

IDS 890: Internship in Liberal Studies Process Description and Definition

About the Master of Liberal Studies

The Master of Liberal Studies (MLS) is a unique interdisciplinary graduate program available through the College of Arts and Sciences at Fort Hays State University. The program consists of a 10-hour core requirement, an 18-hour customized plan of study designed to meet the goals of the individual student and a 3-hour culminating experience for a total of 31 credit hours. The MLS is directed toward the individual seeking either career enhancement or life enrichment through graduate liberal study.

About the Internship

The internship is designed to be the final practical culminating project for a student in the Masters of Liberal Studies degree program. Taken in the final semester or two, the purpose of the internship is two-fold:

- To integrate the knowledge learned in the core courses as well as the concentration, and
- To give the student practical experience in change in a real world environment.

The successful MLS intern should have a broader understanding of the quickly evolving world and a greater understanding of the discipline they studied as a concentration. In fact, this requirement, above most others, is critical. The successful MLS intern will act as a graduate candidate not just a graduate student.

The internship is only one of the possible options for the MLS candidate. MLS graduate students may also complete a traditional research paper or thesis, depending on their interests, in collaboration with a graduate advisor. It is anticipated that advisors will allow for customized internships given the flexible and customizable nature of the program, but some MLS students may be best served by a more traditional approach.

Internship Proposal Guidelines

The first step of completing the internship is the submission of an Internship Proposal. The proposal is basically a 8 to 12 page document that outlines, essentially, the basic processes and outcomes expected to be completed. The graduate advisor and graduate student should mutually agree upon the general topic of the proposal.

The proposal might contain many, if not all or more, of the following topics:

- Introduction,
- Problem/Issue Background,
- Theoretical Considerations,
- Statement of Purpose and Objectives,
- Detailed Outline of Proposed Accomplishments,
- Timeline,
- Expected Outcomes,
- Criteria for Evaluation,
- Summary.

The internship proposal should be first submitted to the graduate advisor. After the graduate advisor has had a chance to review the proposal they'll return the proposal with additions or revisions. The advisor may or may not need to see the proposal before it is forwarded to the remainder of the graduate committee. Once the graduate advisor has given approval of the proposal draft, the graduate student may schedule a proposal meeting with the entire committee. Each committee member should be given a minimum of 1 week to review the proposal before the proposal meeting. During the proposal meeting the graduate student should be prepared to detail their proposal and answer any questions relevant to their project. Committee members commonly make changes to the proposal, asking a graduate student to adapt their project in one way or another, to make it more academically enriching. Once the committee has approved the proposal, and applicable changes, the graduate student may start on the internship.

Internship Guidelines

During the internship the graduate student must be doing two things. First, and perhaps most important, the graduate student should be compiling notes and other relevant records over the course of the project. Notes should be taken to help the intern recall the important events of the experience. Documents should also be collected since many committees find them informational and reflective of the intern's performance. Second, the graduate student should be in regular communication with both their graduate advisor as well as the other committee members. Keeping members apprised of the progress of the project is often easily

done by sending a bi-weekly or monthly email about important milestones that have been accomplished.

Final Report Guidelines

As the internship comes to a conclusion, several events are triggered. It is important that the graduate student contact the Graduate School to make sure they have declared their intent to graduate. This triggers an Examination Report to be sent to the graduate advisor. As ever, the student is responsible for meeting deadlines and monitoring their academic progress. In terms of the actual internship, the graduate student should be compiling the notes and documenting items that demonstrated results in their internship. These notes should be folded into the original proposal document to form a final internship report. The internship report will likely have a similar structure as the proposal, but the information will focus more on what was accomplished, rather than background and expectations. Upon completion of a draft of this work, the graduate student should forward a copy to the graduate advisor for review and approval. The graduate advisor will suggest changes to the document. Once the report has been revised, and copies forwarded to the committee members, a final defense meeting may be scheduled. Please give all committee members at least 1 week to read and prepare for the final internship defense meeting.

The final internship defense should be an opportunity for the graduate student to demonstrate what they did for their internship, as well as what they learned from the internship and its process. Some level of questioning, and perhaps some confrontation of ideas and conclusions characterize many of these defenses. In some cases, the graduate student may be sent back to rework elements of their internship, or internship report. If this is the case the graduate student must contact the Graduate School and realign their graduation date, if need be. If the student needs to re-defend their internship report, then they would essentially repeat the submission to their advisor, then the committee, and again scheduling and holding a final defense.

Ultimately, the committee is looking at the widest range of attributes of the soon-to-be graduate including:

- Ability to articulate and defend theories in their area,
- Understanding of applicable research methods,
- Objectivity in conducting their inquiry,
- Amount of learning through the coursework,
- Amount of learning through the internship process,
- Ability to act in a professional and “Master”ful manner.

The final defense period has dual purposes. First, it is to be a final reflection on the internship. Second, the final internship defense is the comprehensive examination of the student.

Comprehensive Exams

The Graduate School requires that every graduate student be examined based on their coursework and project. The MLS program is not excluded from this. This position is clearly stated in the FHSU catalog:

“Each applicant for a graduate degree must satisfactorily pass a comprehensive examination over the subject fields of the program. The comprehensive examination is not merely a reexamination of materials covered in coursework but is a test of the graduate degree candidate’s ability to integrate materials from the graduate major and any related or supporting field. If a student writes a thesis, the student will sit for a total of four hours of comprehensive examinations; if a student does not write a thesis, the student will sit for a total of eight hours of comprehensive examinations. Each department will determine the content of the comprehensive examinations; the examination may be written and/or oral.” (FHSU Catalog, p. 82).

Individual departments make decisions as to the form and content of the comprehensive examination. The comprehensive examination should not be considered as part of the final defense of the internship. The defense period (of the Internship) should allow the graduate student to demonstrate their learning over the course of their graduate career. Many final internship defenses take an hour or more to adequately cover the many intricacies of the internship and how it relates to their customized program of student and the MLS core.