



**Interdisciplinary Studies  
Doctorate (ISLD)**

**Graduate Student Handbook**

**College of Arts and Sciences**

**August 2025**

## Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate (ISLD) Graduate Student Handbook

Original version by Dr. Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Founding Program Director of the Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate at WMU (2015).

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## I. Program Overview

1. *Program Uniqueness:* Thank you for your interest in the Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate (ISLD) offered by the College of Arts and Sciences at Western Michigan University. This unique, student-driven degree is highly individualized, allowing students with cross-disciplinary interests to take the lead in designing a tailored doctoral program for themselves in consultation with academic advisors who agree to work with the student. From the pre-admission application process until degree completion, ISLD students work under the guidance of at least four faculty advisors who are invited by the student to work with them based on the fit between the faculty members' areas of expertise and the student's interests.
2. *Degree Justification:* The ISLD degree is appropriate only for students whose needs cannot be met by one of WMU's existing graduate departments/programs. It is not meant as an alternative for students who were unable to gain admission to other programs or who were not successful in another program. Our priority is to support established programs at WMU. If a current program adequately meets the needs of an applicant, the applicant will be encouraged instead to pursue that degree option.
3. *Department/Program Selection:* The degree is housed within the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and must include required coursework from at least two declared degree-granting departments/programs, with at least one of them housed within CAS. Each of the two declared departments/programs must offer graduate coursework. Certificate programs are not eligible. The resulting transcript and diploma will indicate "Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Studies."
4. *Program Mission:* This Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate (ISLD) supports the Western Michigan University mission to offer an access-oriented institution that provides an impactful and inclusive education that integrates discovery and fosters holistic growth and well-being so that all may learn. For other information about the Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate (ISLD), contact the College of Arts and Sciences at 269-387-4350, visit the College of Arts and Science's website at <https://wmich.edu/arts-sciences>; and the ISLD website at: <https://wmich.edu/arts-sciences/interdisciplinary-doctorate>; or contact the ISLD director or a designee.

5. The ISLD Handbook serves as a guide to the policies and procedures of the Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate (ISLD) program. It should be carefully reviewed by prospective students, admitted students, and the faculty serving on ISLD dissertation committees. All guidelines described herein are subject to compliance with the policies and procedures of the university, as outlined in the Graduate Catalog (<https://wmich.edu/registrar/catalogs>) and to the policies and procedures of the College of Arts and Sciences (<https://wmich.edu/arts-sciences>). For additional information, please contact the College of Arts and Sciences at 269-387-4350.

## II. Admissions Process

### ***Before beginning your application***

1. *Contact the ISLD:* If you believe this program may be a good fit, you are encouraged to begin a conversation with the director of the ISLD program, or their designee, indicating your interest via email. Admission to the ISLD program requires you to formulate a well-designed, compelling, and feasible plan of study and independent research that combines coursework and faculty mentorship from four faculty members across two or more departments/programs. You must also convincingly justify why the ISLD program is a better fit for you than any traditional doctoral program at Western Michigan University. Dialogue with the ISLD director or their designee is a significant component of successful applications.
2. *Assemble Your Dissertation Committee:* Unlike many other doctoral programs, where the dissertation committee is formed after admission, the ISLD program requires you to form a dissertation committee from the outset. This enables committee members to provide applicants and future students with guidance on course selection for the program of study. You may learn about WMU faculty and explore their research areas by searching the department/program websites in disciplines relating to your area of interest. Faculty agree to work with ISLD applicants on the student's invitation, which they consider on a case-by-case basis.
  - a. It is the sole responsibility of potential students to form their own four-person dissertation committee, although they may seek advice from ISLD program leaders and affiliates in doing so. If you are not currently a WMU student, you may need to visit campus to meet with potential dissertation committee members before applying to this program, or you may set up remote meetings.
  - b. Agreement by faculty to serve on the ISLD dissertation committee is understood as an indication of their willingness to assist you from the beginning to the end of your degree progress, and to welcome you in the research culture of their departments/programs, including department mailing lists, invitations to seminars and social functions, and access to research facilities.

- c. As part of the application process, you must obtain a written agreement from all prospective dissertation committee members (at least four faculty members) stating their willingness to serve on your dissertation committee, should you be accepted into the program. This non-negotiable prerequisite must be met by all students before their applications will be reviewed. Faculty members who agree to serve on a student's committee must gain the consent of their departmental/program chair.
  - d. Your dissertation committee must include at least one faculty member in each of at least two departments/programs. A minimum of one of these faculty members must be from a department/program within the College of Arts and Sciences. At least one of the CAS faculty members must consent to serving as the dissertation committee chair or as co-chair.
  - e. All prospective dissertation committee members must have Graduate Faculty Status at WMU or must be in the process of applying for this status. One or more external members from outside WMU may be included if they apply for WMU Graduate Faculty Status, using the Graduate Faculty Nomination Form process, outlined below. However, there needs to be a total of three WMU faculty members on each ISLD committee. For example, an ISLD committee may include three WMU members and one or more external members.
3. *Devote Sufficient Time:* Before submitting your application, be sure you have devoted sufficient time and effort to outlining a program of study and a research agenda that aligns with the expertise of your selected dissertation committee members. You are encouraged to seek guidance from the ISLD director or their designee in the process of developing your application. Unlike traditional doctoral programs, entry into the ISLD program requires that students develop their own unique program of study in consultation with four supporting faculty members **as a prerequisite for admissions**. To meet this aim, successful applicants usually engage in a series of meetings with multiple faculty members, the ISLD director, and program advisors. Often these meetings take place over the course of several months to allow sufficient time for appropriate relationships and common understandings to develop. As such, students should be prepared to devote significant time and effort to this challenging and rewarding task.



## ***Application requirements***

Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. To start your graduate application, see <https://wmich.edu/grad/apply>. The following application criterion and materials are required for regular admission into the Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate program:

### **Required criterion and materials**

1. (Required Criterion): Prior Education\_Bachelor's or master's degree must be completed before entry into the ISLD program, with a minimum grade point average of 3.25 out of 4.00 for your last degree.
2. Current Curriculum Vitae (Required).
3. Recommendations (Required):\_Three letters of recommendation addressing your academic qualifications for this doctoral degree program.
4. Transcripts (Required):\_Copies of all transcripts as required by Western Michigan University.
5. Statement of Purpose (Required):\_(1500 words maximum): Describe your proposed plan for coursework, goals for independent research, and rationale for applying to the ISLD program. Be sure to include each of the following elements in the order below:
  - a. Discuss your plans for independent research, explain why you need an interdisciplinary studies program to accomplish your stated study/research aims, and justify why the ISLD program is the most appropriate fit for you rather than any other WMU doctoral program.
  - b. List the official names of at least two departments/programs that would house your degree and explain how the approaches and methods in each of these departments/programs would contribute to your proposed plan of study and research. For a list of all WMU's Graduate Programs: <https://wmich.edu/academics/graduate>.
  - c. List the names and department/program homes of each of the four or more faculty members who have agreed to serve on your dissertation committee and explore the connections between their specific areas of

expertise and your proposed study/research plan. In this section, specify which faculty member has agreed to serve as “dissertation chair” or which faculty member(s) have agreed to serve as co-chairs. The dissertation chair must be a faculty member in the College of Arts of Sciences. In the case of co-chairs, at least one of the two co-chairs must be a faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences.

- d. Outline your proposed coursework plan, identify at least two specific graduate courses you would take in each of the departments/programs housing your degree, and explain how each course would strengthen your ability to meet your study/research aims. Additionally, mention any graduate credits you would like to have considered for transfer credit. For a complete list of graduate courses offered at WMU, consult the most updated Graduate Catalog: <https://wmich.edu/registrar/catalogs>.
  - e. Explore how your background education and professional experience have prepared you to embark upon the specific doctoral program of study you have outlined here.
  - f. Address your potential career placement after program completion and explain how the ISLD degree would enhance your career and professional trajectory.
  - g. If you have been dismissed from another doctoral program at WMU prior to applying for the Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate, please describe the personal and academic improvements you have made since that dismissal which would facilitate a successful outcome in the ISLD program.
6. Writing Sample (Recommended)\_It is highly recommended, but not required, for you to include a writing sample demonstrating your ability to produce scholarly work connected to your prospective area of independent research. Faculty members who are asked to be part of your dissertation committee or other members of the applicant’s committee may request such a writing sample or other documentation of the applicant’s skills and readiness for doctoral study.
7. The “Pre-Admission Faculty Support Form for Prospective ISLD Students” must be completed and uploaded as a “Supplemental Form” in your application. You can find it in the “Forms and Resources” section of the ISLD website: <https://wmich.edu/arts-sciences/interdisciplinary-doctorate>. The

completed form must provide documentation of written consent (signatures) from at least four faculty members indicating their willingness to serve on your ISLD committee, should you be admitted to the program. The form must also be signed by the department chair/director of each proposed WMU committee member and the ISLD director or designee. No applications will be reviewed before this documentation is received.

8. Ensure Graduate Faculty Status of All Dissertation Committee Members (Required): The ISLD applicant is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all prospective committee members have Graduate Faculty Status at WMU, or of ensuring that any prospective faculty members who do not already have that status at WMU are in the process of submitting the Graduate Faculty Nomination Form. Graduate Faculty Status is mandatory both for WMU and non-WMU (external) dissertation committee members. It is recommended that ISLD students send the appropriate links and forms to any prospective committee members who do not have such status. Please see details listed here:
  - a. Prospective ISLD students should ask potential dissertation committee members to confirm that they already have, or that they qualify for, graduate faculty status. If prospective dissertation committee members are not sure, ISLD applications may ask their potential dissertation committee to check the criteria specified in the Graduate Catalogue under “Graduate Faculty Appointments,” available via the link below, and make sure that their status is up to date with the Graduate College.  
[https://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=46&navoid=2204#Graduate\\_Faculty\\_Appointments](https://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=46&navoid=2204#Graduate_Faculty_Appointments)
  - b. If a prospective dissertation committee member does not already have Graduate Faculty Status at WMU, the ISLD student should request that the prospective dissertation committee member apply for it using the Graduate Faculty Nomination Form available on the Graduate College website and linked here. [https://files.wmich.edu/s3fs-public/attachments/u1528/2023/Graduate\\_Faculty\\_Nomination.pdf](https://files.wmich.edu/s3fs-public/attachments/u1528/2023/Graduate_Faculty_Nomination.pdf)
    - i. An external (non-WMU) prospective dissertation committee member:
      1. May only apply for “Associate Graduate Faculty status” (i.e. 3-years).

2. Is not eligible to serve as the sole dissertation chair. External members can, however, serve as the co-chair, if the other co-chair is from the College of Arts and Sciences and has full status at WMU.
3. For more details on obtaining Graduate Faculty Nomination Form for external members, please see section devoted to this later in this handbook.
4. After obtaining the completed Graduate Faculty Nomination Form and CV from the prospective dissertation committee member, the ISLD student should send the completed form and CV to the ISLD director or designee. Please note, for ISLD students, the ISLD director will complete the signature line of the form marked for "Chairperson."

## ***Admissions decisions***

Admission decisions will be made by an admission's committee whose members will review your application before providing their decision in written form. In addition, the chairs/directors from each of the departments/programs of proposed study must agree to the admission. If an applicant has been dismissed from another doctoral program at WMU prior to applying for the Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate, a review of their credentials will include an evaluation of evidence of your personal and academic improvements since the dismissal.

### **III. Program Requirements**

#### ***Course requirements and other requirements***

1. At least 60 credit hours with a GPA of 3.0 or better.
  - a. Students with a relevant master's degree may petition the College of Arts and Sciences to transfer a maximum of 18 master's degree credits on their Permanent Program of Study Form.
  - b. At least half of the credits taken at WMU must be at 6000-level or above.
  - c. No fewer than 30 credits plus 12 dissertation credits must be taken after admission to the ISLD program.
  - d. At least six credit hours of 6000-level coursework in each of at least two departments/programs is required after admission to the ISLD program. If one of the student's declared departments offers graduate coursework, but not 6000-level classes, it is possible that adjustments can be made.
2. Overall, the program of study must include the following:
  - a. A minimum of 32 credit hours of subject knowledge, including at least two classes from each of two or more departments/programs.
  - b. At least 15 credit hours in research methodology, including relevant research methods courses offered by departments or graduate research independent study credits (this may include classes like A-S 7350, REL 6000, SOC 6800 etc.), and demonstrated proficiency in two research tools. Some examples of research tools include participant observation, interviews, survey, archival methods, statistical analysis, focus groups, auto-ethnographic exploration, etc.
  - c. Twelve hours of dissertation credits (A-S 7300 or a department equivalent, such as PSY 7300, HIST 7300, ECON 7300).
3. Other requirements:

1. ISLD students must complete the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) course requirement offered through WMU's Graduate College (or equivalent). For more information on the RCR, please see <https://wmich.edu/grad/current-students/responsible-research>.
2. ISLD students must familiarize themselves with all policies and procedures of the ISLD program and gain an awareness about all the forms that they will need to submit throughout the program and their deadlines, as listed in Appendix B, and as otherwise described in this Handbook.
3. ISLD students must have the support of a dissertation committee composed of at least four members who will offer sustained supervision of their student's program of study, including research project, annual reviews, proposal defense, and candidacy exams, dissertation defense, plus any and all other requirements.
4. The dissertation chair must be a faculty member in the College of Arts of Sciences. In the case of co-chairs, at least one of the co-chairs must be a faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences.
5. ISLD students must meet with their dissertation committee at least annually to review their progress.
6. ISLD students must successfully complete the oral defense of a research proposal, which will be determined by the dissertation committee.
7. ISLD students must successfully meet all the requirements for a mandatory comprehensive exam, as determined by the dissertation committee members.
8. ISLD students must complete and successfully defend a dissertation involving original research across disciplines.

## **IV. A-S 7350 or A-S 7300 Application for Permission to Elect**

### ***Online form for registration***

Enrollment in A-S 7350: Graduate Research or A-S 7300 Dissertation requires that students submit the “Application for Permission to Elect A-S 7350 or A-S 7300” online form which is available on the ISLD website. Because this form requires multiple signatures and stages of processing, students should submit the form as soon as possible before the registration deadline for the semester in which they wish to enroll.

### **Submission and registration Instructions**

1. Student gains permission to enroll in this course from the faculty member who the student wishes will supervise the course. The student decides on course details in consultation with that faculty member.
2. Using this information, the student completes the “Application for Permission to Elect A-S 7350 or A-S 7300” online form.
3. After the student submits the form, it will automatically be routed to the supervising faculty member for their signature.
4. Once the form is processed, the student will receive an email from CAS letting them know that a corresponding section of the course has been created, and student will then be able to self-enroll.

### ***A-S 7350: Graduate Research***

This is an optional independent studies course that may be taken by ISLD students who are completing research related to the dissertation. A-S 7350 may be taken more than once by the student. Permission of the instructor who will supervise the course is required. The course is graded on a credit/no credit basis and may be used to fulfill the ISLD research requirement hours. The course A-S 7350 may be registered for in increments of 1-15 hours any semester, with no maximum limit if the course is repeated in other semesters. For more information, see the most updated version of the WMU Graduate Catalogue.

### ***A-S 7300: Doctoral Dissertation***

ISLD students may elect to enroll in A-S 7300 or in a department-specific 7300 course to fulfill their mandatory 12 hours of 7300 coursework. This is an independent

studies course. Permission of instructor who will supervise the course is required. The course is graded on a credit/no credit basis. The course A-S 7350 may be registered for in increments of 1-15 hours any semester, with no maximum limit if the course is repeated in other semesters. Following a student's first enrollment in 7300, the student must have continuous enrollment in 7300 until all dissertation requirements are completed satisfactorily and approved by the appropriate bodies. For more information, see the most updated version of the WMU Graduate Catalogue.

### **Continuous enrollment requirement for A-S 7300**

Following a student's first enrollment in 7300, the student must have continuous enrollment in 7300 during each Fall and Spring semester until all dissertation requirements are completed satisfactorily and approved by the appropriate bodies. "Continuous enrollment" is defined as enrollment in all Fall and Spring semesters from the initial enrollment to the semester in which the student graduates. If the student will graduate in Summer I or Summer II, the student must be enrolled in 7300 during that session. For students not enrolled in Summer I and Summer II sessions, pre-enrollment in the subsequent Fall semester is necessary for access to library resources during Summer I and Summer II.

### ***Research compliance and manuscript preparation guidelines***

As stated previously, as part of the ISLD program, students must complete a research project. Research projects involving human subjects, non-human animal subjects, hazardous chemicals, biohazards, or genetically engineered organisms must be approved by appropriate university committees. Before enrolling in A-S 7350 or A-S 7300, students should discuss issues concerning research compliance with their dissertation chair and make sure they have the proper training in these areas. Information concerning research compliance at Western Michigan University can be found at [www.wmich.edu/research/](http://www.wmich.edu/research/). In addition, prior to the first registration in A-S 7300 Doctoral Dissertation, the student must demonstrate that they are informed about the [Guidelines for the preparation of the dissertation](https://files.wmich.edu/s3fs-public/attachments/u6091/2024/WMU%20Guidelines%2C%202024.pdf) <https://files.wmich.edu/s3fs-public/attachments/u6091/2024/WMU%20Guidelines%2C%202024.pdf>.



## **V. University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects**

By signing the Permission to Elect Form, the student agrees that they understand that research involving human subjects must have prior approval of the research proposal by the appropriate university review body, thus assuring compliance with the regulations for the protection of such subjects or for the use of such materials (See below). Students also agree that they understand that the Graduate College will not approve any master's thesis, specialist project, or doctoral dissertation which does not comply with these requirements, and in that event no credit will be granted for the course.

### ***Requirements for research involving human subjects***

All research conducted at Western Michigan University that Involves human subjects is subject to the following requirements, as described in the Policies of Western Michigan University and mandated by federal and state requirements: Any research involving contact with human research subjects must be approved in advance by WMU's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). No research involving human subjects is exempt from HSIRB review. HSIRB application materials may be obtained from the: Research Compliance Coordinator, 240W Walwood Hall (East Campus) (269) 387-8293. HSIRB approval must be obtained prior to any contact with human subjects; the HSIRB will not review or give approval to any protocols in which contact with human subjects has already occurred. Additional information on research compliance is available online at <https://wmich.edu/research>.

## VI. Processing Forms: The Student's Responsibilities

Students are required to complete and submit a series of mandatory forms by specific deadlines throughout the entire duration of their ISLD program. These forms are listed Appendix B: "Chart of Forms and Their Locations," at the end of this Handbook. The ISLD program regards the student's ability to stay current with and manage their own forms as a significant sign of the maturity, initiative, and independence needed to gain a doctoral degree.

These crucial forms need to be completed, updated, and properly submitted at every stage of the program. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure that these forms are completed correctly, that they are properly routed for all signatures, and that they are submitted and have been received by the correct recipient.

Some students have faced delays in their process or degree completion and/or graduation due to a failure to complete and properly file their required forms. It is the responsibility of each student make sure that this does not happen to them. For detailed information and tips about routing forms, please see the Graduate College Homepage > Current Students > Routing forms for Digital Signatures; <https://wmich.edu/grad/emailing-forms>. Please carefully review these ISLD policies:

1. Labeling Forms
  - a. When sending a form as an attachment, please use the following label:
    - i. Student's Last Name\_Form Name (First 4 or 5 words)\_Date
      1. for example: Jones\_Permanent Program of Study\_8.3.2025
2. Routing Forms
  - a. Some forms require multiple signatures. The process of collecting these signatures is called "routing the form."
    - i. When requesting signatures from committee members, be sure to include a message in the body of the text politely asking for what is needed, and to address them by an appropriate title.
    - ii. Students are responsible for routing the form until it is complete.
    - iii. If there is no response from the recipient after one week, the student may issue a gentle reminder.
    - iv. Sometimes one recipient will send the form to the next recipient rather than back to the student. That's helpful, but it is still the student's responsibility to follow up with the form routing until the student is sure it has been submitted and received.

### 3. Submitting Forms

- a. After the form is routed and all signatures are provided, the form needs to be submitted to its the appropriate final destination
- b. The student should apprise themselves of the appropriate final destination of each form, whether that be with Graduate Auditing in the Registrar's Office, the Graduate College, or another destination. This information is usually included on the form itself.
- c. When submitting a completed form, the student should ask the recipient to send confirmation that the form has been received.
- d. If that confirmation is not received within one week, it is fine for the student to issue a gentle reminder.

### 4. Keeping Forms on File

- a. Students should keep a copy of all their completed and signed forms on file. Students should not rely on their dissertation chair or any administrator to do so for them. This way, if the form gets lost or misplaced, the student has the agency to correct the problem.

## **VII. The Dissertation Committee and ISLD Director Roles**

### ***“Notification of Committee Appointment” form & Routing***

Before the end of the first semester in the program, students must submit to the Graduate College a "Notification of Committee Appointment" form signed by each of their four or more dissertation committee members and the appropriate administrative authorities (see below for routing). This form is also known as the "Notification of Appointment to a Dissertation, Thesis or Specialist Project Committee" form, and is available on the Graduate College website.

#### **Routing the “Notification of Committee Appointment” form**

**The ISLD student** must do the following:

- Fill out the top
- Obtain the signature of dissertation chair and committee members
- Obtain ISLD director's signature on TWO lines:
  - Chair, Department
  - Advisor, Graduate Program
- Obtain signature of CAS Associate Dean
- The student should then keep track of the form until it reaches its final destination.
  - The CAS Associate Dean will forward the form to the Graduate College.
  - After the form routing is complete, the student should keep a copy of this completed form in their files, with all signature lines filled.

### ***Composition of dissertation committee***

1. ISLD students may have either one dissertation chair or two dissertation co-chairs on their committee. In the rest of this document, the term “dissertation chair” will signify “dissertation chair or co-chairs.”

2. The dissertation committee must always consist of at least four members. The composition of an ISLD committee can take one of the following two formats: (A) One chair plus three or more members; or (B) Two co-chairs plus two or more members.
3. The dissertation chair must be a faculty member in the College of Arts of Sciences. In the case of co-chairs, at least one of the co-chairs must be a faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences.
4. ISLD students must maintain a committee with at least four active members on it throughout the entire duration of their ISLD program. Keep in mind, the participation of at least four committee members is mandatory for the student to pass through stages such as: The Annual Review Meeting, Proposal Defense; Candidacy Examination; Graduation Requirement Review Committee Meeting; Dissertation Defense.
5. If the committee membership falls to three or below, the ISLD student has a maximum of one academic semester or until the next Annual Review Meeting, whichever comes first) to submit an updated "Notification of Committee Appointment" form, complete with the signature of all four current members.
6. If a committee change entails that the student's committee falls to fewer than the requisite number of four committee members, the student should update the ISLD director or designee about the change in an email that also contains a list of the current committee members.

## **External dissertation committee member option**

### ***Eligibility***

1. All dissertation committee members must have Graduate Faculty Status at WMU. If a faculty member does not already have such status, they may apply for it using the “Graduate Faculty Nomination Form” (available on the Graduate College website). Prospective external members should be sure that they qualify for graduate faculty status. Please see:  
[https://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=46&navoid=2204#Graduate\\_Faculty\\_Appointments](https://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=46&navoid=2204#Graduate_Faculty_Appointments)
2. Dissertation committee members who are not employed at WMU are not eligible to serve as ISLD dissertation committee chairs. They can, however, serve as co-chair, but only if the other co-chair is a faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences employed at Western Michigan University.

### ***The “Graduate Faculty Nomination Form” for non-WMU members on the ISLD committee: Guidelines for completing the form***

1. Name: Insert professor’s name
2. Type: Select “New” if this is the first time the external member is applying to serve on the named student’s ISLD Committee. Select “Renewal” in other cases.
3. Dates: For new ISLD students, select the start date corresponding to the first semester that the ISLD student will be enrolled in the program. For ISLD students who are already enrolled, select the date corresponding to that of the form submission. For the end date, choose three years from the current date.
4. Level: Non-WMU scholars can only have “Associate” (3-yr status) at WMU, since “Full” status is reserved for WMU board-appointed faculty. Associate members have a term of three years, which is the maximum for associate status (but can be extended with reapplication).
5. Rank: Choose appropriate rank from the drop-down menu.

6. Department or Unit: Insert "Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate"
7. College: Arts and Sciences
8. Renewal: ISLD students are responsible for making sure that the Graduate Faculty status of external members remains current throughout the entire course of the ISLD student's program. They should be sure that the form is resubmitted every three years.
9. Reason for Request: Choose "Member-Specific Committee Only," and provide ISLD student's name.
10. Routing:
  - a. ISLD students are responsible for routing the form by completing the following steps:
    - i. Student sends the "Graduate Faculty Nomination Form" to the nominated external faculty member, asking them to fill out their portions and return to the student along with the nominated faculty's CV.
      1. It is recommended that ISLD student fill out the top of the form for the proposed committee member, if possible, according to the directions provided above, or to direct the nominated committee member to these guidelines.
    - ii. Student forwards the filled form to ISLD director or designee for their signature on the line labeled as "Chairperson," on the bottom left side of the page
    - iii. After ISLD director/designee signature is obtained, student sends the form to an Associate Dean.
    - iv. After Associate Dean signature is obtained, student sends form to the Graduate College with request for review.
  - b. Student may check the status of the nomination via the Graduate College.

## ***Responsibilities of dissertation committee***

### **For faculty members: Considerations before joining an ISLD committee**

Because the ISLD program is not a traditional program with pre-defined standards and expectations, the faculty who agree to serve on the ISLD committee play a key role in defining those standards and expectations. Before agreeing to join an ISLD committee, faculty must ensure that the proposed work is of doctoral-level significance, meets or exceeds the expectations of their department/discipline, and that no current WMU graduate degree program meets the student's unique needs.

Serving as a member of an ISLD committee may be a more demanding experience than serving on the committee of a student in a traditional department. This is because ISLD the committee must bear the responsibility of guiding the ISLD student through all stages of the doctoral program.

Serving on dissertation committees of an ISLD student includes a commitment to make every attempt to participate in the Annual Review Meeting and evaluation, to review and provide comments on the dissertation proposal and dissertation, to participate in the proposal defense/comprehensive exam and final dissertation defense, to suggest coursework as needed, to provide quality control of the work, and to follow the student's progress at all other program stages.

These responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

1. Selecting courses and outlining the program of study.
2. Reviewing the ISLD Handbook to gain familiarity with ISLD administrative requirements, policies, and procedures.
3. Participating in an Annual Review of the ISLD student's progress, including evaluating student's progress, achievements, and steps towards meeting degree requirements.
4. Participating in other meetings of the whole such as the Proposal Defense, Candidacy Examination, Graduation Requirement Review Committee Meeting, Dissertation Defense, and others.
5. Gaining familiarity with the learning objectives for the ISLD degree and assessing the student's accomplishments during the candidacy and final defense using the rubric at the end of this Handbook.



6. Helping the student refine their independent research project and preparing the dissertation proposal.
7. Helping to define the format and administer the requirements of the candidacy process, including the dissertation proposal defense and the comprehensive exam and others.
8. Helping to determining the requirements for the final dissertation and helping conduct the dissertation defense.

Please also consider the following:

1. We encourage faculty on ISLD students' dissertation committees to consider these students for TA and RA appointments, when appropriate.
2. We encourage chairs and directors to consider counting the ISLD graduate student supervision required by committee membership toward faculty workload and in promotion and tenure decisions, even though ISLD students are not part of the faculty member's home department. Faculty are encouraged to have discussions with their chair/director about how ISLD committee membership will be counted in their workload.

### ***Responsibilities of chair or co-chairs***

The chair (or co-chair) acts as the primary mentor and advisor for the ISLD student, guiding them through all aspects of degree progress and completion. The chair usually reviews and provides feedback on materials before they are shared with other committee members, while the other committee members support the student, evaluate the work, and provide additional perspectives. In addition to the responsibilities held by all committee members, faculty who agree to serve as a dissertation chair for an ISLD student are also expected to meet in the following responsibilities:

1. Advising the student as they select courses and helping them outline their program of study, such as by helping them complete the "Permanent Program of Study" form and other forms requiring the chair's consultation.
2. Providing advice to the student in selecting other faculty members to serve on the dissertation committee when needed.
3. Assisting the student in their efforts to meet the program requirements in a timely manner.

4. Mentoring the student in regular meetings to discuss progress.
5. Assisting the student in coordinating Annual Review meetings and other mandatory committee meetings.
6. Providing guidance to the student in defining a research project and preparing the dissertation proposal.
7. Defining the format and administering requirements of the candidacy process.
8. Determining the requirements for the final dissertation.
9. Supervising preparation of the dissertation.
10. Maintaining standards of the discipline in the research proposal and dissertation.
11. Including the ISLD student in the research culture of their department/program, including department mailing lists, seminars and social functions, and access to research facilities. This requires the consent of the faculty member's department chair.

### ***Responsibilities of ISLD director or designee***

The ISLD director or designee serves as the program director for ISLD students and is responsible for overseeing ISLD students. The ISLD director's role include the following:

1. Communicating with prospective students.
2. Convening and chairing admission's committees.
3. Submitting letters to the ISLD student after the student submits their "Annual Review" form.
4. Approving "Permanent Program of Study" and other forms.
5. Providing general oversight of the ISLD degree and answering questions from potential students, ISLD students, and faculty.
6. Analyzing data on overall student performance as part of program assessment and evaluation.

## **VIII. The “Annual Review Meeting”**

### ***Student’s role in convening the “Annual Review Meeting”***

The ISLD student must meet with their dissertation committee formally once per year for the annual graduate student progress review, known as the “Annual Review Meeting.” The purpose of this meeting is (1) for the student to update their dissertation committee on their coursework and progress toward completing dissertation research; (2) for the entire committee to evaluate the student’s progress toward degree completion and their performance in the program.

It is the student’s responsibility to schedule, plan, and convene their Annual Review Meeting on time each year. Students admitted in the fall semester must convene their first “Annual Review Meeting” before March 1 of their first year in the program. Students who began at a time other than fall semester will have their first Annual Review Meeting sometime prior to March 1 of the following year. Thereafter, the Annual Review meeting should take place on a yearly basis.

Meeting formats may take place in person or online. Each year, the student should solicit feedback from the dissertation chair or co-chairs and committee as they plan the meeting. The student should discuss with their dissertation chair how they will present this information to the committee. For example, students may want to present this information using visual displays (e.g., PowerPoint slides) or in a written document accompanied by the oral engagement. Regardless of the presentation format, the student should provide sufficient background information and evidence of progress so that their dissertation committee has enough information to allow for a meaningful evaluation of the student’s progress toward degree and to discuss any proposed changes to the plan of study and research. Students should expect the dissertation committee to provide feedback on the student’s progress, suggestions for the student’s continued success, and guidance to shore up any areas where weaknesses are perceived.

In the first Annual Review Meeting, the student and committee additionally should finalize the “ISLD Requirement Agreement.” (See below for more information). Generally, the third Annual Review Meeting will consist of the candidacy exam if this requirement has not been met before that date. When appropriate, this Annual Review meeting also may be used to administer oral portions of each of the following: Proposal Defense; Candidacy Examination; Graduation Requirement Review Committee Meeting; Dissertation Defense

## ***Student's role in completing the "Annual Review" form***

At least two weeks before the Annual Review Meeting, the student should complete their sections of the "Annual Review for Doctoral Students" form AKA "Annual Review" form and provide this to the dissertation committee members. This form is available on the Graduate College website. Using this form, the student will report on their performance in coursework, research, and professional growth, as demonstrated thorough conference participation, awards, and teaching. It is recommended that the student submits an updated "Permanent Program of Study" form along with the Annual Review form, using this to report on the coursework component.

After each Annual Review Meeting, the dissertation chair, in consultation with the rest of the dissertation committee, will complete their sections of the Annual Review" form. The committee will provide one of the following recommendations: continuation, continuation with reservations, or dismissal. The committee will also document their comments about the student's progress, including their suggestions/requirements for continued success.

The ISLD student is responsible for sending appropriate requests to their chair to ensure that the Annual Review form is completed and returned to the student. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to submit the Annual Review form, complete with the signature of each committee member, to the ISLD director or designee within two weeks after the "Annual Review Meeting." The student will then receive a letter, signed by the ISLD director or designee, indicating whether their progress toward degree is deemed "satisfactory," "satisfactory with reservations," or "unsatisfactory." If the student's progress is deemed unsatisfactory, the student may be placed on probation for one year. An unsatisfactory evaluation, or the lack of the timely submission of the form, may also lead to immediate withdrawal of teaching or research assistantship funding. A second unsatisfactory evaluation or missing evaluation may be grounds for dismissal from the program.

Students should consider the Annual Review Meeting as a minimal requirement for student-initiated communication and solicitation of feedback. ISLD students should be communicating with and soliciting feedback from the dissertation committee members throughout the year.

## **IX. “Permanent Program of Study” form**

Before the end of the second semester, ISLD students must file a “Permanent Program of Study” form in accordance with the ISLD-specific guidelines provided below. The form is available on the Graduate College website under the heading “Doctoral Program of Study.” The student is responsible for completing this form in consultation with their dissertation chair or co-chairs. On the form, the student must list all course requirements the committee has agreed are necessary for completion of the student’s ISLD program. This “Permanent Program of Study” form must be approved by the dissertation committee chair or co-chairs and the ISLD director. The student is responsible for making sure that the completed form, with all the needed signatures, is filed in the Registrar’s Office for use in auditing their eligibility for graduation. The information on this form can be later revised, when necessary, by either one of two methods: (1) submission of an updated “Permanent Program of Study” (2) submission of a “Program of Study Course Change” form (AKA “Graduate Transfer Credit Evaluation and Course Substitution” form). Both forms are available on the Graduate College website. Failure to complete and submit this form in a timely fashion may result in an unsatisfactory Annual Review.

### ***ISLD Guidelines for filling out “Permanent Program of Study” form***

#### **Overview**

1. Must be typed
2. Must be submitted before the end of the second semester of enrollment.
3. Must reflect a total of at least 60 credits, including the student’s past, current, and planned courses, to the best of the student’s knowledge.
4. All sections must be completed in full, including the student’s past, current, and planned exams, dissertation hours, and other requirements, to the best of the student’s knowledge.
5. Any future course plans listed will be considered provisional. It is understood that plans will probably change to some degree. Students may use the appropriate forms to update this information, namely an updated

“Permanent Program of Study” or a “Program of Study Course Change” form (a.k.a “Graduate Transfer Credit Evaluation and Course Substitution” form).

6. If a course fulfills requirements in more than one category, enclose in parentheses the course name and credit hours after its first listing. This applies when, for example, a Master/Transfer Course” also satisfies a “Research Course” requirement, or in similar special cases. Note that all credits will only be counted once.
7. For other guidelines, please see the Graduate Catalog.

### ***ISLD section guidelines: “Permanent Program of Study” form***

- Department: ISLD students must list: “Interdisciplinary A&S (INTD),” then list the Program Code for the two or three declared departments/programs housing the program.
- Program of Study: Students must list “L-PHD-ISLD”
- Required Courses: A total of four courses must be listed here at minimum, including at least two 6000-level courses in each of at least two of the declared departments/programs that the student indicated at the top of the form. These credits must have been earned at WMU.
- Master/Transfer Courses: Eighteen credits maximum. These must be approved by the ISLD director or designee. Please note, for any credits that a student wishes to transfer that were earned more than seven years prior to their admission date, the student must complete a “Program Time Extension Form” (AKA “Extension Request”) and submit this along with their “Permanent Program” form. This form is available on the Graduate College website > forms > special circumstances. An ISLD students’ request to count these older courses will be considered by their dissertation chair, committee, and the ISLD director or designee. Approval of these requests is not guaranteed.
- Research Courses: ISLD students must take a minimum of 15 credits of research courses. This may include A-S 7350; discipline-specific 7350 courses; or other research courses.
- Dissertation Hours: ISLD students must take a minimum of 12 credits of dissertation hours. These may be taken either as A-S 7300 or as a departmental 7300 course, as determined in consultation with their chair.
- Identify Research Tools: ISLD students must list at least two distinct research “tools” or “methods” the student mastered in their coursework. For example,

participant observation, interviews, survey, archival methods, statistical analysis, focus groups, auto-ethnographic exploration, etc. After each “tool” or “method,” the student must identify the courses took at WMU which provided them training in this method/tool.

- List Exams Scheduled/Passed: The student uses this section to report on the proposal defense and comprehensive exam requirements that they and their chair/co-chairs arrived upon in the “ISLD Requirement Agreement” (described earlier), including the date(s) by which each component in the agreement will be met.
- Other Requirements: ISLD students should list: “Oral defense of dissertation and defense of dissertation” along with the topic or working title of the dissertation, and the proposed date by which the dissertation will be submitted.

## **Routing**

- Required Signatures:
  - Program Advisor: This line should be filled in by the dissertation chair/co-chairs.
  - Department Chair: This line should be completed by the ISLD director or designee.
- The ISLD director will then send the form to Graduate Auditing, while cc'ing the student and dissertation chair/co-chairs, and asking for a confirmation receipt from Graduate Auditing.
- The student should keep track of this process until the form reaches its final destination. The student should then keep a copy of the confirmation of receipt on record, along with the submitted form with all signature lines filled.

## **X. “ISLD Requirement Agreement”**

### ***Overview of “ISLD Requirement Agreement”***

By the time of the first Annual Review meeting, ISLD students must, in consultation with their chair or co-chair, develop a written “ISLD Requirement Agreement” outlining specifications for how the student plans to meet the requirements needed for Admission to Candidacy (see below), and have this approved, in writing, by the chair/co-chairs. The nature of the candidacy requirements, whether oral, written, or both, must be proposed by the student and agreed upon by the chair in consultation with the committee. This plan must include the following:

1. A timeline for completion for each of the mandatory candidacy requirements
  - a. Written dissertation proposal
  - b. Oral defense of the dissertation proposal
  - c. Comprehensive exam
2. A description for each of the mandatory candidacy requirements, including
  - a. The length, format, and specifications needed for the written dissertation proposal
  - b. The format of the oral defense of the dissertation proposal.
  - c. A description of the comprehensive exam requirements.

### ***Student’s responsibilities for “ISLD Requirement Agreement”***

Students are responsible for:

1. Initiating the “ISLD Requirement Agreement” process in time for sharing by the first Annual Review meeting.
2. Negotiating the Agreement with the dissertation chair and committee.
3. Ensuring that all other dissertation committee members have had a chance to provide their feedback on the Agreement before it is finalized.
4. Keeping a record of the approved Agreement in their own files.
5. Updating the agreement.
6. If plans change, the Agreement needs to be updated by the student and approved by the chair or co-chairs in the same semester the plan has changed.



## **XI. Admission to Candidacy**

### ***Overview of candidacy process***

By the end of the third calendar year of ISLD enrollment, ISLD students must meet the following Candidacy Requirements:

1. Submission of a written dissertation proposal.
2. Successful oral defense of the dissertation proposal.
3. Completion of comprehensive exam, according to requirements agreed upon with the dissertation chair/co-chairs.

### ***The dissertation proposal***

Students are responsible for clarifying with the dissertation chair what format is expected for their dissertation proposal, and for requesting the chair to provide them with examples of proposals that would be acceptable to the chair, if needed. Students must submit the dissertation proposal to the dissertation committee at least two weeks before the scheduled proposal defense date to give the committee ample time for reviewing the document. Failure to submit the proposal document by this deadline may lead to the cancellation of the oral defense.

### ***The comprehensive exam***

In addition to the proposal defense, students are required to complete a comprehensive exam, the format of which will be decided by the student in consultation with the dissertation committee chair and the committee. The student is responsible for asking the dissertation chair what types of formats would be acceptable and for requesting the chair to provide examples, if needed.

### ***“Admission to Doctoral Candidacy” form***

As part of the proposal defense and exam process, the student is responsible for completing the “Admission to Doctoral Candidacy” form, obtaining the signatures of the dissertation committee consisting of at least four members, and filing with the appropriate office in a timely manner after the completion of proposal defense/exams.

The student’s performance on the dissertation proposal and comprehensive exam, which are required to meet candidacy status, will be evaluated by the

dissertation committee. A positive recommendation from a majority of the dissertation committee is required to advance to candidacy. In the event of failure of either the dissertation proposal or comprehensive exam, a request for another consideration for admission to candidacy may be re-submitted once within one calendar year.

## **XII. Assessment**

### ***Learning outcomes & Their Assessment***

Students who successfully complete the Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate will demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

1. Breadth of subject knowledge spanning two or more disciplines
2. Familiarity with research design and methodology in two or more disciplines
3. High standards for ethics in research and writing
4. Ability to propose and conduct original research that crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries
5. Ability to communicate professionally in both oral and written forms

#### ***Assessment of learning outcomes***

See this document's Appendix A: "Assessment of Learning Outcomes Rubric"

1. Outcome 1 will be measured by successful completion of coursework in the proposed disciplines and an assessment of the student's dissertation proposal, candidacy exams, dissertation, and final oral defense.
2. Outcome 2 will be measured by participation and successful completion of the required research methodology courses, demonstrated proficiency in two research tools, and an assessment of the student's dissertation proposal, candidacy exam, dissertation, and final oral defense.
3. Outcome 3 will be measured by participation and successful completion of the required ethics course and assessment by the dissertation committee.
4. Outcome 4 will be measured by an assessment of the student's dissertation proposal, candidacy exam, dissertation, and final oral defense.
5. Outcome 5 will be measured by an assessment of the student's dissertation proposal, candidacy exam, dissertation, and final oral defense.

### **XIII. Dissertation Completion, Degree Completion, and Graduation**

#### ***Dissertation credits***

Students will complete the dissertation while enrolling in a minimum of 12 hours of dissertation credits (A-S 7300 or a department equivalent). During this process, students are required to submit chapter drafts to the dissertation chair and committee members for comments and feedback until the final full draft is produced and submitted to the dissertation committee for review and evaluation. The Annual Review Meeting may also be used to solicit direction and feedback on chapter drafts.

Embarking upon 7300-level classes is a serious commitment. Once students enroll at the 7300 level, continuous enrollment in 7300 course credit is required during each fall and spring semester until graduation. Students should not enroll in dissertation credits without first consulting their dissertation chair.

#### ***Student responsibility for deadlines of degree completion***

A series of mandatory forms are needed to complete the ISLD process. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure that all forms are completed and submitted in a timely manner. This may include sending reminders to form signatories. Students are also responsible for meeting all college-level and university-level deadlines relating to their degree process and graduation.

The WMU Graduate College has provided helpful information regarding the steps needed for dissertation completion. It is highly recommended that students carefully review the materials provided here: <https://wmich.edu/grad/current-students/dissertation>.

#### ***WMU Graduate College forms and processes***

As students head toward degree completion, it is their own responsibility to keep themselves updated on all policies and processes related to completing the dissertation and applying for graduation as described in: (1) the ISLD Handbook, (2) the WMU Graduate College website <https://wmich.edu/grad>, and (3) the Registrar's Office website <https://wmich.edu/registrar/graduation-doctoral>.

Take special care to review information available under the following WMU Graduate College website's sub-sections labeled: "Current Students," "Events," "Forms." Students can find deadlines for completing various stages of the dissertation completion and defense process here: <https://wmich.edu/grad/dissertation-deadlines>; and forms relating to dissertation completion here: <https://wmich.edu/grad/forms>.

## ***University-level forms and processes***

Be sure to carefully review the Registrar's Office web page under the subheading "Graduation Information for Doctoral Degree," including the "Application for Graduation Process" and the "Application for Graduation Deadlines."

## ***Dissertation formatting & Dissertation support***

The dissertation must be formatted according to Graduate College guidelines. Make sure to use the most updated version of WMU's "Guidelines for the Preparation of Theses, Specialist Projects, and Dissertations." A PDF of the "Formatting Guidelines" may be found on the WMU Graduate College website's page on "Dissertations & Theses:" <https://wmich.edu/grad/current-students/dissertation>.

Information about training sessions and support offered for the writing of theses and dissertations can be found on the WMU Graduate College website's page on "Events:" <https://wmich.edu/grad/events>.

## ***Application for Graduation Process/Audit***

Students must file an "Application for Graduation," including the request for graduation audit, with the Registrar's Office two semesters prior to the anticipated graduation semester. The date of graduation can be changed to a future date for no charge by contacting Graduation Auditing. <https://wmich.edu/registrar/directory>. Be sure to check the Registrar's website for graduation application and plan ahead.

More information about the "Application for Graduation" process may be found on the WMU Registrar's Office website: <https://wmich.edu/registrar/graduation-doctoral>.

At this stage, students should make sure that the following two forms are

updated and on file with the appropriate office at the Graduate college. Both forms can be found on the WMU Graduate College Website for Forms, <https://wmich.edu/grad/forms>, under the category for Dissertation, Specialist Project, and Thesis. These two forms are:

1. "Notification of Committee Appointment" form: Make sure an up-to-date version is on file, reflecting the names of the current dissertation committee members.
2. "Admission to Doctoral Candidacy" form: This should have been filled out as soon as the exams/proposal defense were completed. Make sure a copy of this is on file.

## ***“Graduation Requirement Review Committee Meeting”***

The series of steps described below must be taken consecutively to prepare for, schedule, plan, and document the successful completion of the oral defense of the dissertation.

1. At least one semester before scheduling the oral defense of the dissertation, the candidate must ascertain from the chair or co-chairs that the dissertation is “nearly complete” and elicit feedback from their chair or co-chairs about what remains to be done before they would consider the dissertation as nearly complete. After receiving a positive response from the chair or co-chairs that the dissertation is “nearly complete,” then the student may schedule the “Graduation Requirement Review Committee Meeting.”
2. The “Graduation Requirement Review Committee Meeting” must take place at least one semester prior to the anticipated date of the oral defense. ISLD candidates will use this meeting to determine if their committee is willing to reach consensus as to whether the dissertation draft is “nearly complete” and to verify with their committee that all requirements for graduation other than those related to the dissertation are complete (coursework, research etc.).

## ***Oral defense: preparing and planning***

### **Oral defense components**

The oral defense must consist of two components

1. Public presentation: The defense begins with a public presentation about the project and its findings.
2. Private exam. After the public presentation, the student will defend the dissertation in an oral examination administered by the dissertation committee members. The defense exam will consist of questions from the committee members related to the research conducted or regarding general knowledge about topics related to the work. Students must answer questions adequately to pass the defense.

### **Scheduling the oral defense**

As described earlier, students can proceed with scheduling their final dissertation defense only after the completion of a successful “Graduation Requirement Review

Committee Meeting,” in which the committee has reached consensus that all course and research requirements are completed and that the dissertation is “nearly complete.” The following steps must be taken to prepare for and schedule the Oral Dissertation Defense:

1. Submit the Dissertation to the Committee: At least two weeks before the proposed dissertation defense date, the ISLD candidate must submit the completed dissertation to each committee member. Failure to follow the two-week guideline may delay the date of the defense, as committee members reserve the right to refuse to evaluate any dissertation draft that has been submitted to them late. This rule ensures that the dissertation committee members have sufficient time to evaluate the work.
2. Find a date in which your committee members can attend: All members of this committee must approve the dissertation, and at least three of these committee members must be in attendance for and approve its oral defense in real time.
3. Graduate College scheduling: The ISLD candidate must schedule their defense through the Graduate College at least two weeks in advance of the proposed oral defense date. ISLD Candidates must use the “Dissertation Defense Scheduling” form available on the WMU Graduate College website, under the “Forms” sub-heading, <https://wmich.edu/grad/forms>, under the category for “Dissertation, Specialist Project, and Thesis.”
4. Reserve a Room and Post Announcements: The student is responsible for reserving the room in which the public presentation/oral defense of the dissertation will take place. At least one week prior to the defense date, the student is required to post announcements in the departments related to the disciplines to ensure that all those interested have an opportunity to attend the defense presentation.

### ***“Dissertation Approval” form***

Students are responsible for ensuring that the signature of each dissertation committee member appears on the “Dissertation Approval” form, indicating that the student has submitted and successfully defended the dissertation. Students must select the appropriate “Dissertation Approval” form available on the WMU Graduate College website, under the “Forms” category <https://wmich.edu/grad/forms> and under the subheading “Dissertation, Specialist Project, and Thesis.” Students are responsible for ensuring that the signature of each dissertation committee member



appears on the “Dissertation Approval” form, indicating that the student has submitted and successfully defended the dissertation, and that three of these members have attended the dissertation defense in real time.

### ***Submitting dissertation to Graduate College and completion***

Following a successful defense, the dissertation, with correct formatting (see above) must be submitted to the Graduate College by the deadline for graduation. The dissertation committee may ask the student to revise the document before approving the final version of the dissertation. All graduation requirements must be completed prior to the date of commencement. It is the student’s responsibility to be mindful of the deadlines set forth by the Registrar and Graduate College to graduate and participate in commencement ceremonies

## **XIV. Dismissal policy**

If a student fails to make adequate progress towards the degree, that student may be dismissed from the ISLD program. When reviewing student progress, the ISLD director or designee considers the student's performance in the Annual Reviews, feedback from dissertation committee members, and success in coursework. While the following criteria for program continuation serve as guidelines, these are not to be considered the only requirements.

### ***Graduate College guidelines for academic standards***

1. Overall grade point average in the degree program must be at least 3.0.
2. Whenever the GPA for a particular semester is less than 3.0, but the overall GPA is 3.0 or above, the student may be issued a warning that program continuation may be in jeopardy.
3. If the overall GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be placed on probation for one semester.
4. If the student makes some improvement to the overall GPA, but the GPA is still below the standard, the student may be allowed to continue in the program but may be placed on probation for one additional enrollment period. This is at the discretion of the ISLD director, based on input from the dissertation committee.
5. If the student fails to improve their overall GPA while on probation or fails to reach the requisite GPA while on probation, the student may be dismissed from the program and university. If the student is dismissed from the program or university, they must apply for readmission if they wish to re-enter the program. However, the student must remain out of the program for at least one full 15-week semester prior to readmission.
6. A student may appeal program dismissal decisions to the Graduate College.

### ***Additional factors that may lead to program dismissal***

These guidelines are not exhaustive. Other issues may arise during the program that

may contribute to an unsatisfactory evaluation or program dismissal. The dissertation chair and the ISLD director will communicate with the student directly if any such situations arise.

1. Failure to participate in the Annual Review process for two years may result in dismissal.
2. An unsatisfactory evaluation in the Annual Review process may result in that student being placed on probation for one year. During that year, the student must remedy the issues outlined in the Annual Review report and make clear and documented progress toward the degree. Probation may be removed if the next Annual Review results in an evaluation of “satisfactory” or “satisfactory with reservations.”
3. Two consecutive unsatisfactory evaluations in the Annual Review process may result in dismissal.
4. Failure in two candidacy exam attempts may result in dismissal.
5. If the student is found responsible for academic misconduct, they may be dismissed from the program at the discretion of the dissertation committee, the ISLD director, or their designee.

## **XV. Funding and Awards**

The ISLD program itself has no funds available for teaching or research assistantships. Students are responsible for finding their own funding resources. The departments/programs related to the student's disciplines may consider that student for teaching or research assistantships, when appropriate. However, this is not guaranteed, because these assistantships are often reserved for students in those programs. Please consult the dissertation chair for information on potential funding opportunities. Students are encouraged to apply for scholarships and fellowships available through the Graduate College. Information on these opportunities can be found here: <https://wmich.edu/grad/fellowships-grants> (fellowships and grants); <https://wmich.edu/grad/assistantships> (assistantships); and <https://wmich.edu/finaid> (financial aid).

## **XVI. Research Integrity**

### ***Statement on AI***

Students should discuss the use of AI with their chair if they are considering using AI in any way. Students in the ISLD program must familiarize themselves with and adhere to all WMU's AI policies and restrictions. In addition, ISLD students are responsible for complying with any departmental-level or course-level policies/restrictions on AI, and those upheld by their dissertation chair and committee.

### ***Academic honesty***

Students are responsible for making themselves aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Graduate Catalog that pertain to academic honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. The policies can be found at <https://wmich.edu/registrar/catalogs> under the topic "Academic Policies" and the sub-topic: "Student Rights and Responsibilities."

If there is reason to believe a student have been involved in academic dishonesty, the student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If the student believes they are not responsible, they will have the opportunity for a hearing. The student should consult with the instructor and dissertation chair if they are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

In addition, the student is encouraged to visit the following web site: <https://wmich.edu/studentrights> for information about student's rights,

responsibilities, and Honor Code. The student may also visit the A-Z Directory of University Policies <https://wmich.edu/policies/a-z> to learn more about general academic policies on issues such as diversity and religious observance.

The plagiarism policy not only applies to materials that will be published, but also to any submitted materials, including drafts of proposals and dissertations. The library at Western Michigan University provides training on how to search for information using library resources and how to properly cite information in a written document.

## **XVII. Additional Advice**

Graduates with an Interdisciplinary Studies Doctorate may face special challenges on the job market when compared to those with traditional degrees. It may be difficult to obtain a position in a traditional discipline, given that faculty in traditional disciplines may favor a degree in that discipline. In recent years, there has been a growing appreciation for interdisciplinary work, but those with a non-traditional degree should be prepared to take extra steps to demonstrate the rigor and relevance of their scholarship.

Some suggestions to ISLD students for overcoming such obstacle are:

1. When applying for jobs and explaining your skills, focus on your areas of expertise and not the title of your degree.
2. Keep in mind that the quality of your research, not the title of your degree, often opens doors for your next position.
3. Concentrate your efforts on research methodologies so you will be sought after for your expertise in particular techniques and methods.
4. If you have a personal goal of entering a traditional discipline, then build a record that is strong in that field. Ways to do this include attending conferences in that area, publishing in journals respected in that field, and applying for grants related to that discipline. If you focus your efforts more heavily in one of your disciplines, instead of scattering your participation across several areas, you will be seen as an expert in that area.
5. If your goal is to enter a traditional discipline, talk to those in the discipline so you understand what they value. If they tell you that you will never get a job in that discipline without a degree in that discipline, consider carefully whether the ISLD program is right for you in terms of achieving your goals.
6. When applying for positions, make sure you emphasize your areas of concentration in your application letters. Your degree name will state that you have a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Studies. It will not state the fields you combined to achieve this degree. Therefore, you will need to clarify your areas of expertise in your application letter.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Assessment of Learning Outcomes Rubric and Overall Assessment Key

Assessment of Learning Outcomes Rubric				
	Does not meet expectations	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectations	Comments
<b>Breadth of subject knowledge:</b> Sound knowledge of background information in disciplines involved				
<b>Research design and methodology:</b> Clearly stated problem; well-conceived hypotheses; applied sound methods				
<b>Ethics in research and writing:</b> No ethical issues; understands appropriate conduct				
<b>Original interdisciplinary research:</b> Evidence of creativity and critical thinking; demonstrated how project will advance current knowledge; awareness of broader impacts				
<b>Oral and written communication skills:</b> Logical, sophisticated writing; accomplished presentation; communicates clearly and professionally				

#### Overall Assessment

Based on the overall performance of the candidate, the committee gives the following rating:

- ☐ Does not meet expectations (Does NOT PASS)
- ☐ Meets expectations (PASS)
- ☐ Exceeds expectations (PASS)

## Appendix B: Chart of Forms and Their Locations

More information about each of these forms and processes can be found within the Handbook sections.

\*AKA = also known as, alternate title for form.

Form /Process	Submission Deadline	Location
Instructions for routing forms with digital signatures	Follow these instructions any time you must submit a form	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Current Students > Routing forms for digital signatures
Pre-Admission Faculty Support Form ISLD	Before submitting application to the ISLD program.	<a href="#">ISLD Homepage</a> > Forms and Resources > Pre-Admission Faculty Support Form ISLD
Under-Enrollment Form	Optional, as needed when on assistantship and enrolled in less than 6 credits	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Forms > Assistantships > Under-enrollment Form
Doctoral Research Credits (A-S 7350) Registration	ISLD students <i>may choose to</i> enroll in A-S 7350 to fulfill their research course requirements.	<a href="#">ISLD Homepage</a> > Forms and Resources > Registration for A-S 7350 and 7300.
Doctoral Dissertation Credits (A-S 7300)	ISLD students <i>may choose to</i> enroll in A-S 7300 to fulfill their research course requirements.	<a href="#">ISLD Homepage</a> > Forms and Resources > Registration for A-S 7350 and 7300.
<b>Forms below are mandatory, and (roughly) in sequence</b>		
"Committee Appointment" Form AKA "Notification of Committee Appointment"	Before completion of first semester.	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Forms > Dissertation, Special Project, and Thesis > Committee Appointment Form OR Committee Appointment Form (Co-chair Option)
"Permanent Program of Study Form" AKA "Doctoral Level Program of Study" AKA "Doctoral Program of Study"	Within first year or after 9 credits. Must be updated when course plan changes, using "C" (below). "D" may also be required.	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Forms > Registrar's Office > Doctoral Level Program of Study
"Program of Study Course Change Form" AKA "Program of Study Course Change" AKA "Graduate Transfer Credit Evaluation and Course Substitution" (bottom)	You must update your "Permanent Program of Study" form whenever you change your coursework plan. An updated version of the "Permanent Program of Study Form" may be used in lieu of "Program of Study Course Change Form."	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Forms > Registrar's Office > Program of Study Course Change
"Program Time Extension Form" AKA "Extension"	Mandatory if your "Permanent Program of Study" form includes	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Forms >

Request"	Master's transfer credits earned more than seven years prior to your admission date.	Special Circumstances > Program Time Extension Form
"Annual Review Doctoral Students "AKA "Annual Review of Doctoral Students"	To be held before March 1 the first year, and annually after that.	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Forms > Annual Review > Doctoral students. Student are advised to submit an updated "Permanent Program of Study" form with the "Annual Review" form to report on the coursework.
"ISLD Requirement Agreement" (Not a form)	By the first Annual Review meeting.	See Handbook for more details. (Not a Form) A written agreement that the student prepares with their committee and that the student must keep in their personal files.
"Admission to Candidacy" Form, AKA "Admission to Doctoral Candidacy Form"	Before end of third year.	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Forms > Dissertation, Special Project, and Thesis > Candidacy Form
"Formatting Guidelines: Guidelines for the Preparation of Theses, Specialist Projects, and Dissertations" (Not a form)	It is mandatory to follow these instructions during preparation of dissertation.	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Current Students > Dissertations & Theses > Formatting Guidelines
"Application for Graduation" Process and "Graduate Audit" (Not forms)	Two semesters before graduation.	<a href="#">Registrar's Office Homepage</a> > Graduation and Diplomas > Doctoral Degree (Follow "Graduation Information for Doctoral Degree"
"Dissertation Defense Scheduling" form	At least 2 weeks before dissertation defense date	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Forms > Dissertation, Special Project, and Thesis > Defense Scheduling Form
"Approval Form" AKA "Final Dissertation, Project, Thesis Approval" Select "4-Member or 5 Member Dissertation Committee"	Immediately after oral defense of dissertation	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Forms > Dissertation, Special Project, and Thesis > Approval Forms
Dissertation Submission Instructions AKA "Preparing to Submit a Dissertation or Thesis" (Not a form)	During preparation of dissertation, it is mandatory to familiarize yourself with the official submission process.	<a href="#">Graduate College Homepage</a> > Current Students > Dissertations & Theses > Preparing to Submit a Thesis or Dissertation (Not a form)