

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

MALS STUDENT HANDBOOK



**Master of Arts in Liberal Studies
An Interdisciplinary Program**


Dear MALS Student,

I am pleased to provide you with this MALS Student Handbook. It brings together the information that we feel is important to your progress in this degree program, and I hope you will find it a helpful document. As you will see, it includes a statement of the degree requirements, as well as more detailed statements on the concentration requirements and the final project requirements. You should also keep in mind that this program is subject to the general university requirements for the master of arts degree; these requirements have been incorporated into the MALS degree requirements. If you have any questions about requirements for the MALS degree, please consult the University Program Associate.

In this handbook, you will also find some practical information, helpful links to documents and other policies, an important section on filing your Graduate Plan of Work, and samples of forms you may find useful.

Please refer to this throughout the time you are in the program. I would welcome any suggestions about additions to and revisions of the handbook. And I wish you all the best for the future, as you work toward completing your MALS degree!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amanda Ross Edwards". The signature is stylized, with a large initial "A" and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Dr. Amanda Ross Edwards
Director, Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

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Resources

Program Staff	<u>Telephone</u>
Director Dr. Amanda Edwards 010 Winston Hall Campus Box 8102 aredwar2@ncsu.edu	919-515-2481
Graduate Administrative Support Specialist (Graduate Services Coordinator) Fran Pitchford 106A 1911 Bldg Campus Box 7107 fpitchf@ncsu.edu	919-515-2220
College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS)	
Associate Dean of Interdisciplinary Affairs and Partnerships Dr. Denis Provencher 107E 1911 Bldg Campus Box 7107 dmproven@ncsu.edu	
Director of Student Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mr. Ernest Hendley 106B Caldwell Hall ehendle@ncsu.edu	919-513-1832
Career Services Center Mr. D.R. Ingram Jr Career Services Associate Director 2100 Pullen Hall Campus Box 7303 dr_ingram@ncsu.edu	919-515-2398
Graduate Writing Center (by appointment only/follow link for more information) Academic Success Center	919-515-3163
Registration and Records Registration and Records	919-515-6278
University Libraries University Libraries	919-515-3364
Office of Information Technology NC State IT Service Portal	919-515-4357
Disability Resource Office Disability Office	919-515-7653
Human Subjects Research (IRB) Human Subjects IRB	919-515-7515

Frequently Used Terms

[CHASS](#) - College of Humanities and Social Sciences

[H&SS](#) - Humanities and Social Sciences

[Course subject codes](#)

[DGP](#) - Director of Graduate Programs

[GSC](#) - Graduate Service Coordinator

[GSSP](#) - Graduate Student Support Plan

[IDS](#) - Interdisciplinary Studies

[IRB](#) - Institutional Review Board

[LOA](#) - Leave of Absence

[GPOW](#)- Graduate Plan of Work

University Patent Agreement and Copyright Procedures

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A. Requirement to Sign Patent Agreement

All students must approve the Patent Agreement via Student Self-Service in the *MyPack* portal **by the end of their first semester of enrollment**. Master's students must have an approved Patent Agreement on file in the Graduate School before they will have either their Request to Schedule the Master's Oral Examination or Request for Option B Graduation Checkout approved (MALS is an Option B program.)

B. Nature of Patent Agreement

NC State is dedicated not only to teaching and research but to extending the knowledge its students, faculty and staff create to the public.

It is the [policy of NC State](#) to carry out its scholarly work in an open and free atmosphere and to publish results obtained therefrom freely, limited only by a short time delay in cases in which this is necessary to establish patent rights. Although NC State does not undertake research or developmental work principally for the purpose of developing patents and commercial applications thereof, patentable inventions sometimes arise out of the research activities of its employees which are carried out wholly or in part with university facilities. As a public service institution, NC State has an interest in assuring the utilization of such inventions for the public good. Protection must be provided to at least some of these inventions through patents and licenses to encourage their development and marketing. Patents and their exploitation, however, represent only a small part of the benefits accruing from either publicly or privately sponsored research.

A portion of the research conducted by NC State is supported by the government and a portion by private industry. Service to the public, including private industry, is an integral part of NC State's mission. As a public institution, the university, in its agreements with private industry or other private organizations, must keep the interests of the general public in view. The rights and privileges set forth in cooperative agreements or contracts, with respect to patents developed as a result of research partly or wholly financed by private parties, must be fair and just to the inventor(s), the sponsor and the public. Research should be undertaken by the University under support from private parties only if it is consistent with and complementary to the University's goals and responsibilities to the public.

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About the Program

North Carolina State University's Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program offers the student an opportunity to undertake a broad, interdisciplinary program of graduate study that integrates and expands awareness and is geared to the student's personal interests. As part of the application process, each student proposes an individual program of study around an interdisciplinary concentration. This program is distinct from the usual master's degree program in that it is not specialized study in a single discipline, nor is it designed as a vocational or professional degree, though it could be quite relevant to a student's professional field and interests.

NC State's rich resources in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and technology are made available to MALS students as they explore their interests through the offerings of various departments and also through special interdisciplinary seminars designed exclusively for MALS students.

MALS students have diverse educational backgrounds, diverse educational objectives in pursuing a MALS degree, and may be coming back to school after a considerable break in their education. The MALS student might be a middle-level manager seeking a better understanding of community and organizational dynamics, or an engineer wanting to study the interplay between science, technology, and society, or a teacher who would like to explore the literary and historical foundations of the American experience, or a retiree who has always wanted to learn more about national and international issues and the decision-making process.

The program is designed to be flexible and accommodating to the needs of the adult student. Students begin the program in the fall semester and by taking one course each fall and spring semester can finish the program in five years. The special MALS seminars are offered in the late afternoon or evening, thus accommodating the schedules of working students and alleviating parking problems for everyone.

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Degree Requirements

General Degree Requirements:

The degree requirements consist of 30 hours of coursework, or 10 three-hour courses, which must include:

- at least two MALS seminars
- a research methods course (broadly defined) or third MALS seminar
- a six-course interdisciplinary concentration
- a culminating project for which three credit hours are given

The Graduate School also has [minimum requirements for a graduate degree](#) including:

- 18 hours of the 30 total hours of required work must receive a *letter grade* (these must be NC State or inter-institutional courses)
- 3.0 minimum GPA throughout the graduate career (academic warnings should be taken seriously as they may result in termination by the Graduate School)
- Degree completion within 6 years of starting the program

First-Year Advising:

The MALS Program Director, who also serves as the Director of Graduate Program (DGP) will be the default advisor to incoming students. At any point a student can designate an academic advisor in their research/ academic interest area. This advisor may typically also serve as their MLS 676 advisor. Students are still welcome to check in with the DGP for general academic guidance.

Other Regulations and Recommendations:

- No more than 6 credit hours of a 400-level class can count toward the graduate degree (a 400-level course can only be taken if there is no graduate level equivalent)
- Students may take up to 6 credit hours of independent study as part of their degree
- MALS students may not count more than 36 credit hours toward their degree
- Once admitted, students work with the DGP until they identify an appropriate academic advisor. Students should identify an academic advisor by the time they complete they complete 18 credit hours.
- Students must attend an orientation program.
- MALS students are advised to take a MALS seminar in the first semester of enrollment. By the time students complete the program, they will have taken two MALS seminars, plus a third seminar or research methods course. Typically two MALS seminars are offered each semester.
- The research methods course, if taken, can come from departments and programs throughout the university and should be appropriate for the student's concentration. The options might include statistics, experimental or survey research, or qualitative methods.

Concentration Requirements:

Each concentration is expected to have breadth and depth, and also to show the student's understanding of a liberal studies degree. The concentration must include:

- a coherent theme or topic, conveyed by a descriptive title (e.g. "Diversity in Higher Education," "Sports Management and Leadership," or "Environmental Communication")
- courses from at least three different academic departments
- no more than two courses from any one department
- at least two courses from offerings in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences or, with program approval, from other traditional liberal arts disciplines like mathematics or natural sciences.

The six-course, or 18-credit hour, concentration on an interdisciplinary theme or topic is proposed in the application and finalized by each student once he or she is 15 credit hours into the program. This is done by completing the [Interdisciplinary Concentration Statement/Learning Outcomes](#). The student should then begin compiling their POW and learning outcomes, which must be submitted through the MyPack Portal System by the time they complete their 21st credit hour. This work is done in consultation with the student's advisor and/or the MALS Program Director. The courses making up the concentration may be graduate (and sometimes appropriate 400-level undergraduate) courses offered by other NCSU departments (or other universities in the area, through the [Inter-Institutional Agreement](#)), related MALS seminars, [UNC Online](#) offerings, or independent study courses.

Culminating Project:

The final part of the program is the culminating project related to the student's concentration. The culminating project can take a diversity of forms—long paper, video production, community engagement, educational program, creative writing, website, handbook, or business plan, for instance. Students not doing a long research or analytical paper should write a 12-15 page critical introduction to their project, explaining why it has been undertaken, how it has been carried out, what the results and their implications are, and how it might be continued, elaborated, or modified in the future. Three hours of credit will be given for completing the culminating project. A final presentation of the project must be given before graduation. See our [guidelines for MLS 676](#) for more details.

Students are required to have a three person committee. The advisor (committee chair) should have graduate faculty standing (full or associate) at NCSU (please consult the university's graduate faculty list: <https://grad.ncsu.edu/about/people/graduate-faculty/>).

As soon as the student selects their MLS 676 advisor (instructor of record) they should be added to the student's Graduate Plan of Work (POW) via MyPackPortal. The advisor should officially accept this role through MyPackPortal.

Graduate Advisor and Advisory Committee

The graduate advisor's role is to chair the committee, oversee the culminating project, and serve as an intellectual mentor to the student. The committee chair will also be instructor of record for the course MLS 676, the MALS culminating project course. Faculty members for the committee should be chosen to represent the interdisciplinary nature of the student's research and final project. Please note:

- A faculty member with [graduate faculty status](#) at NCSU must serve as the student's primary advisor
- At least one other faculty member must be from a different department from the advisor
- At least one faculty member must be from the College of Humanities and Social Science
- A unanimous vote by the committee is required to pass the final project

External Committee Members

Students may select committee members from institutions other than NC State:

- Graduate faculty from another university
- A person from industry or a governmental agency
 - This person will be a fourth member
 - This person will be a non-voting member

All external members are subject to review by the DGP. Requests for an external member should include their CV and explanation of skills or qualifications for participating on the advising committee.

Changing Committee Members

Students may change the members of the advisory committee any time before the POW is submitted. If the student requires changes to the committee after a POW has been approved by the Graduate School, the student should include an explanation of the changes to the DGP, and submit their updated committee members for approval.

Participation and Meetings

Meetings:

The student and the advisor are expected to meet throughout the student's academic career in MALS on their own schedule. The program encourages the student and advisor to meet at least once a semester prior to the final semester. For the final semester (enrollment in MLS 676), the student and advisor should agree on a regular meeting schedule to ensure satisfactory progress of the final project. The advisor and student should discuss how they want to incorporate the other member(s) of the committee into meetings prior to the formal meeting.

Formal Meeting:

The advisor, committee member(s), and student must have a formal meeting that decides the outcome of the project (satisfactory or unsatisfactory completion of the final project). This meeting should take place prior to the Culminating Project Presentation (which occurs during reading days of the fall or spring term). We highly recommend that the advisor and committee members be present in person for the formal meeting, however, if needed, they may participate via video conference. The formal meeting will review the work and final project the student completed. The program provides a general rubric that should be met by all students in the MALS program. All members must agree on the satisfactory completion of the final project for the student to pass.

A program survey or evaluation (based on the rubric) must be completed electronically by the advisor for the program records. The survey will be administered and records will be kept by the University Program Associate. The survey will include the committee members' votes on the satisfactory completion of the final project by the student. All graduating students will then present at a final project presentation at the end of the semester.

Enrollment

Students cannot independently enroll in MLS 676 through MyPack Portal. Enrollment in MLS 676 is completed by the Program Associate. Students should email the following with their enrollment request:

- confirmation that their POW is approved by the Graduate School,
- and confirmation that the faculty advisor has graduate faculty status at NC State.

If any of these items are missing or inadequate, the student will not be enrolled in MLS 676 until they are completed.

Your advisor should review and approve your proposal prior to submission.

Requests should be submitted the semester *before* intended enrollment (by May 15 for Fall enrollment and by December 15 for Spring enrollment). Requests are reviewed by the Program Associate and the Director. Requests submitted after this time may not be approved in time for registration deadlines. Revisions may be necessary prior to approval and enrollment. Once the request is approved, the Program Associate will create a section of MLS 676 course for the student, and enroll the student in that section.

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Requirements and Guidelines for the Interdisciplinary Concentration:

The purpose of the NC State MALS program is to offer a broad, interdisciplinary program of graduate study that integrates diverse perspectives, expands awareness, and is geared to the student's interests and aspirations. The program requires both breadth and depth. Our particular model for providing liberal studies graduate education at NC State includes the requirement of an 18-credit hour interdisciplinary concentration.

The six-course (18 credit hours) interdisciplinary concentration should have both focus and breadth and be identified by a descriptive title. The courses making up the concentration:

- May be regular departmental offerings or MALS seminars (on suitable subjects),
- Must include courses from at least three different academic departments, with no more than two courses from any one department,
- May contain up to two individually designed independent study courses related to the concentration (no more than 6 credit hours) and,
- May contain no more than six credit hours at the 400-level (undergraduate) courses when there is no graduate level equivalent. 400-level courses must be completed after admission to the graduate program,
- Should include at least two courses from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences or, with program approval, from other traditional liberal arts disciplines like mathematics or natural sciences.

Concentrations are individually designed by the student in consultation with his or her graduate advisor. The MALS Program Director may be consulted if needed. The concentration statement describes learning outcomes for each course in the concentration in a [brief document](#) that should include the title of the concentration topic or theme. The courses will also be listed in the proposed Graduate POW, and the concentration statement should be included in the comments section of the POW. The concentration is to be approved by the graduate advisor and the director of the MALS program.

A wide variety of concentrations is possible given NC State's curriculum. To further illustrate this concept, some examples that would be appropriate and suitable to the MALS program are given below.

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Examples of MALS Concentrations:

Your self-designed concentration should consist of courses that interest you, based on your proposed research interest or theme. The samples below are for explanatory purposes only and should not be viewed as tracks or limitations on what course work you can take. The possibilities are almost infinite!

Science, Technology and Society

- ENG 515: Rhetoric of Science and Technology
- HI 582: Darwinism in Science and Society
- MA 433: History of Mathematics
- PHI 498: Special Topics: Philosophical Issues in Environmental Ethics
- PA 550: Environmental Policy
- MLS 501: Science and Literature

National and International Issues and Decision-Making

- ECG 515: Environmental and Resource Policy
- PA 507: The Public Policy Process
- PA 553: Disaster, Crisis, and Emergency Management and Policy
- PS 437: U.S. National Security Policy
- SOC 440: Social Change
- MLS 501: Global Sustainable Human Development

The American Experience

- HI 546: Civil War and Reconstruction
- HI 554: History of U.S. Foreign Relations, 1900-present
- ENG 555: American Romantic Period
- ENG 575: Southern Writers
- PS 506: United States Constitutional Law
- PS 507: Civil Liberties in the United "States

The Community

- LAR 511: Community Design Policy
- LAR 577: Sustainable Design
- SOC 513: Community Organization and Development
- SOC 533: The Community
- SW 413: African American Families: History, Tradition, and Community
- PA 520: Seminar in Urban Management

The Human Animal

- ANT 508: Culture and Personality
- ANT 550: Environmental Anthropology
- SOC 509: Population Problems
- SW 506: Human Behavior and the Social Environment: Individuals, Families, and Groups
- PSY 511: Advanced Social Psychology
- PSY 504: Evolutionary Psychology

Independent Study (MLS 630) in the MALS Program:

Students in the MALS Program may take independent study courses with faculty members as part of their program of study. Up to six credit hours of work completed as independent study may be counted toward the 18 credit hour concentration requirement.

Independent study involves course work--reading and/or research--by one student or a small group of students with a faculty member. The student and the faculty member are free to work out the content, objectives, and requirements of the independent study, and how much academic credit will be earned. Independent study courses focus on topics or areas of research that cannot be pursued through existing course offerings; they can also be used to structure internship experiences. The student and faculty member identify and agree on the work to be done by the student, e.g., assignments from a reading list, writing assignments, and other projects. They also schedule regular meetings, e.g., weekly or bi-weekly. It is important to have a clear understanding about the mutual expectations and basis for evaluation.

The initiative for doing independent study lies with the student. Interested students should approach an appropriate faculty member to see if an independent study can be arranged. The faculty member should have [Graduate Faculty Status](#) in order to be the instructor of record for this graduate course. If the student and faculty member agree, the course can be run either under the graduate independent study number of the faculty member's home department (e.g., PSY 599) if that person's home department has such numbers or under the MALS independent study number, MLS 630. While the choice of course number is up to the student and faculty member, please note that MLS 630 can be used for independent studies led by any faculty member, regardless of their home department. We generally recommend using the MLS 630 number, which gives students more flexibility in designing their MALS concentration, because of the limit on two courses in a given discipline within the concentration. Please note as well that 600-level courses can only be taken on a pass/fail basis (pass/fail courses count as full credit but do not affect your GPA), and the course will not count toward your required 18 hours of letter graded credit required by the Graduate School for this degree.

If you are using MLS 630, requests should be made by the middle of the semester before the independent study should begin (for example: an independent study for Fall 2024 should be requested during the Spring 2023 enrollment period). You must notify the University Program Associate and forward an email confirmation from the faculty member who has agreed to conduct the course. The request is subject to the approval of the MALS Program Director.

MLS 630 should not be confused with MLS 676, which is the MALS culminating project, a capstone course to be taken only in the student's final semester. MLS 630 can, however, be used strategically to carry out preliminary work (e.g. surveys, literature reviews, etc.) that leads toward the culminating project.

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Inter-Institutional Registration:

While enrolled in the program, students may take courses from other universities and have the credit counted toward the NC State MALS degree, though it is important to **check with the faculty advisor**. Before doing this, students are required to acquire approval from the course instructor at the home institution, DGP, and CHASS Associate Dean for Academic Affairs prior to taking the course by submitting the [inter-institutional approval form](#). Requests should be made as soon as possible in the semester before the course begins.

The [Inter-Institutional Registration Program](#) is a voluntary organization of NC State University, Duke, North Carolina Central University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and University of North Carolina at Greensboro for the purpose of developing and conducting cooperative educational activities. The program provides the opportunity for students to enroll at another institution for a course(s) not offered on their home campus.

A graduate student must be registered concurrently for coursework at NC State to take a course at a participating institution. The student's graduate advisor must certify that the course is required for the student's degree program and the course is not available at the home institution. Even though taking a course on another campus, the student is exclusively under the administrative direction of the NC State Graduate School. Enrollment for courses on other campuses will take place on that campus, following guidelines from Registration and Records. Such courses are considered by the Graduate School to be a part of the student's normal load and the student will be billed for the courses through the NC State University Cashier's Office.

When the grading system of the other institutions varies from that of NC State, grades received under Inter-institutional Registration will be converted to the NC State system. For example, "H," "P," "L," and "F" grades earned at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and "E," "G," "S" and "F" grades earned at Duke University will be converted to "A," "B," "C" and "F" grades, respectively.

Distance Education (online) courses are not eligible under the Inter-Institutional Registration program.

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Continuous Enrollment:

[3.15 Course Registration < North Carolina State University](#)

After a student is admitted to the Graduate School and enrolls for the first time, he/she is required to maintain continuous registration. Continuous registration refers to a student's enrollment each semester, excluding summer sessions, until he/she has either graduated or his/her graduate program has been terminated. All students attending classes must be registered.

Exceptions

- A. **Leave of absence** A student in good academic standing who must interrupt his/her graduate program for good reasons may request a leave of absence from graduate study for a definite period of time, not to exceed one year within a given graduate degree program. The student should initiate the request with the Director of Graduate Programs (DGP) before the DGP submits it to the Graduate School. The Graduate School should receive the request **at least one month prior to the first day of the term involved**. The time that the student spends on an approved leave of absence will be included in the time allowed to complete the degree. Time limits are not extended.
- B. **Withdrawal**
 - a. **Withdrawal during the registration period.** Any student enrolled in a graduate program who is registered for a given semester and withdraws during the official registration period (typically the first 10 working days of a semester) must obtain a leave of absence to meet the requirement for continuous registration.
 - b. **Withdrawing after the registration period ends.** Any student withdrawing after the official registration period ends DOES NOT need to obtain a leave of absence and will be considered by the Graduate School as having met his/her continuous registration requirements.

Time Limit:

Within six calendar years, students must complete all requirements for the Master's degree, beginning with the date the student commences courses carrying graduate credit applicable to the degree program either at NC State or another institution. The time limit remains at six years even if a student was on approved leave of absence during the six-year period. The student's degree clock for time to completion starts with the first course approved for inclusion in the POW.

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Instructions on Filing a Graduate Plan of Work

Graduate Plan of Work

The student should actively create and refine their POW. A Graduate Plan of Work should be filed by the end of the semester in which the student completes the 18th credit hour toward the MALS degree. All graduate students can enter and update their POW online via Student Self Service in [MyPackPortal](#). The POW is designed as an advising tool. You may begin working on your POW as soon as you are active in your graduate career. You may save in-progress work and submit it at a later date. You may make changes at any time up until submission.

The Graduate Plan of Work displays the total coursework--past, present, and future--that will make up the student's degree program (including any credit being transferred from other institutions that is counting toward the MALS degree). Thus, it must include a projection of the remaining course work that the student plans to take, even though this does not commit the student to these actual courses; the Graduate Plan of Work can be revised if there are changes in the courses taken to complete a student's program that are acceptable to the student's graduate advisor.

Interdisciplinary Concentration Statement/ Learning Objectives:

In addition to submitting the Graduate Plan of Work online, MALS students are required to submit a concentration statement, a brief statement that describes the 18-hour concentration, and explains how each of the six courses contributes to its objectives. The concentration should be described in terms of the content, objectives, and issues it raises; each course is to be identified by course number, title, and the course's relevance to the concentration should be described briefly. When entering your plan online, please include your concentration statement in the comment section of the POW. It is recommended you complete and save the statement in some sort of text document, then cut and paste into the comment section.

Students should create and revise their Graduate Plan of Work and the Concentration Statement with their graduate advisor and committee members. The advisor is likely to be the person who will be the instructor of record of MLS 676, the capstone course for the culminating final project. Any faculty member at NC State with [graduate faculty status](#) is eligible to serve as a student's graduate advisor. It is highly recommended that the advisor be someone that the student is already acquainted with in some capacity and who has interest and expertise in the student's area of research.

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Steps for the Graduate Plan of Work:

The filing of the Graduate Plan of Work is completed individually, but the series of steps given below is a common strategy that students and faculty may want to use:

1. Student works out a tentative Graduate Plan of Work (all 30 hours that will make up the degree) and a tentative statement and approaches the prospective graduate advisor (the [degree planner](#) is a useful planning tool). Use the [course catalog](#) to help determine when courses may be offered to help with planning. For accurate course selections for an upcoming semester, use the [course search](#) tool.
2. As soon as a faculty member with graduate faculty status has agreed to serve as advisor, he or she should be added to the Committee tab in the POW, and accept the role of advisor/committee chair when the POW is submitted for approval. Although you will also need to identify your remaining committee members/readers, they do not need to be added to your POW.
3. The student, advisor, and committee members if needed come to agreement on an acceptable version of the Graduate Plan of Work and the concentration statement.
4. The student submits a final Graduate Plan of Work and a final concentration statement online via MyPackPortal, and informs the MALS program office.
5. A completed and approved POW is required before enrollment in MLS 676.

Best Practices:

- We strongly recommend the following:
 - Read your MALS Student Handbook carefully and completely. The Handbook contains important policies and information. Most of your questions are answered in the Handbook.
 - Start the MALS program with a MALS seminar (MLS 501) to help prepare for the interdisciplinary work in your academic career. Our seminars are designed to serve as a general introduction to graduate-level work, and a more specific introduction to interdisciplinary inquiry.
 - Prepare and maintain a [checklist/degree planner](#) (download document for best results) to make sure all MALS requirements are met and you remain on schedule to degree completion.
 - Find an advisor as soon as possible, but prior to 15 credit hours of completion. The advisor should:
 - Have [Graduate Faculty Status](#)
 - Have experience and knowledge in an area of study you are researching for your final project
 - Check in with the Director at the beginning and end of each semester
 - Have your [checklist/degree planner](#) ready for review
 - Prepare questions you may have ahead of time
 - Prepare your course schedule for the upcoming or following semester for review
 - Take only the final project course during your last semester. We recommend enrolling in MLS 676 alone so your last semester concentrates on the final project.
- We also recommend:
 - Finding appropriate resources for your needs. This includes:
 - Scheduling appointments with the [Graduate Writing Center](#)

- Scheduling appointments with the [Director of Student Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)
 - Scheduling appointments with the [Career Development Center](#)
 - Scheduling appointments with the [Counseling Center](#)
- Meeting regularly with your advisor
- This establishes a working relationship
 - Allows you to ask questions as they come up
 - Helps you plan for your final project
- Registering during the regular enrollment period
 - Dates for the regular enrollment period are marked on the [academic calendar](#)
 - Registration during the late enrollment period may include a late registration fee and pre-payment obligations, and limits course availability.
 - Some courses may require pre-approval from the instructor of record. If you wait, you may not be able to obtain permission in time to register for a course.
- Ensuring the University Program Associate has your preferred email address. All official contact from the MALS program is done via email. Check your email frequently. Read any emails from the Director, University Program Associate, or Graduate School carefully. They contain important information, including enrollment, opportunities, academic progress, et cetera.
- Liking us on [Facebook](#) and the [MALS Program LinkedIn page](#)! We post deadlines and opportunities on our Facebook page! We also post things you cannot find anywhere else such as upcoming events and alumni news!

Common Questions (click to jump to a question):

[How do I choose courses for my concentration?](#)

[What if I want to take a course for which I have no background or experience?](#)

[I attended another graduate program. How do I transfer my credits?](#)

[How do I know what degree requirements I have or have not met?](#)

[When should I get an advisor? How do I choose an advisor?](#)

[What kind of final project should I do?](#)

[How do I enroll in MLS 676 for my final project?](#)

How do I choose courses for my concentration?

When choosing courses for your concentration, consider what disciplines and courses will best help you with your culminating project. You want to build a foundation of knowledge, skills, and perspectives that pertain to what you want to study. Ideally your project should integrate all your coursework, and the disciplines you've explored, into a cohesive interdisciplinary study.

- Start with your initial concentration plan (from your application to the MALS program):
 - Find these courses in our [Course Catalog](#) and see when they might be offered (please note, course availability varies. Some courses are subject to enrollment minimums, enrollment caps, availability of faculty, et cetera).
 - Identify at least 3 different areas of study you want to participate in. Per MALS degree requirements, your concentration must contain:
 - At least 2 courses in the College of Humanities and Social Science

- No more than 2 courses in a single discipline
- As you work through the MALS program, you may find that your concentration changes from what you originally proposed. If your focus changes, determine if you need to consider different courses for your concentration, keeping in mind program requirements.
- Build your POW in MyPackPortal and/or work in your degree planner to ensure you meet all requirements
- If you are considering taking a course through our [inter-institutional](#) agreement, the [request form](#) must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the start of the semester. This includes obtaining permission from the instructor of record in writing.

What if I want to take a course for which I have no background or experience?

You should make contact with the professor who will be teaching the course (or a professor who has taught the course recently if the course is not currently available). We recommend you ask the professor:

1. If you can view a syllabus
2. If the course is recommended for someone with no background in the subject/topic
3. What prerequisites would be recommended

You may have to do work on your own to understand and remain engaged in the course.

I attended another graduate program. How do I transfer my credits?

The Graduate School allows up to 12 hours of transfer credit if it meets [transfer requirements](#). The Graduate School requires a [request form](#) and official transcript(s). Keep track of your transfer credits and keep in mind what constitutes transfer credit. Post-baccalaureate or non-degree academic work and UNC Online are considered transfer credit.

How do I know what degree requirements I have or have not met?

You should read your student handbook carefully. We also provide a [checklist/degree planner](#) to help you track your progress to degree. If you have questions, you should consult with the University Program Associate.

When should I get an advisor? How do I choose an advisor?

You should begin looking for an advisor your first semester in the program. We suggest you take a course early on with the professor you want to be your advisor. This allows you to build a relationship with them and ensure that their work, expertise, and research will complement your final project. When choosing your advisor consider their academic background and your fields of study. The advisor should be able to help guide you, offer resources, and other academic support for your final project. Once you feel comfortable that the faculty member would be an appropriate advisor, you should submit a formal request to the faculty member, copying the University Program Associate in the email request. You should select your advisor the semester BEFORE enrolling in MLS 676.

What kind of culminating project should I do?

Projects can take a variety of forms, including:

- An analytical paper
- A case study
- A documentary or oral history
- A business plan or community outreach program that has been or is ready to be implemented

Consider what best showcases what you are studying and what kind of data you may collect. What would help focus your project, and best present the results, findings, or conclusions derived from your research? Your academic advisor should also help you with this. Your culminating project should demonstrate clearly your knowledge of your concentration area, an interdisciplinary approach to your topic, and insightful understanding of your research and conclusions.

How do I enroll in MLS 676 for my final project?

You must request enrollment in MLS 676 by contacting the University Program Associate. You cannot do this on your own. You must submit/verify the following before the University Program Associate can create a section and enroll you in MLS 676:

1. Your POW has been approved by the Graduate School
2. Your advisor/chair has graduate faculty status at NC State
3. You have completed all required coursework (or will be completing all required coursework concurrently with MLS 676 enrollment)
4. You and your advisor/chair have agreed on a syllabus/timeline for completion of the final project that you must submit to the DGP for review

If you have questions or concerns about policy or approval, contact the DGP as soon as possible.

Forms, Links, and Examples:

- [Degree Planner/Checklist for Students Completing MALS degree](#) (download for best results)
- [Sample Interdisciplinary Concentration Statement and Proposed Theme](#)
- [Guidelines for MLS 676 Students and Advisors](#)
- [Sample Final Project Paper](#)
- [Sample Final Project Critical Introduction](#)

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