

INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES MAJORS

If you are thinking about completing an M.A. or an M.S. under the title of *Interdisciplinary Studies*, there are a number of important points to consider:

1. Is this the only degree which will satisfy your needs? A degree in a major field that offers elective options that are carefully selected with advisor approval will probably meet most student needs. For some students, an interdisciplinary degree may be the only way to complete a Master's degree that encompasses the student's areas of interest. Therefore, carefully investigate all possibilities and talk to advisors across departments before seeking a major in Interdisciplinary Studies.
2. Will this major serve you best when you are seeking employment? Some employers may not understand the uniqueness of your degree and disregard your application because you do not have a standard degree. For example, community college systems have instituted a hiring clause which states that a teacher in that system *must* have an M.A. or M.S. in the field in which the person is teaching.
3. Are you self-directed and self-motivated enough to pursue a degree without the usual lists of requirements and departmental deadlines to guide you? In this major, you will select an advisor to guide and to support you in choosing classes, and to serve as your culminating experience chair, but most often your advisor may not have experience across your entire interdisciplinary studies program. Thus, you will be responsible for effectively working with faculty across the disciplines of your program and will need to keep your advisor aware of graduate office deadlines. Additionally, you may need to get your faculty to meet each other to talk about your program, and to decide what form your culminating experience will take at the end of your program.

If you are still certain that this is the right degree for you, the following information may answer some of the questions you have and may guide you through the steps of gaining your degree.

1. Requirements

Read this program application carefully; it will help develop ideas for your degree by indicating the limits in your choice of courses and in asking you to determine, in the beginning, what kind of thesis or project you will complete. If you have any questions, please contact the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs in the College of Graduate Studies or Graduate Program Coordinator, Dr. Ted Butryn. Remember that you must still apply for admission to the degree program via Cal State Apply. In most cases, you will also need to identify a faculty member to oversee your studies.

2. Classified Standing

To graduate, you must attain full classified standing. When admitted into the Interdisciplinary Studies program, you may have already fulfilled all the required program admission requirements and demonstrated that you are fully classified to work in your program major towards your degree. On the other hand, your program advisor may feel that you have deficiencies that must be addressed in the form of additional preparation thorough course prerequisites or by providing an approved project proposal. You may also find yourself without a program advisor during your first semester. Thus, you may be conditionally admitted into the program. In this case, students will typically have one semester to find an appropriate advisor and develop an approved program of study or face disqualification from the program. Once your deficiencies have been addressed, your advisor can petition that your conditional status be removed, and your status will be changed to fully classified.

3. Selection of a Program Advisor

You are required to find a faculty member who will serve as your advisor. Your advisor should be a full-time tenure track or tenured faculty member who should be familiar with at least one area in your interdisciplinary objective. If you have received an undergraduate degree from SJSU, you may already know a professor with whom you want to work on your degree. If not, you will probably need to take a semester to get to know the faculty so that you can wisely choose your advisor. Be as specific as possible about what you want to accomplish, while letting them know you value their advice and direction. When you meet with potential advisors, be prepared, have materials well organized for them, and establish timelines and responsibilities. If they have questions about the major itself, ask them to contact the College Graduate Studies. You must work with your advisor each semester to ensure that you are making progress towards your degree, verify coursework, and to continue discussions regarding your culminating experience which may include setting up a thesis or project committee if necessary.

4. Graduate Writing Requirement

All graduate students must meet the graduate writing assessment requirement (GWAR), which can be accomplished in several ways. Most students meet the requirement by taking and passing a GWAR certified course as part of their program of study. If you have completed a master's or doctoral degree at a U.S. accredited university, you can apply for a GWAR waiver by submitting a GWAR petition and attaching documentation including the published work and transcripts. Finally, if you have a publication for which you are the sole author or primary author you may also submit a GWAR waiver petition. Please attach your

publication for consideration. All petitions are subject to approval by the Associate Dean of Programs in the College of Graduate Studies.

5. Advancement to Candidacy

The semester before you plan to graduate, you must submit an Approval of Candidacy form to Graduate Admissions and Program Evaluations (GAPE); the form can be found online at www.sjsu.edu/gape. **Review, and complete the candidacy form with your advisor, who must sign the form before you return it to GAPE. The courses listed on this form serve as a contract for which you will be held responsible during the graduation check and should match the courses listed on this application. If you wish to change courses prior to advancing to candidacy, you must receive advisor approval, fill out a new application form with the course substitutions, and obtain signatures from both your advisor. If your candidacy form is approved and filed, and you wish to make course substitutions, you must then file a petition for course substitution which can be found on the GAPE forms website.** In order to apply for candidacy you must fulfill the following:

- achieved classified status
- completed a minimum of nine letter-graded units with all grades “C” or higher
- fulfilled the GVAR requirement
- achieved a minimum cumulative and program 3.0 GPA, and,
- graduate within the seven-year time limit for degree completion.

It is strongly recommended that you file for candidacy as soon as you meet the required elements above.

Please visit [this site](#) for more details on advancing to candidacy.

6. Culminating Experience

All Interdisciplinary Studies majors must complete a culminating experience as defined as follows:

Thesis: A thesis is the written product of a systematic study of a significant problem. It identifies the problem, states the major assumptions, explains the significance of the undertaking, sets forth the sources for and methods of gathering information, analyzes the data, and offers a conclusion or recommendation. The finished product evidences originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, and thorough documentation.

Project: A project is a significant undertaking appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields. It evidences originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. It is described and summarized in a written abstract that

includes the project's significance, objectives, methodology and a conclusion or recommendation.

Generally, students who elect an interdisciplinary studies degree elect to do a thesis (Plan A) or a project (Plan B). To complete this requirement, you may sign up for 3-6 units of 299 for a thesis or 298 for a project from one of the departments in which you are working. A thesis requires the formation of a thesis committee which will be chaired by your advisor. Your committee should be composed of at least three full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty at SJSU. In some cases, temporary faculty members, faculty from another university, or experts in your field of study may function as committee members, with the approval of the College of Graduate Studies. Note that, at a minimum, two of the three persons serving on the thesis committee must be SJSU faculty. In addition, the committee Chair must be a full-time tenured or tenure track faculty member at SJSU. Theses and Creative Projects (Plan C) must comply with the thesis guidelines which can be found [here](#). Projects are less restrictive and typically are defined by individual programs. Please work carefully with your advisor if you are working on a project to develop an approved project that will ensure that it follows the guidelines and requirements from one of your discipline programs.

7. Comprehensive Examination or Verification of Culminating Experience

All Interdisciplinary Studies majors must meet this requirement. The way in which the requirement is met is determined by your advisor, although it usually takes the form of an oral defense of the project or thesis in which the candidate is questioned by his/her committee members and other interested parties regarding the goals, the process, and the results of the thesis or project. Your advisor must report by memo to Graduate Admissions and Program Evaluations that this requirement has been met. A verification of culminating experience form can be obtained from the [GAPE office](#).

8. Applying for Graduation

Submit an application for graduation by the deadline to Graduate Admissions and Program Evaluations (the form is available online: www.sjsu.edu/gape). You cannot graduate if you do not apply for graduation. Your records will be checked to see that you have completed or are completing the requirements your committee and our office has set for you. You will be notified of your status once that check has been completed.

7. Will you be admitted as a conditional or fully classified student? If you are to be admitted conditionally, what will the conditions be that must be fulfilled before you can be changed to classified status?
8. Final approval and signatures. Once you have completed this application, both you and your major advisor will sign below. This form should be routed via Docusign starting with the student, Program Advisor [Dr. Ted Butryn](#), and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, [Jeff Honda](#) for review and final approval. A copy of this application will be sent to the student and advisor for their records, and the appropriate GAPE evaluator will be notified to process the student's application for final approval into the program. **Note that this document will serve as your official program of study. Students will not take any other courses than the ones listed and agreed upon unless the student and advisor mutually agree to a course substitution. If any changes to the original course of study are to be made, then a new course of study must be entered on a new application form. Students who deviate from their agreed course of study will be subject to administrative academic probation and disqualification for not progressing towards their degree**

I have read and understand the above information regarding the Interdisciplinary Studies Major.

Student Name: _____ Student ID #: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student's program advisor: As this student's program advisor:

1) I will provide discipline-specific guidance for the appropriate plan of study and career preparation needed to achieve the student's educational objectives. This includes meeting individually (and preferably at least once a semester) with the student as needed and approving the 30-unit plan of study for the master's degree. I will work with their advisee to ensure that they are enrolled in courses each semester that are listed on the Program of Study (or adjust the Program of Study if needed) and apply to candidacy as soon as they are eligible to do so.

2) I will oversee the completion of the student's culminating experience, whether thesis or project. This responsibility includes setting up committee meetings and filing the Culminating Experience Memo.

Note: The Verification of Culminating Experience Form is not accessible to students and will not be accepted if submitted by a student. Please contact GAPE to receive access to the form and submit it to the GAPE Office on behalf of the student.

Compensation:

The College of Graduate Studies will pay each faculty mentor \$1,000 per student mentored via the special consultant mechanism per semester of mentoring for a total of 3 semesters per student. Specifically, a faculty member advising an IS master's student would receive 2 semesters of support in the student's year 1, when the student is developing a program and 1 semester of support in year 2 when the student is completing the culminating experience (i.e. \$3000 total per student for three semesters).

Please note that CGS will not provide this stipend support to faculty who receive compensation from their departments, either as a stipend or as workload credit, for mentoring these students. If you wish to take advantage of this compensation plan, please contact [Associate Dean Amy Leisenring](#) and attest that you currently are not receiving any form of compensation described above from your home department. Once you have provided your response and attestation, your stipend can be processed.

Advisor Name: _____ Advisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

College of Graduate Studies Associate Dean:

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____