

Program Policy Statement—Master of Arts in Liberal Studies, 2020

Introduction

The Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) program is designed to meet the intellectual needs of people who wish to explore multidisciplinary topics in the humanities, social sciences, and cultural aspects of science. The program appeals to those who crave an opportunity to examine and discuss seminal texts; to engage in critical thinking, writing, and debate; and above all, to explore core questions of human experience and culture that cannot adequately be addressed within the framework of any single discipline. The independence of the MALS program from the professional requirements of any field leaves it free to offer an unparalleled level of intellectual diversity, and class discussions are enriched by the students' expertise in such fields as law, science, religion, business, medicine, and public service.

Degrees Offered

M.A. in Liberal Studies

MALS has special arrangements with three University of Delaware graduate certificate programs: [Graduate Certificate in Historic Preservation](#), [Museum Studies Certificate](#), and the [Graduate Certificate in Community Engagement](#). The first two are twelve credit certificate programs and nine of the certificate credits will count as MALS electives. Students complete three credits as overload for the MALS program and earn both your master's degree and a graduate certificate. The Graduate Certificate in Community Engagement is a nine credit certificate and can be taken completely concurrently with MALS.

Admission

Admission Requirements

Application requires two essays, two recommendations, and an interview with members of the MALS Faculty Advisory Committee and the director.

The MALS program does not require a standardized test for admission. Because many of its students have been out of school for a long time, GPA is less an indicator of success than the applicant's essays, letters of reference, and professional experience and achievements. Admission is based on the MALS Faculty Advisory Committee's holistic assessment of those elements as well as an interview in which committee members assess the candidate's suitability for graduate study and the fit of the program for the student's goals. Interviews are also used to address any questions arising from the application materials.

Prior Degree Requirements

Applicants must have at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution.

Application Deadlines

Admission is rolling within the following deadlines:

- July 1 for fall semester
- November 1 for winter session
- December 1 for spring semester
- April 1 for summer session

For consideration for partial tuition scholarships, applicants must apply one calendar month prior to the application deadlines.

Degree Requirements

Required introductory course:

MALS 601, Introduction to Graduate Liberal Studies

Two three-credit core courses selected from the following list:

MALS 600, Nature and Human Nature

MALS 610, Force, Conflict and Change

MALS 619, Science and Society

MALS 622, Interpreting the Past

MALS 624, Writing in Liberal Studies

MALS 625, Film and Society

MALS 626, Studies in Contemporary Culture

MALS 660, On Becoming Human

Fifteen credits of electives (additional core courses, MALS electives, other graduate level courses, special problems)

Students may take up to six credits of electives outside MALS. They may take additional electives outside the program with permission from the Faculty Advisory Committee.

Six credits of research or creative work:

MALS 869, Thesis

MALS 879, Project

Total credits required for degree: 30

Advisement

MALS students choose an advisor from among the faculty who teach in the program or other University of Delaware faculty who are working in the student's field of interest. The primary advisor must have a University of Delaware faculty appointment. In conjunction with their advisor, students choose a second reader, who does not need to be on the faculty. Until the student chooses an advisor, the program director is their de facto advisor.

Thesis and Project Guidelines

What is the difference between a thesis and a project?

A thesis is a research paper--a traditional master's thesis. "Research" includes the use of interviews, surveys, online sources, and archival collections as well as traditional book-based work.

If students wish to engage in creative, alternative work, they can complete a project. Examples of projects include writing a memoir or biography, composing original music, and filming a documentary. Internships and community service work can also lend themselves well to MALS projects. Projects must include a research component relevant to the nature of the endeavor.

Both projects and theses involve extensive research. However, for the project the research is the background for, or supplementary to, the creative or alternative activity that forms the bulk of the project.

Expected length for theses and projects is at least 50 pages of text, excluding the signature pages, bibliography, etc. The number of sources used in research depends on the topic. Both length and number of sources should be agreed upon by the student, the advisor and the second reader.

Getting a topic approved

Once the student has established a relationship with an advisor, the student will write a thesis or project proposal. After being approved by both the thesis/project advisor and the second reader, the proposal should be sent to the MALS director as an e-mail attachment with copies to the advisor and second reader. No hard-copy signatures are necessary. The MALS director will forward it to the Faculty Advisory Committee, which normally responds within a week.

Students are encouraged to submit a thesis/project proposal during or shortly after their final MALS course.

At the very latest, students must submit a proposal by the end of the seventh week of the first semester in which they are registered for MALS 869 or 879.

Detailed instructions on submitting a thesis or project proposal

The proposal for a thesis or project must follow the outline below. There are no minimum or maximum requirements for the length of any section, but every heading must be addressed. Via the proposal, the student should tell the MALS Faculty Advisory Committee what it needs to know in order to understand not only the topic of the proposed project, but also the methodologies and research sources the student proposes to use. Students should bear in mind that the thesis or project must entail some original contribution on their part; it cannot consist solely of a summary of information that is already in print. Both the advisor and the second reader must approve the proposal before it is submitted to the MALS Faculty Advisory Committee.

It is understood that as the work moves forward, changes may have to be made if new ideas or information become available or if some aspect of the research does not turn out as expected. The purpose of the proposal is to demonstrate that the proposed thesis or project is well-conceived, well-planned, and feasible. Students are not bound to every detail of the proposal from that point onward.

Required sections:

- Title

- Student's name
- Advisor's name and department
- Second reader's name and department
- Summary of the topic
- Explanation of the significance of the topic
- Explanation of the ways in which the topic is interdisciplinary
- Proposed Procedures
 - Note: If the proposed procedures involve interviews, surveys, or other methodologies that entail interpersonal interactions, it is necessary to include a statement that the student plans to submit the plan to a review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to insure compliance with regulations regarding human subjects in research. Information about these reviews is available at <http://www.udel.edu/research/preparing/humansub.html>. Although the Institutional Review Board may determine that its approval is not necessary for the work the student plans to do, that is the Board's decision and not that of the researcher. **The IRB review itself should be done after the proposal is approved.**
- Proposed timeline
- Additional information (optional)
- Preliminary bibliography

No later than two weeks after receiving the proposal, the MALS director will notify the advisor and the student of any concerns expressed by the Faculty Advisory Committee. The Faculty Advisory Committee may give their approval, request an agreement that particular changes will be made, or require a fully revised proposal.