

M.S. in Liberal Studies Handbook
Department of Humanities
Texas A&M University—Central Texas



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY
CENTRAL TEXAS

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This handbook provides students the information they need to enter and complete the Master of Science in Liberal Studies at Texas A&M University Central Texas. Questions about this document should be directed to the Graduate Coordinator for Liberal Studies.

Welcome

Welcome to the Master of Science in Liberal Studies (MSLS) program, set within the College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Humanities at Texas A&M University-Central Texas (TAMUCT). The MSLS program at TAMUCT provides students the chance to develop a unique scholarly identity by combining a variety of academic programs into one curriculum. The result is a more personalized degree that can more directly meet the variety of educational and professional goals today's students bring with them to a university.

This program holds particular rewards for students looking to develop scholarly interests that extend beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries or that naturally exist within an interdisciplinary context. Regardless of specific interests, graduates from the MSLS will develop the skills they need to address contemporary questions or concerns through original research, and to express their findings in an effective and meaningful manner.

Program Learning Outcomes

The MSLS program strives to prepare students to...

- Locate scholarly arguments within the disciplinary concerns that define them.
- Examine one's own scholarly interests within some established or still developing sets of methodologies and scholarship.
- Combine and integrate the theories and methodologies from multiple disciplines.
- Evaluate intellectual questions against a set of contexts including, but not limited to, political, historical, material, cultural, racial, ethical, national, and geographic contexts.
- Author original research that exhibits the advanced critical-thinking and communication skills necessary for effective professional and other social or cultural contexts.
- Develop habits of critical inquiry that include self-direction and self-reflection.

Equipped with this set of skills, MSLS students will be ready to enter any number of professional contexts and to address the challenges that arise within those contexts. Most succinctly, the interdisciplinary training the MSLS program allows students to develop a unique scholarly identity that can meet a variety of personal, educational, and professional goals.

Mutual Expectations and Responsibilities

The MSLS program, the Department of Humanities, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Office of Graduate Studies all expect and demand your intellectual engagement and curiosity, academic integrity, and professionalism. Those who meet these expectations and demands can expect the faculty who contribute to this program to provide you a challenging and safe learning environment, to hold you to high academic standards, and to be professional in all their contact with you. Furthermore, you can expect TAMUCT to offer you the necessary academic resources and ancillary services needed during your career here. Please contact the MSLS Graduate Coordinator should you have concerns about your ability to meet your expectations or requirements, or should you find a faculty member, a program, or our institution failing to deliver on our promise.

MSLS Directory

The primary point of contact for the MSLS program is the Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Stefan Schöberlein. You can reach Dr. Schöberlein by email (schoeberlein@tamuct.edu). Most emails will receive a response within one (1) business day. Those who would like to schedule a meeting can do that over email.

As the MSLS program is an interdisciplinary degree, you will also need to remain in meaningful contact with faculty members from chosen areas of study throughout your program. Most usually, this additional point of contact will develop naturally as you take coursework in a particular area. Should coursework not yield a meaningful and productive professional contact, it is your responsibility to develop a working relationship with program-specific faculty. These relationships are important because the faculty in your areas of study can help you learn disciplinary expectations, develop disciplinary questions, and learn more about career opportunities that extend from that area of study. Also, the faculty can discuss course options with you and discuss the benefits of taking specific courses. Therefore, it is to your benefit to develop professional contacts within your chosen areas of study. Program-specific faculty will not become your advisor. They will, however, play a vital role in your professional development. The MSLS graduate coordinator will remain your primary point of contact on all program decisions, especially as they relate to your standing in the program, your course selection, and the completion of your terminal project, which will be a thesis or a comprehensive exam.

Students admitted into the MSLS are required to meet with the MSLS coordinator before registering for courses. MSLS students should know that not every course is available to or suitable for them. Every course must be approved by the MSLS coordinator. MSLS students should check with the MSLS graduate coordinator before registering for a course to ensure each course taken counts toward the MSLS degree. MSLS students should not self-advise.

If you have questions about a specific discipline before beginning the MSLS degree, contact the graduate coordinator for the program(s) that interests you. Potential MSLS students should also consult the faculty members of their desired areas of focus to learn the opportunities and limitations of an MSLS degree before declaring themselves an MSLS student. Table 1 provides the contact information for all of the programs that most usually participate in the MSLS program as emphasis areas.

Table 1: Point of Contact for Common Disciplines Frequently Participating in the MSLS

Participating Program	Graduate Program Coordinator	Email
English	Dr. Amber Dunai	adunai@tamuct.edu
History	Dr. Cadra McDaniel	cadra.mcdaniel@tamuct.edu
Political Science	Dr. Jeffrey Dixon	jeffreydixon@tamuct.edu
Math	Dr. Christopher Thron	thron@tamuct.edu
Criminal Justice	Dr. Michele Quinones	mquinones@tamuct.edu
Computer Information Systems	Dr. Anitha Chennamaneni	anitha.chennanmaneni@tamuct.edu

Human Resources	Dr. Brad Almond	loafman@tamuct.edu
Educational Psychology	Dr. Andria Schwegler	schwegler@tamuct.edu
School Psychology	Dr. Coady Lapierre	lapierre@tamuct.edu

Other Important Contact Information

Table 2: Contact Information for Additional Offices

Office	Location	Phone	Website
College of Arts and Sciences	216 HH	(254) 519-5441	tamuct.edu/departments/artsandsciences/
Counseling Center	207 WH	(254) 501-5955	https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-counseling.html
Information Technology Services	113 FH	(254) 519-5466	https://www.tamuct.edu/help/index.html
The Graduate School	424 FH	(254) 519-5468	tamuct.edu/departments/graduatestudies
Student Financial Assistance	108 FH	(254) 501-5854	https://www.tamuct.edu/financial-aid/index.html
Student Government Association	105 WH	(254) 501-5909	https://tamuct.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/student-government-association
University Library	Warrior Hall	(254) 519-5798	tamuct.edu/departments/library/

MSLS Overview

The MSLS degree at TAMUCT provides you an opportunity to consider questions or problems from an interdisciplinary perspective. You will be able to approach scholarly interests from a broader academic perspective than any one program can provide, and to continue studies at a graduate level in areas of inquiry where a disciplinary program in that area does not currently exist.

All MSLS students are required to take LIBS 5300: Interdisciplinarity. This course is an introduction to interdisciplinary research. MSLS students should take LIBS 5300 as soon as possible after being accepted into the MSLS program.

All MSLS students are also required to take LIBS 5310: Interdisciplinary Methods. This is a research course that allows students to begin researching and creating interdisciplinary projects. MSLS students should take LIBS 5310 as soon as possible after being accepted into the

MSLS program. Those who wait too long to take LIBS 5300 and LIBS 5310 should expect some trouble completing their terminal project of choice, the thesis or the comprehensive exam.

In addition to the two required courses, all MSLS students will also have the opportunity to select coursework that helps them explore a specific topic of interest. Students will meet with the MSLS Coordinator before registering for each upcoming semester to discuss course options. This meeting is a requirement as students should be selecting coursework that refines their topic of interest and will help prepare them for their terminal project. When meeting with the MSLS Coordinator, students should provide justification and a thorough explanation as to the reasons that they would enroll in each specific course. Failure to provide this justification may result in the MSLS Coordinator's denial of a particular course or set of courses. As such, students should work actively with the MSLS Coordinator to discuss course options. Those who work on their own should expect troubles with financial aid and delays in graduation.

Students should keep in mind that some courses are not open to MSLS students, and other courses do not inform a student's scholarly interest or an interdisciplinary approach in the way they must for a student to have success in the MSLS program. The only way to guarantee that a class will count toward the MSLS degree is to discuss that course with the MSLS graduate coordinator before registering for it. Classes taken without consultation may not be credited toward the degree. The MSLS graduate coordinator reserves the right to refuse to count any outside elective taken without prior permission.

Terminal Projects

MSLS students have two options for a terminal project. They may elect to write a thesis or to take a comprehensive exam. Below is an overview of both options.

The Thesis Option:

Students taking the thesis option complete a thesis under the direction of a thesis chair, who will most normally be the MSLS Graduate Coordinator. In some cases, with the approval of the MSLS Graduate Coordinator, a member of the Graduate Faculty from a specific discipline may be approved to serve as the chair. This decision belongs entirely to the MSLS Graduate Coordinator, although it will be made in conversation with the student. The thesis chair will also work with the thesis writer to form an acceptable thesis committee. Each committee will consist of the chair and between one (1) and three (3) additional faculty members. The thesis chair will approve all members of the thesis committee. The additional members should teach in the areas of study the thesis writer looks to utilize. All members of a thesis committee must be approved Graduate Faculty. The thesis chair supervises the student's thesis committee and holds the final vote on if a thesis passes or not.

The specific requirements for the thesis are determined by the thesis committee chair in consultation with the thesis committee. However, each student's thesis will need to meet the following criteria: 1) Develop an interdisciplinary thesis that makes an original contribution, however modest, by synthesizing knowledge from the student's specific fields of

study, 2) construct a thesis that has a strong and defensible argument, which is supported through extensive primary sources and which utilizes appropriate research methodologies, 3) create a thesis that effectively utilizes the methodologies and leading scholars appropriate to the student's fields of study, and 4) design a thesis that will be styled according to the academic citation style used in the student's main field of study.

The thesis topic should be agreed upon in consultation between the student and his/her thesis committee chair. The thesis topic must be approved by the Graduate School by filing the Thesis Proposal Approval Form available on the Graduate School's webpage. Deadlines related to the thesis are also available on that website, including deadlines related to submitting the topic approval form, the defense deadline, and filing an electronic copy of the thesis.

The thesis will be prepared in accordance with the procedures specified by the Graduate School. Upon completion of the thesis, the student will sit for an oral defense before his/her thesis committee. The six (6) credit hours of thesis will be taken over the course of two (2) semesters. In some rare instances, a student may petition the MSLS Graduate Coordinator to take one (1) additional thesis hour to finish a project one semester beyond the normal, two-semester plan. Should a student need more than this one extra semester or should the MSLS Graduate Coordinator deny the request for an extra hour, the student will convert to the non-thesis track and will need to pass the comprehensive examination. This examination will be the terminal project.

Some projects will require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before the research begins. It is the responsibility of the student to make this determination. The student can do that by reaching out to the chair of the IRB. In general, though, when scholarship involves human subject research, it will need IRB approval. The student will be required to submit the needed paperwork and forms to the IRB committee for review. The student should work with the chair of his/her thesis committee to complete all necessary paperwork and the required IRB review process for research that involves human subjects.

Removal from Thesis Track: A student should work closely with the thesis chair to ensure that they are making satisfactory progress in completing the thesis. If a student is unable or unwilling to complete a thesis, then the student will be placed on the non-thesis option for the MSLS and will need to complete a comprehensive exam to finish the MSLS program.

Thesis Defense and Final Thesis Copy for the Graduate School: A thesis defense is scheduled after the thesis chair approves the completed thesis. The thesis defense is an oral examination, normally lasting around one (1) hour. The examination covers the thesis and the field(s) related to the thesis.

Following a defense, but before submitting the thesis to the Graduate School, the student must make certain that the thesis is free of typographical, spelling, and grammatical errors. The Graduate School will return the thesis if it contains such errors or if the thesis does not conform to the prescribed format. The student bears all responsibility to see that the thesis achieves an acceptable format. Following approval by the Graduate School, the thesis will be published and made available through Proquest. Questions regarding thesis publication should be addressed to the Graduate School.

If the student does not make the necessary corrections in a timely manner, graduation may be delayed. In extreme cases, a student unable or unwilling to submit an error-free thesis as

determined by the thesis committee or the Graduate School may be moved to the non-thesis track.

Thesis Option, 36 Hour Degree

NOTE: This is a tentative guide to be used for student advising. It is not considered an official degree plan by Texas A&M University-Central Texas, and it is subject to review and change by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Required Courses, 12 Hours Total

LIBS 5300 Interdisciplinarity

LIBS 5310 Interdisciplinary Methods

LIBS 5395 Interdisciplinary Thesis

LIBS 5395 Interdisciplinary Thesis

LIBS 5300 and LIBS 5310 should be taken as soon as possible upon acceptance into the MSLS program. A student should inform the MSLS Coordinator the semester before they plan to enroll in LIBS 5395.

Approved Courses, 24 Hours Total: A student must meet with the MSLS Coordinator to receive approval for all courses to count toward the Approved Courses Section. Departments may require some prerequisite courses; therefore, each student is encouraged to consult the course descriptions in the TAMUCT catalog. Some courses may not be available for this degree for reasons of licensure or certification.

Comprehensive Examination Option:

Preliminary Preparations for the Examination: For a student who opts for the comprehensive examination (LIBS 5090), this examination will be his/her culminating work in the MSLS. The comprehensive examination will allow a student to synthesize the knowledge that they have learned by answering questions in their fields of study.

A student preparing for the comprehensive exams should contact the MSLS Graduate Coordinator either the semester before the student enrolls in LIBS 5090, or within the first two-weeks of the semester in which the student is enrolled in LIBS 5090. Failure to alert the Graduate Coordinator of one's intention to take the comprehensive exam may prevent that student from completing the exam as desired.

Overview of Examination: The comprehensive examination requires students to write an essay that addresses some specific prompt using the skills and insights gained from coursework and independent research. The MSLS graduate coordinator and the student will negotiate the exact prompt and timeline. In some cases, the MSLS graduate coordinator may

elect to form a panel of readers from areas the student plans to bring into his/her paper. A student can also request outside readers. A faculty member must be graduate faculty to serve as an outside reader. The MSLS graduate coordinator will be the person who determines if the student passes or fails, even when that decision is made in consultation with others. Normally, the student will have ten (10) days to write a 12-20 page paper on the agreed upon topic. A student can expect these general guidelines to be more specific before the exam begins, at least as long as the student provides the MSLS graduate coordinator timely notification notifies of a desire to take the comprehensive exam.

Comprehensive Examination Option, 36 Hour Degree

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Required Courses, 6 Hours Total

LIBS 5300 Interdisciplinarity

LIBS 5310 Interdisciplinary Methods

LIBS 5090 Comprehensive Examination

NOTES: LIBS 5300 and LIBS 5310 should be taken as soon as possible upon acceptance into the MSLS program. A student should inform the MSLS Coordinator the semester before they plan to enroll in LIBS 5090.

Approved Courses 30 Hours Total

A student must meet with the MSLS Coordinator to receive approval for all courses to count toward the Approved Courses Section. Departments may require some prerequisite courses; therefore, each student is encouraged to consult the course descriptions in the TAMUCT catalog. Some courses may not be available for this degree for reasons of licensure or certification.

Students Transferring into the MSLS Program

Students that transfer into the MSLS program from another university or after starting another program at TAMUCT should expect to forfeit some if not all earlier course work. Students must petition the MSLS Graduate Coordinator at the time they are admitted into the MSLS program to have any previous coursework count toward their new program. The final determination of what will and will not count toward the MSLS degree resides entirely with the MSLS Graduate Coordinator.

Guidelines and Procedures for MSLS Students

The following guidelines and procedures provided here intend to acquaint students with the general operations of the program and to provide a succinct statement of certain degree requirements. Students are also urged to read carefully the requirements and regulations for the MSLS degree as listed in the Graduate Catalog.

- 1) Administration: The MSLS degree program is administered by the MSLS Graduate Coordinator in consultation with the Graduate Coordinators for participating programs and participating graduate faculty members.
- 2) General Policies and Requirements: the following policies and requirements apply to all students:
 - a) All students are required to take 1) LIBS 5300; LIBS 5310 2) Select either the Thesis Option or Comprehensive Examination Option
 - b) Students must submit a Degree Acknowledgment Form before beginning the program, and any time there is a change to their emphasis area of study. The Degree Acknowledgment Form should be completed in consultation with the MSLS Graduate Coordinator.
 - c) Students must complete a Graduation Application by the deadlines set by the Office of Graduate Studies.
 - d) Students with Incomplete grades must complete all course requirements by the deadlines stated in the contract with their instructor. Failure to do so will result in an automatic F grade for that course and the inability to graduate on time or at all.

These guidelines and procedures are not a replacement or correction for the expectations conveyed in the Graduate Catalog. MSLS students should familiarize and follow the guidelines described in that document.

Graduate Assistantships

The MSLS program has limited openings for graduate assistantships each year. Most graduate assistants are assigned to Graduate Coordinators and to other faculty contributing to the MSLS program. Duties tend to relate to assisting faculty with responsibilities associated with college level instruction and research. Graduate assistantships are generally awarded to the strongest students in the program as a form of meritorious recognition. The College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Humanities, and the MSLS graduate coordinator award graduate assistantships. Important factors in obtaining a graduate assistantship include educational background, research interests, career ambitions, applicable skillsets, and academic merit. The Office of Graduate Studies determines eligibility and other rules and regulations pertaining to graduate assistantships.

Graduate Student Awards

Each year the Office of Graduate Studies and Research sponsors a series of awards for graduate students. Awards granted that apply to the MSLS degree program include awards for 1) Scholarship, 2) Professionalism, and 3) Community Service. The Office of Graduate Studies and Research extends a call for nominations for each of these awards during each spring semester. The MSLS program will forward a nominee for any student it deems deserving of one of these awards, with the goal being to nominate one student for each award. If you have questions about these awards or the process of nomination, ask the MSLS Graduate Coordinator.

How to Register for Classes

Online registration through Warrior Web may be the easiest way to register for class. Detailed instructions on how to register through Warrior Web may be found at the following link: <http://www.tamuct.edu/departments/registrar/registrationinstructions.php>.

A Registration FAQs is available here: <http://www.tamuct.edu/departments/registrar/registrationfaq.php>. If you have any trouble, you should contact the Office of the Registrar at (254) 519-5452.

How to Track Degree Progress

Students are encouraged to track their progress toward their degree during their career at TAMUCT. You should check your degree progress at least once a semester to ensure that the information is accurate. You can use DegreeWorks as a way to see the courses you have taken and to know what is left to take. Should you find a discrepancy in your record, your first point of contact should be the Officer of the Registrar. If that office is unable to rectify your record, you should consult the MSLS Graduate Coordinator. Please keep in mind that a course must be taken within six years of your graduation date to count on your degree. No course more than six years old at the time you graduate will count toward your degree.

NOTE: Tracking your progress is no substitute for academic advisement. MSLS students are expected to work with the MSLS Graduate Coordinator before registering for any course taken to satisfy the MSLS degree. Not every graduate course will count toward the MSLS degree. Students who “self-advise” (take courses without consulting with the MSLS Graduate Coordinator) may find that the course they have selected will not satisfy the expectations of the MSLS degree.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

In addition to meeting applicable Graduate School regulations, the MSLS program expects students to maintain satisfactory academic progress. The program reserves the right to warn those students who are not maintaining satisfactory academic progress and will remove those individuals from the program in serious cases. Any student who receives a course grade of a “C” or lower will receive a warning. Any student who receives a semester GPA less than a 3.0 in two semesters will be removed from the program.

Questions about Graduate Study at TAMUCT

This handbook may leave unanswered or even raise some questions about graduate study at TAMUCT. Should this document fail to answer one of your questions, you might check the website for the Office of Graduate Studies. If you still cannot find your answer, you should contact the MSLS Graduate Coordinator. Another good point of contact is the

administrative assistant for the College of Arts and Sciences. This person can be reached by phone at (254) 519-5449. Students should contact the Student Government Association at TAMUCT for matters affecting graduate students most generally.

Your Degree, Your Responsibility

You are ultimately responsible for your education. The MSLS program, the Department of Humanities, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Office of Graduate Studies, and TAMUCT will do all they can to allow you to meet program requirements in a timely fashion. However, it is your responsibility to remain aware of all deadlines, to fill out all required forms, and to make sure you are fulfilling educational and administrative requirements. You also need to remain in contact with the MSLS graduate coordinator to ensure that you are taking courses in the right sequence. In other words, you are responsible for making sure that you fulfill all academic and financial obligations associated with being a graduate student in the MSLS program. In the case of a student grievance about any program procedure, if a satisfactory outcome cannot be reached with the Graduate Coordinator appeals should be made to the Chair of the Department of Humanities according to the Department's policy for appeals.