

## Doctoral Interdisciplinary Studies (DIS) Admissions Procedures

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### A. Application

1. Pre-application procedures: due to the structure of the DIS, the development of an DIS proposal is considered a pre-application.

- a) Prospective committee status: faculty do not officially become members of the student's program committee until the student is admitted;
- b) Preview of credentials: student must present to all proposed committee members their GRE scores and TOEFL (if applicable), transcripts, and letters of recommendation before faculty officially agree to serve. Credentials are needed by the prospective committee to help guide the student in the articulation of objectives and curriculum design and includes assessing transfer credits and residency requirements.

2. Supporting letters from prospective committee members.

Prospective committee members must agree in writing to serve on the student's committee. This agreement should include a) a statement about the value and rigor of the student's proposal, b) an indication of willingness to participate in the collaborative effort, c) a discussion of their specific areas of expertise, and d) how this expertise strengthens the student's DIS program of study and dissertation project(s).

3. Rule on transfer from an existing traditional doctoral program.

In the case (a) in which a doctoral student already admitted to a doctoral degree program at UM seeks to change doctoral programs, or (b) was applying to a traditional doctoral program at UM and there was no space available in the program for the upcoming year, the reasons for the transfer from one program to another must be investigated.

The Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs' Director or the Graduate Dean's Designee will meet with the current UM Graduate Program Director/Chair or Graduate Committee Chair of potential applicants who desire to transfer from an existing UM doctoral program before the potential applicant can proceed with the pre-application process. Students wishing to transfer from an existing UM doctoral program will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the nature of the DIS as an interdisciplinary degree that cannot be accomplished through a traditional PhD program.

4. Explicit DIS program committee chair responsibilities.
  - a) Faculty willing to chair DIS committees must be proactive in keeping the collaborative function of the committee together;
  - b) They should serve as an advocate for the student and must be sufficiently available;
  - c) They must clearly understand the DIS process as articulated in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs webpage.

5. Enforced interaction between Admission Committee and prospective DIS committee chair.

Before the submission of an application, the chair of a student's proposed DIS committee and the prospective student will meet with the DIS Admission Committee chair to discuss details of the student's research problem(s) and academic plan. This meeting occurs at least two weeks prior to the application deadline.

6. Formal DIS application checklist

Incomplete applications (according to the checklist) will be screened by the Graduate School before faculty review and returned to the applicant.

## B. Admission

1. DIS Admission Committee

The charge of the committee is to review the admission phase in the DIS application process. The DIS Admission Committee will be composed of five faculty members from any Schools or Colleges that offer graduate programs. Whenever possible, at least three of the five must be from different doctoral-granting programs. The composition will be based on ECOS recommendation and appointed by the President for staggered three-year terms.

2. Two-tiered admission

Applicants who completed a master's degree program with a thesis are required to write a comprehensive description of the anticipated methodology and approach to be used in the research plan.

Applicants who completed a non-thesis master's degree and/or a professional masters or professional doctorate are expected to:

- a) Describe their preliminary ideas for the methodology section;
- b) List all the coursework, and its timeline of completion, pertinent to the acquisition of research methodology skills;
- c) List in the timeline the semester when the applicant will propose and defend their research methodology for their student's committee. The committee would then decide if (1) the student is ready to move forward, (2) the student needs remediation plan to acquire the skills necessary to demonstrate the knowledge required to move forward, or (3) the student has failed to demonstrate the required research methodology skills and

a vote will be take to either allow the student an opportunity to retest or dismissal from the DIS.

### 3. Decision phase

As in other graduate programs, the admission process is online through Data Portal, the software that manages admission applications; however, prospective students do not submit documents through the portal. The complete application packet is delivered to the Graduate School by the prospective student's committee chair. After the DIS Admission committee has taken action on the application, its chair will inform the Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs director or the Dean's designee via email of the DIS Admission committee's recommendation for each applicant. The Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs' Director or the Graduate Dean's designee will register the decision on Data Portal, at which point the Graduate School will finish the admission process and issue the decision letter to the applicant.

#### a) Objection of admission voting outcome

Anybody on an DIS Admission committee who objects to a voting outcome within the committee may appeal to the Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee has the right to recommend that the Graduate School Dean or Interdisciplinary Graduate Program's Director intervene to remedy the conflict.

### C. Major, substantive revision to an D.I.S.

The D.I.S. is housed in the Graduate School and does not have a specific department. Thus, the student's D.I.S. committee serves as his or her department. The Director of Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs oversees the D.I.S. and serves in the role of department chair with support from the D.I.S. Admissions Committee, the D.I.S. Oversight Committee, and, when needed, the Dean of the Graduate School. Upon admission into the program, the student's prospective committee becomes the official acting committee (i.e., the "department"). This committee is responsible for directing the student's program and committing their time and effort to mentor and guide the student through program and degree completion.

If an D.I.S. student makes substantive changes to his or her D.I.S. program (e.g., original research plan, scope of work, timeline, comprehensive examination format, or committee member composition), a formal review and approval process of the revised D.I.S. must occur. The Graduate School (which is the responsible academic unit) must approve of the proposed changes. The formal approval process can occur through one of two different courses of action; the student can choose which course of action.

Course of Action #1: The D.I.S. student convenes the current committee (i.e., the committee approved by the D.I.S. Admissions committee and recognized by the Graduate School) and presents to them the proposed revisions to the D.I.S. Specifically, this presentation should include:

- 1) A brief summary of the revised research plan, including methodology. If the student is proposing revisions to the D.I.S. committee (i.e., the 'department') the student must explain how revisions will successfully contribute to the revised research plan and degree completion.

- 2) Present a revised timeline, showing coursework completed and any new courses that might be needed to meet the goals of the revised research plan and any changes in committee member composition.
- 3) Describe any changes to the comprehensive exam format that was originally agreed upon.

After the presentation, the student will be excused, and the committee members will discuss the students' proposed revisions to the D.I.S. After this discussion, the student will be informed of whether the current proposal is acceptable as submitted or require minor changes. If major changes are required, the revisions will need to be reviewed, evaluated and approved by all members of the student's current committee. All documents prepared for this meeting will be kept on record in the student's file at the Graduate School.

If the changes do not implicate committee membership, members of the existing committee will indicate their approval verbally during the meeting. If the approved changes include new committee members, these new members will be required to write letters of commitment and submit them to the Graduate School. These letters should mirror in scope and format the letters submitted by prospective committee members at the time of the student's original application to the D.I.S. As noted in the application guidelines, the letters must, "...include a statement about the value and rigor of the student's proposal, [the committee members'] willingness to participate in the collaborative effort and [the committee members'] specific areas of expertise and how this strengthens the student's D.I.S. program of study and dissertation project(s)" (see PhD Individualized Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program, item 5b <http://www.umt.edu/grad/Interdisciplinary%20Graduate%20Programs/Prospective%20Students.php>). These letters will be kept with the student's file.

Course of Action #2: The D.I.S. student prepares a new D.I.S. application that includes the revisions to the research plan, course of study, comprehensive exam format, timeline and committee member makeup and submits this to the D.I.S. Admissions Committee. The application can and should include relevant coursework and research activities that the student had already completed in the course of his or her original plan. The application submission deadlines are November 15 and April 1, each academic year. The D.I.S. Admissions Committee will review the application and decide to fully approve, provisionally approve, or deny the student admission into the D.I.S.

### Application Materials (current checklist below)

Deadlines for applications are April 1st & November 15th.

Criterion for evaluation includes:

1. TOEFL score(if relevant) that meets the University standard and GRE General Test
2. Masters Degree or equivalent degree program of study that includes at least 30 credit hours of graduate work and a minimum of 3.0 GPA.
3. Relevance and quality of professional work to date and potential for PhD level work.
4. Statement as to whether or not the applicant has applied to an existing doctoral graduate program at UM; and, if so, an explanation of why the applicant is not pursuing said degree.

Statement that the applicant has not been dismissed from an existing doctoral graduate program at UM.

5. A clear indication the proposal is for a truly integrative PhD that cannot be constructed using an existing UM doctoral program.
6. Application and Proposal
  - a) Academic and professional goals including statement of research problem(s) and articulation of objectives (skills and competencies) to be developed
  - b) Curriculum Plan
  - c) Assessment Plan
  - d) a statement of the research problem(s) that will be addressed, review of literature and articulation of the gap in knowledge to be addressed (i.e. the context of the proposed research with respect to previous literature in the field), general approach to the methodology, and expected format of the dissertation (i.e. chapters to be submitted)
7. CV
8. Transcripts from all previous institutions
9. Letters (3) of recommendation
10. Commitment letters from prospective DIS committee members
11. Checklist completed by applicant and the 3<sup>rd</sup> page completed by DIS prospective committee Chair.

Notes:

- A. Incomplete applications will be returned and only re-reviewed once.

