INDIVIDUALIZED STUDY, BIS

Banner Code: LA-BIS-INDV

300 Enterprise Hall
Fairfax Campus

Website: http://sis.gmu.edu/programs/la-bis-indv

The Bachelor of Individualized Study (BIS) Program in the School of Integrative Studies is an undergraduate degree completion program with a 42-year history of serving adult students. It offers students a distinctive educational opportunity that allows them to integrate previous experiences into university coursework. Recognizing that college-level learning may be acquired through varied professional, military, and personal experience, the BIS program provides mechanisms for translating experiential learning into academic credit. The program combines an interdisciplinary academic framework and a writing-intensive, research-based curriculum to provide students with individualized degree plans.

In this degree program, most students design their own individualized interdisciplinary program of study. Other students who are interested in early childhood education and who meet specific eligibility requirements can pursue a more prescribed curriculum that leads to a concentration in early childhood education studies.

Admissions & Policies

Admissions

Students who are interested in the bachelor of individualized study degree must attend an information session. In addition to applying to Mason through the Office of Admissions, they need to apply separately to the BIS Program. The schedule of BIS information sessions and the BIS application are available on the BIS Program website (http://bis.gmu.edu).

Eligibility

Adult transfer applicants, age 25 or older may be considered for the BIS only with the following minimum criteria:

1. 12 credits of transferable college coursework as determined by the Office of Admissions
2. Cumulative collegiate grade point average of 2.00+

Admission is directly to BIS with no change to another major without reapplying. The concentration in early childhood education studies is an exception to the age requirement.

Policies

Students pursuing a bachelor of individualized study must meet the baccalaureate degree requirements for all undergraduates: they need to complete 120 credits with 45 credits at or above the 300 level and at least 30 credits at Mason.

BIS students may elect to take a minor in addition to their BIS concentration. 15 credits of the minor must be applied uniquely to the minor and not to the concentration. For students pursuing the concentration in early childhood studies, the minor is required for the degree.

For policies governing all undergraduate degrees, see AP5 Undergraduate Policies.

Credit for Nontraditional Modes of Learning

The BIS program allows students to receive college credit for learning acquired through a variety of nontraditional methods indicated below. The maximum allowable credits are indicated for each category.

- Nationally recognized exam programs such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) when the particular exam has been approved for Mason credit. See CLEP Examination for an approved list. A maximum of 45 maximum credits can be earned through exams. After matriculation, students are limited to taking and applying credits for the CLEP exam in "Information Systems and Computer Applications". Students with a qualifying score on this exam will be awarded credit for IT 104T. Students receiving credit for IT 104T must still meet the university information technology ethics requirement (see Mason Core section of this catalog). Credit for other CLEP exams awarded after matriculation may not be applied.

- Certain university approved industry, government, or military training credits if such credits are indexed and recommended as college-level credit by the American Council on Education (ACE). To be eligible for Mason credit, training and course specifics must exactly match what is in the ACE guide and be approved for Mason credit. The specific credits must also be approved by the program director and the dean. A maximum of 45 credits can be earned through ACE-approved training. A maximum of 60 total combined credits can be accepted for exams and ACE-approved training. For example, if 45 credits are accepted by ACE-approved training, a maximum of 15 credits can be accepted for exams. Students may not take these courses for credit once they have matriculated at Mason.

- Experiential learning demonstrated by portfolios subject to approval by the program director and the dean (30 maximum credits).

- College-level credit earned at institutions accredited by bodies other than recognized regional accrediting organizations subject to approval by the program director and the dean. These credits can only be considered if the institution is listed in Accredited Institutions of Postsecondary Education published by ACE (30 maximum credits) and only if they are taken before the student matriculates at Mason.

Students may not pursue credit for options 1, 2, and 4 once they have matriculated at Mason. They must complete the third option within their first 30 credits after declaring the BIS major. Although the types of credit noted above may be applied to a bachelor of individualized study degree, if a BIS student changes majors, credit awarded in these ways cannot be used toward other majors. These nontraditional credits are not transferable to other degree programs at Mason.

Requirements

Degree Requirements
Total credits: minimum 120
Students should be aware of the specific policies associated with this program, located on the Admissions & Policies tab.

Students pursuing a bachelor of individualized study degree must complete four required courses and one concentration.

**Core Courses in the Major**

Students must complete each of the four core courses with a minimum grade of 2.00.

In BIS 390 The Research Process (or BIS 391 The Research Process for Honors for students pursuing honors in the major), students develop a project proposal. An approved proposal from BIS 390 The Research Process or BIS 391 The Research Process for Honors is a prerequisite to enroll in BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core).

In BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), students complete a senior capstone project that varies according to the individual program of study. It may be an investigative or creative project, and must be appropriate to the student's interdisciplinary concentration. This course requires significant writing and fulfills the Mason Core synthesis requirement. It is a research intensive course designated RS by OSCAR. The project is evaluated by the BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core) instructor in consultation with the student's faculty mentor and others as determined by the BIS director.

BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core) and BIS 491 Senior Project Presentation are taken concurrently when no more than 6 credits remain in the concentration.

**Concentrations in the Major**

Students must complete one concentration of 24-42 credits. Of the credits applied to the concentration, at least 15 credits must be at the 300 level or above and a maximum of 6 credits can have grades of C- or D (grades below 2.00). The total credits applied to the concentration must represent a minimum GPA of 2.00.

Courses applied to a concentration may not also be used to fulfill Mason Core requirements.

**Individualized Concentration (IND)**

Students may do an individualized concentration to meet their own academic needs and interests. The concentration is developed in close consultation with BIS staff and a faculty mentor. Students may incorporate into their individualized concentrations up to 9 credits of previously earned college course work or previously earned nontraditional credit from other institutions. In addition to the 4 core courses, students complete between 24 and 36 credits, depending on the topic and the student's preparation.

Students are encouraged to include UNIV 304 Bachelor Individualized Studies Transfer Transition in the concentration. Students are also encouraged to include BIS 489 Directed Readings and Research and complete it before taking BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core).

**Concentration in Early Childhood Education Studies (ECES)**

This concentration offers students holding a Northern Virginia Community College associate's degree in applied science in early childhood development the opportunity to obtain a BIS in early childhood education studies and a minor in business or other relevant minor. This concentration does not lead to teacher licensure in early childhood education.

To receive this concentration, students complete a minimum of 34 credits beyond the associate's degree in addition to the four core BIS courses, electives, and Mason Core requirements needed to reach at least 120 credits.

**Admission Requirements**

Students are eligible for this concentration if they have an associate's degree in applied science in early childhood development. Unlike the individualized concentration, there is no age restriction regarding admission into this BIS concentration.

**Interdisciplinary Courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIS 300</td>
<td>Understanding Interdisciplinary Studies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>The Research Process</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or BIS 391</td>
<td>The Research Process for Honors</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIS 490</td>
<td>RS: Senior Project (Mason Core)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIS 491</td>
<td>Senior Project Presentation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Credits**

10

**Electives at the 300-400-level**

Select 6 credits of electives relevant to the concentration in consultation with their faculty mentor

**Total Credits**

19

**Mason Core**

BIS students complete a modified Mason Core program of 36 credits. The Mason Core requirements may include courses not listed here; consult the BIS program for more information. Courses used to meet the
Mason Core requirements cannot be used to meet a requirement for a concentration.

Students pursuing the concentration in early childhood education studies meet Mason Core requirements as specified in the advising agreement between NVCC and Mason.

### Mason Core for Early Childhood Education Studies Concentration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>NVCC Coursework</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Level Written Communication</td>
<td>ENGH 101 Composition (Mason Core)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral Communication</td>
<td>COMM 100 Public Speaking (Mason Core)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>MATH or STAT</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core) (synthesis)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Mason Core for Individualized Concentration

**English Composition**

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>ENGH 101</td>
<td>Composition (Mason Core)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGH 302</td>
<td>Advanced Composition (Mason Core)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Humanities**

Select three courses from the following:

- Any ARTH course
- Any AVT course
- Any COMM course
- Any DANC course
- Any ENGH course
- Any MUSI course
- Any PHIL course
- Any RELI course
- Any THR course
- Any course from a foreign language department

**Social and Behavioral Science**

Select three courses from the following:

- Any ANTH course
- Any CRIM course
- Any ECON course
- Any GOVT course
- Any HIST course
- Any LING course
- Any PSYC course
- Any SOCI course
- WMST 200 Introduction to Women and Gender Studies (Mason Core)

**Mathematics or Statistics**

Select one course from the following:

- MATH 106 Quantitative Reasoning (Mason Core) (or any MATH course above 106)
- STAT 250 Introductory Statistics I (Mason Core)

**Information Technology**

Select one from the following:

- IT 104 Introduction to Computing (Mason Core)
- Any course that fulfills the Mason Core IT proficiency requirement (all components including ethics)

**Natural Science**

Select any 3-4 credit lab or non lab course from the following:

- Any ASTR course
- Any BIOL course
- Any CHEM course
- Any CLIM course
- Any EVPP course
- Any GEOI course
- Any PHYS course
- CONS 401 Conservation Theory
- GGS 102 Physical Geography (Mason Core)
- GGS 309 Meteorology and Climate
- INTS 301 Science in the News (Mason Core)
- INTS 318 Exploring Virginia's Watersheds
- INTS 395 Field-Based Work
- INTS 401 Conservation Biology (Mason Core)

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1 Except for ENGH 100 Composition for Multilingual Writers (Mason Core), ENGH 101 Composition (Mason Core), ENGH 302 Advanced Composition (Mason Core)
2 Except for PHIL 173 Logic and Critical Thinking, PHIL 376 Symbolic Logic
Permission to take a graduate course for reserve graduate credit is normally granted only to Mason seniors within 15 hours of graduation. Permission to take a graduate course for reserve graduate credit is available to all high achieving undergraduates with the permission of the department. The ability to take courses for reserve graduate credit is available to all students in the BIS Program. These credits do not apply to the undergraduate degree. Students may take up to 6 additional graduate credits as reserve graduate credit to apply to the program. Students in the BIS Program can apply for this option if they have earned 90 undergraduate credits (including 15 Mason resident credits) with an overall GPA of at least 3.25. Students in the BIS Program must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.75, and successfully present their research during the Senior Capstone Project presentations (by earning a grade of 2.0 or better in BIS 491 Senior Project Presentation) to graduate with honors in the major.

Accelerated Option Requirements
Students in the accelerated master’s option must maintain a minimum 3.30 GPA in the undergraduate segment until they have satisfied all requirements for the BIS degree. On completion and conferral of the undergraduate degree they submit the Bachelor’s/Accelerated Master’s Transition Form (http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms) and are admitted to graduate status.

As graduate students, accelerated master’s students have an advanced standing. Students must complete all credits that satisfy requirements of the BIS program and those of the MSAIT program, with two courses overlapping from the courses necessary to earn the BIS with a concentration IND (individualized), applied information technology emphasis as listed below.

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>Database Management Systems</td>
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<td>Fundamentals of Computing Platforms</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Total Credits</td>
<td></td>
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Individualized Study, BIS/Applied Information Technology, Accelerated MS

Overview
Highly-qualified students in the Individualized Study, BIS have the option of obtaining an accelerated Applied Information Technology, MS. Students in the Individualized Study, BIS program may apply for this option if they have earned 90 undergraduate credits (including 15 Mason resident credits) with an overall GPA of at least 3.25. Criteria for admission are identical to criteria for admission to the Telecommunications, MS program.

Application Requirements
Applicants to all graduate programs at George Mason University must meet the admission standards and application requirements for graduate study as specified in Graduate Admissions. Mason undergraduate students in the BIS Program can apply in the semester in which they will have completed 90 or more credits (including 15 Mason resident credits) applicable toward the BIS. Students must have an overall GPA of at least 3.30 to apply to the program.

Accelerated Option Requirements
Students in the Individualized Study, BIS/Applied Information Technology, Accelerated MS program must maintain a minimum 3.30 GPA in the undergraduate segment until they have satisfied all requirements for the BIS degree. On completion and conferral of the undergraduate degree they submit the Bachelor’s/Accelerated Master’s Transition Form (http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms) and are admitted to graduate status.

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Individualized Study, BIS/Applied Information Technology, Accelerated MS

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Admission Requirements
Students in the Individualized Study, BIS/Applied Information Technology, Accelerated MS program must maintain a minimum 3.30 GPA in the undergraduate segment until they have satisfied all requirements for the BIS degree. On completion and conferral of the undergraduate degree they submit the Bachelor’s/Accelerated Master’s Transition Form (http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms) and are admitted to graduate status.

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Individualized Study, BIS

Select an additional 500-level TCOM course(s) from the list below

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<td>The Research Process</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIS 491</td>
<td>Senior Project Presentation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE 301</td>
<td>Digital Electronics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT 341</td>
<td>Data Communications and Network Principles</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCOM 500</td>
<td>Modern Telecommunications</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Select additional courses related to telecommunication \(^1\) 9-21

Total Credits 31-43

\(^1\) Required to reach the necessary number of credits for the BIS Individualized concentration.

### Telecommunications Courses

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<tr>
<td>TCOM 500</td>
<td>Modern Telecommunications</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCOM 530</td>
<td>Data Communications Fundamentals</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCOM 535</td>
<td>The TCP/IP Suite of Internet Protocols</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCOM 551</td>
<td>Digital Communication Systems</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCOM 607</td>
<td>Satellite Communications</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCOM 608</td>
<td>Optical Communications Systems</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCOM 631</td>
<td>Voice Over IP</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Accelerated students who have passed IT 341 Data Communications and Network Principles with a grade of B or higher will not be required to take TCOM 530 in the Telecommunications, MS core. Other TCOM courses may be approved on a case-by-case basis. See each course for individual prerequisite requirements.

### Degree Conferral

Students must apply the semester before they expect to complete the BIS requirements to have the BS degree conferred. In addition, at the beginning of the student’s final undergraduate semester, students must complete a Bachelor’s/Accelerated Master’s Transition form that is submitted to the Office of the University Registrar and the VSE Graduate Admissions Office. At the completion of MS requirements, a master’s degree is conferred.