

## ADVISING BULLETIN

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### Developing Your Program of Study

This issue of the Advising Bulletin includes information that may help you make decisions in planning your MLIS program of study. Planning a program of study is like creating a map of the courses that you want to take. Those courses should relate to your career goals and interests. Other factors that you need to consider are the availability of courses and how many courses per semester are feasible.

**If you entered the MLIS program in the 2007 fall semester or the 2008 spring semester,** you are required to submit a program of study to your advisor. The forms for listing your courses are on the MLIS website on the “Student Resource” page under the heading “Program of Study Forms.”

**If you entered the MLIS program prior to the 2007 fall semester,** the form called “MLIS 1<sup>st</sup> Masters” can be used as a generic form to list your courses. The new rules concerning course transfers do not apply to you. The sign-offs on the form do not apply to you. Using the form to track your courses is optional.

### MLIS Course Rotations

A complete list of MLIS courses is available at <http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/courses.shtml>. The following is general information on course scheduling. **Course schedules are always subject to change.**

**Core Courses.** Currently, MLIS 7000, 7100, 7200, and 7300 are scheduled to be taught in every Fall and Spring semester. MLIS 7200 and 7300 have been taught in alternating Summer terms. MLIS 7700 is taught in the Fall and Spring semesters when needed. MLIS 7800 is taught in all three terms.

**Elective Courses.** Normally, electives are scheduled to be taught every two years. Exceptions to this rotation schedule occur when demand for an elective is great and faculty are available for teaching that particular course.

**Summer Courses.** Currently, MLIS courses are offered during the term called Summer II. You essentially have seven weeks to fulfill course requirements. Some electives (e.g., MLIS 7130 and MLIS 7440) were created as summer courses. In other cases, you may find the same course requirements for a 15-week course compacted into 7 weeks.

Due to limitations on salaries available for summer teaching at VSU, you can expect to find a much abbreviated schedule of course offerings in the summer term. You should factor this situation into your program of study. *A graduation timeline that depends upon taking two or more MLIS courses during any given summer term is tenuous at best.*

**Other VSU Courses.** There are a number of courses taught in other graduate degree programs at VSU that **may qualify** to be counted in lieu of MLIS courses. Two such courses are listed below. Always **check with your advisor about the applicability of these courses** to your program of study before enrolling.

PADM 7110 – offered through the Political Science program, but is cross-listed as MLIS 7270. It is taught regularly and is listed for Summer II. It is an online course.

ITED 7070 Decision-Oriented Research and Evaluation - offered through the Instructional Technology program. It can be substituted for MLIS 7700. It is taught regularly and is listed for Summer II. It is an online course.

#### How Many Courses Are Recommended for a Semester?

This is a question that many new students ask their advisors. Here are some guidelines that we recommend you consider as you plan for the coming semesters.

**Three graduate courses is a full-time load for MLIS students.** The VSU Graduate Catalog states that a normal full load is 9-15 hours per semester. However, this recommendation does not take into consideration the extra time involved in taking online courses.

Members of the MLIS faculty recommend a course load of **no more than 2 courses at a time for students with full-time jobs and no more than 3 courses at a time for students not working.** This recommendation is consistent with what the faculty members in the VSU Instructional Technology program recommend to their students. Family obligations and any other ongoing, time-consuming responsibilities should also be factored into your decision about the number of courses you can handle.

**The standard for time spent on a 3-hour graduate course during a standard-length semester is 12 hours per week.** This means that to take a course, you must be willing and able to allocate up to 12 hours per week on it if need be. Some MLIS courses require this, some don't, and some require it during part of the semester. You should plan your course load knowing that 12 hours per week per course is what your instructors have a right to expect.

The 12-hours-per-week standard is consistent with what other graduate-level programs tell their students. Here are two examples from face-to-face programs:

Sam Houston University makes this recommendation to its students: **“While the workload differs with each course, a good general rule is to expect to work at least six to ten hours per week outside of the classroom for each course”** ([http://www.shsu.edu/~grs\\_www/faq/](http://www.shsu.edu/~grs_www/faq/)). That advice converts to 9-13 hours per class per week.

Michigan Technical Institute's website says: "**Students should multiply the course credits by 3.5 to determine the demands the course will place on their time during a typical week of the semester**" ([http://www.gradschool.mtu.edu/catalog/degree\\_requirements.html](http://www.gradschool.mtu.edu/catalog/degree_requirements.html)). That formula means a 3-credit course requires about 10.5 hours per week of study time.

### Declaring a Track

There are four optional "tracks" of concentrated study in the MLIS program: Cataloging and Classification, Library Management, Reference, and Technology. A fifth optional track in Health Sciences Librarianship is pending. A sixth track with a concentration in Youth Services is under development. Declaring a track basically involves discussing this with your advisor and fulfilling the track requirements. The Cataloging, Reference, and Health Sciences Librarianship tracks require completing 120 hours of supervised fieldwork via the MLIS 7960 course.

### Guidelines on Independent Study

MLIS 7950 is an Independent Study option. Guidelines for this option are on the MLIS website at: <http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/documents/MLIS7950GUIDELINES.pdf>. Please note that this option is reserved for study in areas of library and information science **not normally available in regular course offerings**. The Banner system currently lists Dr. Koehler as the professor of record for MLIS 7950. In actual practice, you are required to obtain **approval from your advisor before registering for MLIS 7950**.

### Guidelines on Supervised Fieldwork

MLIS 7960 is a Supervised Fieldwork option. Guidelines for this option are on the MLIS website at: <http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/syllabi/documents/MLIS7960GUIDELINES.pdf>. Please note that this option is **normally taken toward the end of the student's coursework**. In the past, a Supervised Fieldwork was coordinated with your advisor and the field site supervisor. Starting in the 2008-2009 academic year, a designated MLIS faculty member will oversee all fieldwork assignments. Dr. Yontz will handle the Fall 2008 assignments. In addition to coordinating a fieldwork proposal with Dr. Yontz, you are required to obtain **approval from your advisor before registering for MLIS 7960**.

### Policy on Granting a Grade of Incomplete

The circumstances under which you qualify for a grade of "I" (Incomplete) are outlined on page 15 of the 2007-2008 Graduate Catalog. It reads: "A report of 'I' (incomplete) indicates that a student was doing satisfactory work at the end of the term but, for non-academic reasons, was unable to complete all requirements for the course. A report of 'I' requires the subsequent completion of all course requirements within a time limit specified by the instructor, not to exceed one calendar year from the end of the term in which a grade of incomplete is assigned, regardless of the student's enrollment status during the period specified for completion." Note that **the instructor specifies the time limit for completing course requirements**. Also, **the instructor may deny a request for an Incomplete**. Students on tuition waivers (TAP students) have only one semester to convert an "I" to a grade. If an "I" is not converted to a letter grade within these specified timeframes, it will be changed to a grade of "F."

### Grades Needed to Complete the MLIS Program

The regulations for grade point averages that are needed to complete graduate programs at Valdosta State University are explained on page 14 of the 2007-2008 Graduate Catalog. You must at all times maintain an average of not less than 2.5. No grade below a C will be credited toward your degree. Any combination of two grades of D, F, WF, or U results in dismissal from the Graduate School. To graduate, your cumulative grade point average must be 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale.

### Reminder on Requesting an Advisor Change

Your advisor was assigned to you at the start of your enrollment in the MLIS program based on your goals and interests reflected in the materials you submitted in your application packet. You may request a change in advisor at any time. To do so, use the form called "Advisor Re-assignment Request." It is located on the MLIS website on the "Student Resource" page under the heading "Policies and Procedures." A request for an advisor change that you want to take effect in the 2008 fall semester should be submitted no later than May 1st. Instructions are on the form.

### Support from Other Students

Graduates of the program and students who have some seniority in the program can be good sources of information. Keep your eyes open for events sponsored by your student organization, SOLIS, and informal gatherings planned by classmates. Speaking of student support . . .

Graduate students from the Atlanta area are planning a "Graduate Student Meet-up" on Saturday, April 12th, 2008, 3:30-5:30pm. The meet-up will be held at the Mechanicsville Branch of the Atlanta Fulton Public Library. This event is free. Please RSVP or request information regarding future meetings through this link: <http://www.library.gsu.edu/gla/libschool.asp>. This is a student-led event, not part of the MLIS program at Valdosta State University.