

1 SIGNIFICANT DATES AND DEADLINES

For specific to IS Significant Dates and Deadlines please consult the IS web site under IS News & Events at Important Dates.

<http://is.uwaterloo.ca/dates.htm>

Hard copies are usually available each term at the IS office and, typically, provided at the IS Welcome and Orientation sessions held the first Wednesday of each term after UW lectures begin.

For UW-wide dates, see the current Undergraduate UW Calendar

http://www.ucalendar.uwaterloo.ca/INTRO/calendar_events.pdf

And the Office of the Registrar's site

<http://www.quest.uwaterloo.ca/undergraduate/dates.html>

Remember:

Late penalties in the form of fines are assigned without exception when you don't meet the deadlines for fee payments. Payments for fees can be done easily with on-line banking.

Meeting administrative deadlines and submitting assignments are top priorities for you as a student. There are thousands of students who need paperwork processed and thus staff manage HUGE amounts of data and particulars. Help yourself – and of course them -- by ensuring all information you provide is accurate, complete, readable, and provided before the deadlines.

Get in the habit of providing your name and UW student ID on every piece of correspondence. Consider setting-up an automatic signature for your email with that information included.

The responsibilities and obligations you have as a student are similar to those you would have with employment. You are accountable for 'doing your job' and thus for your own progress.

Having said that, we know life happens and sometimes deadlines for academic work are a challenge to meet. Anticipate such events when you can and immediately contact the people concerned – lecturers, advisors, administrative staff – with your needs. By being straightforward and direct, you may find a certain understanding will be afforded you. Keep in mind that people will question your organizational abilities, however, if you routinely ask for extended deadlines and special considerations!

ORGANIZING YOUR PROGRAM OF STUDY

The IS web site (www.is.uwaterloo.ca) provides an overview and background information for the program, much of which you may already have learned. See the “About Independent Studies (IS) section of the IS web site (<http://is.uwaterloo.ca/about.htm>), including the “Program Overview” (<http://is.uwaterloo.ca/program.htm>) which outlines the work to be accomplished for the pre-thesis and thesis phases of the program.

1.1 Pre-Thesis Phase

The number of courses to be completed in this pre-thesis phase depends on whether you have been given academic credit for prior work you may have done at UW or elsewhere. You are told this at the time of admission into IS and you should make note of it. You must spend the equivalent of at least two full-time terms (a total of ten courses of 0.5 credit weight) in this first phase if you have already completed two terms of university work, or the equivalent of at least four full-time terms (of a possible six) if you have not previously attended college or university.

A course of self-directed study or an IS course entails about 100 hours of serious work during the term and is considered to be equivalent to a single term course of 0.5 credit weight offered in other UW programs.

1.1.1 Meeting with an Academic Advisor in IS

IS is a small program that strives to maintain an open and friendly atmosphere. This allows students and advisors to get to know one another. Take advantage of the opportunity! Academic advisors provide initial guidance and supervision for your academic studies. Throughout the term, meetings with your advisor are used to monitor progress in relation to the objectives specified in your term plan. Five meetings are required per term but you are encouraged to meet more often. You and your advisor should determine what is appropriate for you.

Because IS is a program for individuals with diverse interests, each student develops a different agreement with their advisor. At the first meeting, it is a good idea to discuss your advisor's expectations in terms of work to be produced, course requirements, and time requirements. This results in fewer complications in the future and can save a lot of time and frustration. Outline how you wish to proceed with your Independent Studies courses and explore what options are available to you. Ultimately, your IS courses are what you make them! Don't be afraid to explore creative options or try a unique technique. Enjoy the experience and freedom IS affords.

The first term is an exciting and somewhat confusing time. It is a period of major adjustment not only to the freedom and responsibility of independent courses but also in terms of learning to define your own limits, setting your own goals, and evaluating your strengths and weaknesses. Talk to other students -- it is an excellent way to get ideas for IS courses. Get connected at the Orientation and Welcome session and luncheon held at the beginning of each term.

1.1.2 Term Plans and Term Performance Reports

Students in IS develop their individual term plans (a plan of study) with the assistance of IS academic advisors. The plans focus on expectations and objectives for your academic activities in the program and they help establish the habit of setting specific academic goals which, in turn, provide structure for your full independent study.

A “**Term Plan**” is required of every student in each term during the pre-thesis phase, and your academic advisor helps you with this. Once you finalize a term plan, you and your advisor sign the form cover and include all the term plan material. In turn, the material is provided to the IS office for administrative processing. To view guidelines for the preparation of a term plan and to obtain the cover form which must accompany it, see “Resources, Forms” on the IS web site at <http://is.uwaterloo.ca/forms.htm>

You may study either full-time (taking five courses of 0.5 credit weight) or part-time (taking two courses of 0.5 credit weight). These numbers are fixed for IS by the rules governing university funding by the provincial government. You may take regular university courses but you are expected to engage in a significant amount of independent study and you are encouraged to develop a perspective that goes beyond that of a single discipline. You meet regularly with your academic advisor during the term and with other IS course advisors (if you have them) as often as is mutually agreed upon.

You must prepare a “**Term Report**” at the end of the each term. For a copy of the term report guidelines and cover form, see “Resources, Forms” on the web site at <http://is.uwaterloo.ca/forms.htm>. This report helps you summarize and integrate what you learn during the term and provides a good basis for thinking about your next academic goals for the next term plan.

These documents provide the basis for review and evaluation of your term work. Through a system of term plans and term reports, honest, critical self-evaluation is balanced with reasonable, constructive external evaluation. Your term reports must be received and approved before you are given credit for the term. The term report is read and the cover signed by your regular advisor and reviewed by another IS advisor, a resource or second reader. Finally, the material is submitted to the IS office staff for further processing.

1.1.3 Course Selection

How do you determine which courses to take – especially whether you take IS courses or other university courses? The main purpose of a term plan is to encourage you to think strategically about how you use your time at UW. Many IS students confirm that thinking strategically about their full course load is critical to their overall success.

Remember:

IS students have the option of NOT selecting other university courses, choosing instead to work independently each term by registering all five courses as IS courses. Should an IS student do this, the result is a completely self-directed university experience which satisfies a student’s desire to focus on a topic or field. Still other IS students decide upon a mix of other university courses and IS

courses, which results in a broader undergraduate experience. Whatever courses you choose, the expectation is that the information you learn will contribute to your final thesis product.

Consult the UW undergraduate calendar <http://www.uwaterloo.ca/course.html> for a complete selection of courses available.

Here are some points to keep in mind for course selection ...

After the BIS Degree

IS students have gone on to do graduate studies in a wide range of professional and academic fields at Canadian and other universities, and some have received certification for special work in other areas such as ergonomics, holistic health services and mid-wifery. If you are interested in further university work or other kinds of accreditation, find out SOON (if not right now!) what the requirements are for whatever you might want to do. You may meet many of the requirements through self-directed studies in IS or you may find it is desirable to take some recognizable courses along the way, if for no other reason than to demonstrate by your good grades that you have the ability to succeed in this approach to learning as well.

IS Courses

Whether you are a student just entering university for the first time or if you have some post-secondary studies, IS 100, *Introduction to Research Methods*, provides a good orientation for effective self-directed study. All individual IS courses of study have an IS course number. Start with IS courses at the beginning of the 100 or 200 series depending on the term level you are assigned when you are admitted to the IS program. Keep track of the course numbers you select each term and continue consecutively with subsequent terms.

Prerequisites

You might find a course that you would really like to take offered at the third or fourth year level in a particular department. Be sure to check if it has a prerequisite, such as a first or second year course that has to be done first. These “gatekeepers” or requirements are intended to ensure that everyone in the course has sufficient prior background understanding -- which can be especially important in the maths and natural sciences. Sometimes, there is also a note that the course can be taken with the permission of the instructor. If so, even if you don’t have a prerequisite but you have studied in this area on your own, take time to inquire, and if it’s okay, then ask the instructor for the course permission number for on-line registration. You will also need to complete an over ride form <http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/forms/index.html#enrol>, obtaining the instructor’s signature and a signature from your IS academic advisor on this form.

Program Options and Minors

There are a number of formal program Options at UW which are open to students enrolled in different programs. Check to see whether there might be an Option that meshes well with your interests so that you might decide to complete the requirements for it as part of your IS program. It would be identified on your BIS degree. Start, for example, with the listings under “Interdisciplinary Studies” in the Calendar. Successful completion of ten term courses in a given discipline is usually

required for a “minor” in that discipline to be identified on your degree. Check the specific requirements in the University Calendar for the disciplinary program of interest to you.

Reading or Special Topic Courses

Many departments offer what are commonly called reading or special topic courses. If this would be helpful to your studies, check with the department you wish to work in for the availability and terminology of such courses. In a reading course, you work with a faculty member in your area of interest and receive a grade for your effort. There are advantages to taking a reading course: you make contact with professors who share your interests and who might later be one of your thesis supervisors *and* you are still able to do independent work.

Audits

You can sign up to audit courses offered by most faculties. Please note that courses in the Faculties of Engineering, Environmental Studies (courses with the labels ARCH, ENVS, GEOG, PLAN) and Science (labels of BIOL, CHEM, EARTH, PHYS, SCI) are not available for audit.

You must consult with the instructor at the beginning of the course to see what conditions, if any, must be met for an audit. Instructors of courses in faculties not allowing audits might allow you to sit in without signing up. Officially, audited courses show up on your transcript as AUD.

Remember:

Sitting in an AUD course by itself is not equivalent to an IS course of study so check with your advisor about additional work to be completed.

Excerpt from the University of Waterloo Undergraduate Calendar 2007-2008:

Audit status (AUD): Students may request to register for Audit status (AUD) in a course taught on campus. No credit is granted for a course in which an AUD grade is awarded. Students interested in an Audit must consult with the course instructor at the beginning of the course to ascertain what conditions are attached to the granting of an AUD by the course instructor. Audits must be approved by the course instructor and the student's advisor during the two week add period. Failure to satisfy the conditions of Audit will result in the course being dropped from the academic record.
<http://www.ucalendar.uwaterloo.ca/ARTS/artsexam.html> (page 7:7)

Courses from other Universities

There is close co-operation between UW and Wilfrid Laurier University, and normally you can enrol in courses at WLU subject to their prerequisites and size limits. See “Undergraduate Studies Cross-Registration with Wilfrid Laurier University <http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/forms/CrossRegn.pdf> or in the UW Undergraduate Calendar on page 7:3. <http://www.ucalendar.uwaterloo.ca/ARTS/artsadmission.html>

You will need a [Letter of Permission](#) (a UW \$25.00 non-refundable processing fee applies) in advance to take courses from other universities for credit towards your BIS degree at Waterloo. **You may not be enrolled in more than one university in any one term.** The other universities will charge you their tuition fees for these courses.

For those IS students not living in the Kitchener and Waterloo area, this can be an advantage. However, **no more than one half (50%) of the course credits for a UW degree can be transfer credits from other institutions.** If you have been given advanced standing for work you completed at other universities be sure to check with IS about how many additional courses you could complete elsewhere for credit at UW before registering for them.

Distance Education Courses

UW distance education courses can be credited towards your BIS degree. For more information, see <http://de.uwaterloo.ca/index.html>.

Other distance education courses such as those offered by Athabasca University (<http://www.athabascau.ca/>) or through the Canadian Virtual University (<http://www.cvu-uvic.ca>) are subject to limits noted above.

1.1.4 Registration Procedures

QUEST is the University of Waterloo's student system for online enrolment. Instructions for this on-line registration are provided at: <http://quest.uwaterloo.ca/help/howdoi/index.html>

Remember:

- * You will need to have your UW userid and password ready to access the system.
- * Your UW userid and password can be obtained through the QUEST website.
- * If you have problems, contact the **QUEST Helpline** for undergraduates at **Extension 36644** or
- * Contact the Arts Computing Office <http://www.aco.uwaterloo.ca/>, PAS 1077, Extension 33190.

As a student at UW, you can use Quest to:

- Enrol in, drop, or swap classes
- Update your contact information
- View your tuition fees and account summary
- Link to online banking institutions to pay your fees
- View your financial aid, awards, scholarships, and bursaries
- Link to myHRinfo to view your pay cheque earnings, if applicable
- View your term grades
- View your unofficial transcript
- View your class schedule
- View your weekly schedule in a grid-based format
- View the UW course catalogue and Schedule of Classes
- View your Distance Education assignments information

And it will look like this:

For students:

- Obtain a login and password
- Log in to Quest from an international computer
- Delete cookies and clear cache in my browser

- Enable cookies so that I can use Quest
- Add classes
- Work out a conflict-free schedule
- Check to ensure that there is still room in the class(es)
- Undergraduate Schedule of Classes
- Graduate Schedule of Classes
- Permission numbers
- Auditing courses, extra courses, etc.
- Error messages (undergraduate students only)
- Remove my name from UWdir publications
- Drop classes
- Swap classes
- View my enrolment appointment (undergraduate students only)
- View my schedule
- View my weekly schedule
- Change my address information
- Change my email address
- Change my phone number
- View my demographic information
- View my name information
- Display or print my term grades
- Display or print my unofficial transcript

Understanding your undergraduate unofficial transcript:

- View my account
- View my financial aid
- Remove a hold (service indicator) from my account
- View my Distance Education Assignments Information
- View my Distance Education Exam Schedule
- View my Distance Education Materials Information

After your first term of registration, you will be given a “Class Enrolment Appointment date,” from the Registrar’s office approximately two months before a term begins. If you miss your appointment date, then you will have to wait for the “On-Campus Open Class Enrolment Session” to complete or modify (drop/add courses) your enrolment. By that time some other on-campus courses you want might be full so it is important to enrol within your appointment time.

Forms for different enrolment and registration situations can be found at:

<http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/forms/index.html>

1.1.5 Accessing Other Faculty

As you proceed in the program, you will develop contacts with other UW faculty to assist you in your studies. When you first enter the IS program, you are assigned one, maybe two IS academic advisors with whom you consult to develop your term plans and to whom you report at regular

times throughout a term. You are encouraged to make yourself known to the full complement of IS academic advisors and you may find they share same interests as you!

Additionally, there are times when there may not be any academic advisor who is proficient in the academic area you wish to pursue. That means you need to find faculty members who are specifically interested in the topic(s) on which you plan to focus. (And, being forever strategic, you may be laying the foundation for these professors to eventually act as your thesis supervisors!)

Here are some ways to identify such faculty members:

- Check to discover if there are other on-campus or 'near UW campus' courses in the area of your interest. If so, find out who their instructors are. These professors and instructors might be willing to advise you on readings or even give you a special topics reading course.
- Talk to the academic advisors and members of the Academic Board for IS. They will assist you to identify and make contact with faculty members who might be of assistance.
- Talk to other students who share your interests. These may be IS students or other students at the University.
- Graduate students in other departments can often provide valuable advice on faculty resources from a student's perspective.

Remember:

Faculty members and graduate students are very busy people. However, they are almost always interested in helping students and often enjoy working with students whose interests are in areas similar to theirs and who are keen! You must use their time effectively -- and you must fulfill commitments you make to them.