).

## Program Design

The master's program in Individualized Studies requires two core courses: IDST 600 (Degree Planning), and Capstone. The course of study must be interdisciplinary and include at least two (or more) disciplines or subject areas, including the combination of graduate certificates offered at Metro State. Students have a range of learning strategies open to them, including student designed independent studies, graduate courses, and experiential learning. The passion of each student guides a student's choices, for example, one student might design a research-based capstone that studies women and micro-loans, while another student might design a creative project that combines video production with a marketing plan. Others may choose to use mapping technology to discern links between property taxes, school funding, and student achievement. A student interested in the environment might develop a new way to teach school children about environmental preservation or study ways to reduce ocean pollution. Students may even ask whether zip codes can help predict health outcomes. The options are truly bound only by each student's interests and creativity! The scope and design of a student's study plan will start to be developed in the core IDST 600 course, will be carried out in the various courses and learning strategies selected, and will culminate in the capstone project.



## Curriculum Overview

Admitted students begin by taking IDST 600 Research and Planning (or MLS 600), which teaches methods of interdisciplinary inquiry through variable topics. The course serves as an introduction to the program and to interdisciplinary thinking, learning and research. To that end, students will study and discuss the ways in which knowledge is constructed in different

disciplines and in integrated interdisciplinary study and research. One of the course outcomes is an individualized plan of study, designed to address each student's educational objectives within the framework of graduate program resources.

You may design a program with focus on coursework and research that integrates multiple disciplines, drawing from the arts, sciences, and professional studies. Designations of either MA or MS will reflect the composition of your plan and capstone project. If you chose to pursue a Master of Arts, the preponderance of your studies will likely be in liberal arts subjects such as literature, philosophy, mathematics, and social and physical sciences. If you decided to pursue a Master of Science, the preponderance of your studies will likely be in non-liberal-arts (professional) areas, such as STEM, human services, or public advocacy.

Please note: There are some professional fields that require you to have a degree, often from an accredited program, in that specific field. Some examples are teacher education, nursing, accounting, and social work. Note that some applied subject areas, such as nursing and urban education, are limited to students in those graduate programs. Courses in these programs may not be accessible to students in the Individualized Studies master's program, and the details will be covered during IDST 600 or when meeting the graduate director/advisor.

In addition, some focus areas may require prerequisites and additional testing. You are responsible for checking on and honoring any prerequisites/testing, and remember that if they are not met, your registration may be dropped!

After completing IDST 600 and at least 24 credits in the program, students may apply to register for their Individualized Studies Capstone, which is typically registered as a student-designed independent study (SDIS). Students will need to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 and have the approval of the Graduate Program Director to register for their capstone.

In addition to the two required courses, each study plan must include a 12-16 credit focus from another graduate program at the university, as well as another 8-12 credits from outside that focus area. For example, a student interested in entrepreneurship might complete 12 credits in College of Management and an additional 12 credits in Technical Communication. Students who are accepted into certificate programs at Metro State can use up to 16 credits from those programs toward the MA/MS of Individualized Studies.

Overview of the Curriculum	Credits
IDST 600 Research and Planning (required)	4 credits
*Focus Area of Study	12-16 credits
*Approved Graduate Elective Credits (Outside the Focus Area)	8-12 credits
Individualized Studies Capstone (required)	4 credits
TOTAL	32 credits

\*Graduate course work at the 500G level or higher, in courses, independent studies or internships clearly relevant to the approved Focus Area

## Sequence.

Students are expected to complete IDST 600 at the start of their program; any course they take prior to, or concurrent with, IDST 600 must be approved by a CIS faculty member. Students who complete two classes without completing IDST 600 will not be allowed to register for other courses until IDST 600 is successfully completed. The capstone should be completed during the student's final semester at Metro. When taking courses in other graduate programs, students must follow the sequences and meet the prerequisites in place for those programs and/or courses.

## Transfer Credits

Students can apply up to 8 transfer credits toward their plan, with the approval of the Graduate Program Director. Transfer credits must have been earned at another accredited institution and not be part of any other completed degree program. Elective credit may also be available by assessing some of your prior learning (PLA), but the total combined credits of PLA and transfer credits (outside of Metro State) cannot exceed 8 credits. Current students enrolled in graduate coursework at Metro State may transfer up to 12 graduate credits. Exceptions may be made for certificates and minors, to allow up to 16 credits to be transferred (such exceptions will be based solely upon the CIS Admissions Committee's review and approval).

## Part-Time Graduate Studies

This program is designed for part-time students, including those who are employed full-time and might take just one graduate course per semester. Most classes meet once a week on a weekday evening.

## Digital Literacy

The program involves use of technology, including navigating the Internet, researching online library databases, keyboarding, and using Metropolitan State University email for all official business. It is expected that all students have competence in these areas.

## Academic Advising

Since its founding, Metro State University has emphasized a student-centered educational philosophy with strong faculty involvement in advising. Advising begins with the graduate director or the instructor in IDST600 Research and Planning, where students articulate their educational objectives.

Students will be assigned a faculty advisor who will guide them toward appropriate courses, and also help arrange creative learning strategies, including customized independent studies and internships.

As a student nears completion of the program, they will need to identify a faculty member from a discipline related to the student's focus area to evaluate their capstone; their faculty advisor in CIS and/or the graduate program director will assist in this. This faculty member will evaluate the student's capstone and, typically, be the instructor on record for the student-designed independent study functioning as the capstone project.



## Advisee's Responsibilities

As advisees, students also have specific responsibilities, which include:

- Understand and meet all program requirements and course pre-requisites.
- Consult with your faculty advisor regarding your courses and capstone.
- Come to an understanding with your faculty advisor about how they will be involved or help with the capstone.
- Make sure to provide your advisor with sufficient time to provide input and feedback on your capstone.
- Take advantage of all the advising opportunities available, including one-to-one meetings, cafeteria-style group sessions, and peer mentoring.

## Required Courses

### IDST 600 Research and Planning

In this course students will explore various research methods and methodologies, approaches, and ethical considerations in their research or creative projects. Among others, students are expected to engage with and identify, synthesize and evaluate relevant scholarly works. As such, the course will also emphasize the study and research skills and methods needed to conduct a final research and/or creative project.

Further, students are expected to develop a focus that will provide direction and organization for their educational plans. Students will investigate courses offered throughout Metro State to shape that focus and tentatively outline final projects that will demonstrate their multidisciplinary learning. The course will introduce students to the nature of individualized study and the significance of interdisciplinary studies.

During this course students will also consult with their advisor and instructor to decide whether they will pursue a Master of Arts (MA) or a Master of Science (MS). The decision will depend on the area of focus and the coursework that will be selected. While the conversation about a particular path starts in this course, students can make adjustments as they continue their coursework and through consultations with faculty.

By the end of IDST600, students will submit a plan of study that outlines their focus areas and associated learning. The approval of this plan, including the relevance and appropriateness of associated learning, is at the discretion of the faculty. A faculty committee will have final approval responsibility for both students' plans and final projects, prior to registration for their capstone.

### IDST 600 Learning Outcomes

- Identify a complex problem, intellectual or creative query using an interdisciplinary perspective.
- Explore and determine disciplines as well as methodologies and approaches that most appropriately address a complex problem, intellectual query, or creative project.
- Identify, synthesize, and evaluate relevant scholarly study.
- Create an interdisciplinary plan that pursues an in-depth study of a complex problem, intellectual query or creative project from different perspectives.

## Individualized Studies Capstone

As part of an individualized master's program, students will produce a culminating work that brings together and builds upon their graduate studies journey. This capstone project will be unique to each student's own interests and goals. Therefore, the guidelines below are general in nature.

All capstone projects must be related to the student's course of study. Before registering for the capstone, projects must be approved by the student's faculty advisor in CIS and by a subject matter expert in the capstone's topic who can serve as an evaluator.

### Types of Capstone Projects

In general, capstones may be either research-based or project-based, as follows:

**Research-based Capstone:** Though the length may vary by project and should be determined with the student's advisor, a research-based thesis is typically a minimum of 40 double-spaced pages long.

**Critical engagement of scholarship:** This approach collects the most important scholarly works on a specific topic or field, puts them into conversation with each other, and describes what is known about the topic, points of disagreement within the scholarship, and areas where more research is needed.

**Thesis Paper:** Advanced students may wish to pursue a thesis-driven research paper based on their own original research. The research paper usually presents an analytical/theoretical or data-driven argument around a specific research question. Note that research with human subjects, such as used with many social scientific methods, must meet HSRB (Human Subjects Review Board) approval before research begins.

**Project-based Capstone:** The project-based capstone consists of a professional or creative activity, and an accompanying essay (typically including a literature review) about the project. This type of capstone may be a community-based project, a project in the creative arts, or a professional project, such as an innovative business practice.

**Experiential Capstone:** Students may also pursue internships in their field of study.

**Certification-based Capstone:** With permission, students concurrently pursuing graduate certificates may also elect to take an existing capstone course in their certificate's field, such as in Management Information Systems or Adult Education.

### Capstone Registration Process

Capstones are typically completed as a four-credit student-designed independent study (SDIS) project, with students working one-on-one with a faculty member with expertise in the capstone area.

To register for the capstone SDIS, students must consult with both their faculty advisor in CIS, as well as the subject-matter expert who will evaluate the project, to ensure it meets the overall goals of their graduate degree plan. Two documents must be completed before registration: the *SDIS Proposal Form* and the *Capstone Proposal*.

The SDIS may be registered through CIS (as IDST 660), or through the college of the faculty member who will be evaluating the project. Regardless of the college, the capstone SDIS should be named “Capstone Project: [title of the project].”

### Capstone Proposal

Before being approved to register for a capstone project, students must write a proposal. Proposals may vary depending on the type of research or project being pursued, but at a minimum should contain the following information:

**Project Narrative:** This section should address the background and content of the project and clearly communicate how it is related to the student’s field of study.

*Research-based* proposals should include the field of scholarship being engaged or research question (and, if applicable, hypothesis), preliminary literature review, and methodology

*Project-based* proposals should describe the primary features of the creative or professional project being proposed, including any literature review or methodology, as applicable.

**Anticipated schedule:** This should include the anticipated date of completion as well as any intermediary significant dates.

**Research compliance (if applicable):** If the capstone involves research with human subjects or data related to human subjects, the student must follow HSRB (Human Subjects Review Board) protocol and acquire approval before research begins.

**References:** A list of major scholarly works informing the research or project.

The expected length of the capstone proposal may vary depending on the project, and should be determined in consultation with the student’s advisor and project evaluator. Proposals should use the latest APA style, or the professional style guide used in the field of the student’s focus area.

### Preparing for the Individualized Capstone Course

The Individualized Studies Capstone is where the Capstone Project/Research is brought to completion. Before registering for their capstone, students must devote considerable time and attention toward developing their capstone. This means taking multiple graduate-level courses, having consultations with faculty advisors, doing independent research and reflection, and writing drafts for components of the capstone.

Before registering for their capstone, student must:

- Complete IDST 600, plus at least 24 additional credits in the graduate program
- Confer regularly with their advisor and other faculty to discuss program progress.
- Maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0. Students should consult with the Graduate Program Director if their GPAs ever fall below 3.0.
- Submit a completed Capstone Proposal to the Graduate Program Director.

## Continuous Registration

### Capstone Completion

Although you have five years to complete the program from the semester in which you were admitted, once you sign up for the capstone seminar course, you must complete your capstone within that semester. If you are not able to complete your capstone within the semester, you have to seek written permission for an extension before the end of the capstone course. The extension request should include:

- reasons for requesting the extension,
- a clear timeline for completing your capstone within the subsequent semester
- a clear plan on how you will work with your academic advisor to complete your capstone during this time.

This extension request must be submitted to the CIS graduate program director before the end of the semester, through your capstone faculty. If you are granted the extension, an “incomplete” grade will be recorded for your capstone course grade. The extension:

- may only be for a semester,
- must be for the subsequent semester (following the semester in which you registered for the capstone course),
- cannot be over the summer semester, since your advisor may not be available.

If you fail to complete your capstone during the extension semester you must register and pay for the 1 credit Faculty Designed Independent Study – FDIS 698 – course.

The one credit FDIS 698 will not count toward the 32 minimum credits needed to complete the program.

### FDIS 698 DESCRIPTION

Students will use this one credit FDIS 698 as a continuous registration credit in completing their capstone. In order to register, students should be consulting with their academic adviser, and have a plan in place to complete their capstone work prior to registration. No further documentation will be necessary. This one continuous registration credit will be recorded as satisfactory or non-satisfactory.

## Learning Outside the Classroom

### Independent Studies and Internships

In addition to taking graduate courses at Metropolitan State University (and up to 8 transfer graduate credits from other institutions), students can earn program credits through the following creative learning strategies. Students interested in setting up an independent study or internship are invited to send an email describing that interest to the Graduate Program Director, who can refer you to the appropriate forms and help identify possible faculty supervisors.

## Faculty-Designed Independent Studies (FDIS)

Graduate FDIS is usually an independent study version of an existing graduate course, or a 500G-level independent study version of an existing 500-level course.

## Student Designed Independent Studies (SDIS)

Graduate SDIS is most often a unique learning opportunity customized by a student with the individual faculty member.

## Internships

Graduate internships are usually coordinated through the Career Center and could involve a wide range of projects and activities. Students can contact the Graduate Program Director for more information.

## Graduation Clearance

To be cleared for graduation, you must satisfy the following requirements:

- Completion of min. 32 credits
- Satisfying both focus and elective requirements as stated in the degree plan
- Successful completion of your capstone (for 4 credits)
- Maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or higher

Additionally, a student must be registered in the semester they plan to graduate.

## Academic Standing and Progress

Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Progress Policy, and for monitoring their academic progress and immediately notifying the Graduate Program Director of a low grade or non-completion of a class or other learning.

To remain in good standing and to be qualified for graduation, students must maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0. Grades below C do not apply to program requirements but are calculated in the cumulative grade point average.

## Academic Probation, Dismissal and Reapplication

### **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)**

Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress to remain in the program.

Only courses with a letter grade of C (2.00) or better count toward degree requirements; and a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 is required to register for the capstone, and for graduation.

Students with a cumulative graduate GPA below 3.0, or who do not complete 67% of the graduate credits attempted, will be placed on academic warning for a semester. Students may be suspended from the program if, after the warning semester, their academic performance has not improved to satisfactory levels.

Students suspended from the CIS graduate programs for unsatisfactory academic progress, may reapply after one calendar year has passed. Re-admission decisions are made by the CIS Admissions Committee and are not automatic.

Only courses with letter grades (A–C) are applied to the MA/MS degree, except in the case of graduate internships, which may be graded S–NC.

Students should immediately consult with the Graduate Program Director if they have questions or concerns about their academic standing.

### **Appeal of Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Removals from the Program**

Students suspended from the program for unsatisfactory academic progress may appeal the suspension to the College of Individualized Studies' dean. The appeal must be in writing and it must provide specific grounds for the appeal. The appeal to the dean is due within 30 days of receiving confirmation of suspension from the program; appeals received after 30 days will not be considered.

### **Reactivating into the CIS MA/MS Program**

Should a student who is admitted to the CIS graduate program not be able to start the program and register for courses, they will be able to retain their accepted status for up to a year; students in this situation should consult with the Graduate Program Director. Students who have been admitted but do not register for courses for more than a year without consulting with the Graduate Program Director will be dropped from active status and will need to reapply to the program.

Similarly, students who started the program and are in good academic standing, but who have not registered for courses for three calendar years, must reapply to the program. If readmitted, students are required to satisfy the degree requirements in force at the time of readmission, if those requirements differ from those in force at the time of original admission.

## **Time to Completion**

The CIS graduate program allows students to complete their MA/MS degree within two to three years. However, students may take up to five years from the first semester of graduate study to complete their degree program requirements. An extension of the time limit may be requested by writing to the Graduate Program Director. Such requests must be received prior to the expiration of the time limit. Requests for extensions should include:

The reason(s) for requesting the extension.

A summary of the student's plan to finish graduation requirements.

A specific date for the extension to expire.

Extension decisions are made by the Graduate Admissions Committee, are not automatic, and cannot be appealed.

## Appendix A – CIS Professors & Independent Study Topics

If you are interested in Graduate Student Designed Independent Studies (SDIS), CIS faculty offer the following areas of interest and expertise.

### **Richard Bohannon**

Geography (GIS, cartography and map design, urban studies, biogeography)

Religious studies (religious environmentalism, sociology of religion, U.S. religion, early Christianity)

Environmental studies (American environmentalism, environmental social theory, environmental justice)

### **Sheila Kunkle**

Film studies (theory and analysis: American film, contemporary film, world film, foreign films, genres)

Adult education (theory, practice, and philosophy)

Psychoanalytic theory, culture, and major thinkers

Politics and civic engagement

Cultural studies

### **Gemma Puntì**

Undocumented immigrants (policy, education, work, and health)

Live experiences of immigrants and refugees (education, work, health)

Immigration policy (theory and practice)

Cultural assimilation

Community-based research

Academic civic engagement

Language planning and policy

Cultural competence/humility and civic skills

### **Charles Tedder**

American literature after 1900

Literature and human rights

Literary and critical theory

Science fiction, futurism, and utopian studies

Fantasy, popular culture, and genre studies

**Isak Tranvik**

Political and Social Theory

American Politics (esp. social movements, political institutions)

Black Political Thought

Community Organizing

Religion and Politics (political theology, secularization, colonialism, etc.)

Minnesota Political History

**Daniel Woldeab**

Adult education

Adult literacy

Human resources development

Organizational leadership and policy

Work and human resources education

Technology and pedagogy

Technology and culture

Cultural competency, acculturation, and acculturative stress and anxiety