



Academic Program Review

October 2016

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Course Prefixes: IS

Description of Department, Changes since Last Program Review, and Department Mission Statement

The UVU Program in Integrated Studies (IS), established in 1998 as one of UVU's first four-year degrees, requires students to choose two emphases from an approved list of emphases established and administered by individual departments. Each Emphasis has a minimum of 18 credit hours not including prerequisites, at least 9 of which are upper division. Additionally, students must complete an Integrated Studies core of 21 hours that includes three writing and integrated research classes, two upper-division philosophy or theory courses related to the emphases, and two capstone courses during which students plan, develop, present, and defend a senior thesis. A faculty mentor from each emphasis and one from the Integrated Studies Program guide the research and writing of the thesis. From their first inquiry about the program until graduation, students are guided by 3 different academic advisors as well as 3-4 faculty mentors.

Michele C. Everett, in her 2016 report on integrated and interdisciplinary teaching and learning, writes that "The increasingly complex nature of issues facing today's global society has placed greater emphasis on the need to foster interdisciplinary thinking and research in higher education.... The number of undergraduate degrees conferred in multi/interdisciplinary studies continues to show significant growth; 38 percent between 2005-2006 and 2010-2011. Factors contributing to this growth include the flexibility these programs provide students, opportunities for active and engaged learning, and the focus on developing the interdisciplinary skills needed to succeed in today's workplace. These skills include critical thinking, complex problem solving, the ability to apply knowledge to real-world settings, and to work effectively as part of a diverse team." (Fostering Interdisciplinary Understanding and Skills, Currents in Teaching and Learning, February 2016) Research published in the Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning found that students who participated in an interdisciplinary learning community developed greater skills in scientific reasoning and critical thinking (Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Vol. 13, No. 5, December 2013, pp. 90-105.)

Mission Statement

The BA/BS Program in Integrated Studies serves students with interests and capabilities in more than one scholarly discipline. The degree embodies disciplinary depth with breadth in cross-disciplinary research and writing that culminate in a senior thesis. The Program encourages and supports interdisciplinary inquiry across the range of disciplines at UVU.

Integrated Studies B.A. / B.S.

Criteria 1 – Description of Program, Changes since Last Program Review, Program Mission Statement

The determining characteristic of an Integrated Studies degree is the incorporation of depth and breadth across multiple disciplines. Students receiving this degree have developed skills in thinking, problem solving, collaborative work, gathering and analyzing data, writing, and speaking, and have done so on the foundation of solid, but not exhaustive, disciplinary emphases. Integrated Studies students are not exclusively focused on a single discipline. Rather, they must conceptualize, research, write and defend a senior thesis of depth on a theme that cuts across disciplines, bringing their multidisciplinary tools to bear on a problem that requires research, interpretation and clear presentation.

Criteria 2 – Workforce Data and Demand

For those completing the bachelor degree in Integrated Studies, various opportunities exist for advanced academic and professional degrees (a wide variety of MA and PhD programs, law school, medical and dental schools, MBA, MPA, etc.) business and industry environment, and public service. Many employers seek students with skills gained from educational programs with broad foundations like Integrated Studies. These skills include general problem solving, the ability to work with and comprehend diverse material, write clearly, think critically, and work collaboratively.

The most recent data from UVU's Department of Institutional Research and Information (IRI) was collected independently of the Integrated Studies program's outreach:

- 71.9% of Integrated Studies students are engaged in full-time employment in the year following their graduation;
- 43.3% of students report that they have already begun further education;
- 23.3% say that they plan to continue their education in the future;
- Over 90% of students over the last 3 years said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience within the Integrated Studies Program, with no students indicating that they had a poor experience.

In addition to the IRI's ongoing reporting, the Integrated Studies Department undertakes its own internal evaluation of student outcomes each year. Below is a list illustrating some examples of graduate and/or professional work being done by recent undergraduates of Integrated Studies:

- Many Integrated Studies Students go on to pursue advanced education in various programs including:
 - University of Virginia, Ph.D. Neuropsychology
 - University of Florida, Graduate program in Sustainable Development
 - Villanova, MS Biology
 - Stanford, Michigan, Neuroscience and Learning

- Some Integrated Studies students pursue law degrees at schools such as:
 - University of Virginia School of Law
 - University of Louisville Law School
 - Michigan School of Law
- Business students from the program often go on to get their MBA
- Military Science students often receive their ROTC Commission and one is currently serving as a first Lieutenant
- Students who study Behavioral Science often go on to pursue a MSW degree
- The Integrated Studies Program also graduates several students who go on to medical school
- For students who do not pursue advanced education of any kind, there are several examples of students who find work in their fields (e.g. students who study computer science find work in Information Technology jobs)

Criteria 3 – Institutional Data and Analysis

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of IS Majors	61	74	88	77	76
Graduates (Degrees Awarded)	28	31	35	40	43
Percentage of Sections Taught by Full Time Faculty	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Degrees Awarded per 100 Headcount (Retention appears to be well above other programs in our college.)	49	48	60	62	58

Median Years to Graduate: 6 Years

Criteria 4 – Student Learning

Program Learning Outcomes are taken from the Integrated Studies Department Mission Statement (see page 2) and are currently being formalized in the curriculum. Course learning outcomes are driven by the need to prepare students for their capstone projects and support the University-wide Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs).

The Integrated Studies Department is working on a restructuring which will allow for the creation of a 3-point evaluation model for student learning outcomes by taking measures of student knowledge during an introductory course, an IS topics course, and at the completion of a Capstone course.

In addition to this 3-point evaluation model, the IS program employs the assistance of an outside evaluator to review the undergraduate theses of our capstone students on a recurring basis. This has been instrumental to the planning of the Integrated Studies Department in the past, and will continue to inform the program's direction and goals in the future.

Criteria 5 – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths of the unit:

- Quality of faculty and support staff.
- Program rigor helps prepare students for the next step in their academic or professional career.
- Students are eager to participate in interdisciplinary work.
- The Integrated Studies journal, *Intersections*, has just published its 14th volume.
- Faculty productivity is especially high, with meaningful publications and research projects completed and regularly underway.

Areas for improvement:

- Preparedness of students for senior thesis project.
- Quality of senior theses.
- The Integrated Studies Program continues to be under-represented in the science emphases and will work to improve student's options.
- The program must adjust to meet the needs of adult students who have responsibilities to their families and jobs and cannot commit as much time as is needed for thesis writing and mentoring processes.

Challenges the unit faces in addressing the areas for improvement identified:

- The rigor of the program, and especially the capstone process, make it difficult for non-traditional students to accomplish their goals here.
- Online options and distance education in our program are limited, the Integrated Studies Program offers no online courses and the classes students are required to take in emphasis areas are rarely offered online.
- The Integrated Studies Program continues to struggle establishing a perceptual identity separate from Interdisciplinary Studies and University Studies.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- Improve student preparedness for their capstone project by creating a new course that will also play a key role in evaluating student learning outcomes at each level of the program.
- Help students find opportunities to network with IS alumni and take an active role in preparing students for grad school or for a career through advisor outreach and internship opportunities.
- Expand the emphasis options for students taking the Integrated Studies Degree by working with more programs on campus to create emphases in the sciences.
- Repair emphasis curriculum that is outdated in order to help our students be successful in their emphasis areas without the need for intervention from staff members.

Integrated Studies A.A. / A.S.

Criteria 1 – Description of Program, Changes since Last Program Review, Program Mission Statement

Same as Integrated Studies BA/BS.

Criteria 2 – Workforce Data and Demand

Same as Integrated Studies BA/BS, but with the limitation of students only having an associate degree.

Criteria 3 – Institutional Data and Analysis

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of IS Majors	50	82	82	99	83
Graduates (Degrees Awarded)	19	36	62	58	109
Percentage of Sections Taught by Full Time Faculty	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Median Years to Graduate: 3 Years

Criteria 4 – Student Learning

No specific assessment of student learning for AA/AS students exists at this time.

Criteria 5 – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Same as Integrated Studies BA/BS.

Department Summary

The Integrated Studies program offers a four-year interdisciplinary Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts course of study that enables students to combine two different disciplines into a solid interdisciplinary degree. Departments across UVU have designed 41 areas of emphasis that can be combined with the Integrated Studies core curriculum to create a wide variety of educational possibilities for students. Each emphasis area comes as a set of required and elective courses, approved by the departments that created them. Each Integrated Studies degree requires careful planning and coordination between students and their academic advisors from each emphasis area. The complex problems of today require thinking that is informed by the study of multiple disciplines. Integrated Studies students will demonstrate the ability to think across disciplines as they complete their Capstone Project, a thesis or project that uses the tools and knowledge of their emphasis areas and allows each student to work closely with expert faculty who specialize in each emphasis area.

Over the next five years, the primary goal of the Integrated Studies program is to improve the already high rate of retention and completion in the program by ensuring that students build the skills they need to be successful early in their academic careers and have opportunities to network with alumni and with their fellow Integrated Studies students. Programs that will build an alumni network for Integrated Studies students are expected to improve many aspects of the program, as well as allow students to achieve high levels of post-graduation success through various careers and graduate school opportunities that will be created by the rigor of the program and the active preparation of IS students through the advising system.

Over the next five years, the Integrated Studies program will also seek to develop its curriculum in order to create a more robust program with a stronger presence in the science and technology fields. Adding more emphases for students to choose from will allow students from all over campus more opportunities to craft their own multidisciplinary degrees that demonstrate each students' capacity for excellence and will prepare them for future opportunities.

A surge in the use of analytical research and internal auditing of systems and procedures has had a dramatic impact on the Integrated Studies Departments planning and performance in the past year. Policies put into place as a result of the information gathered have improved record keeping practices, eliminated barriers to student matriculation, retention, and scheduling, and provided valuable insight into the nature of various emphases within the Integrated Studies Program.

Finally, the Integrated Studies Program is on track, over the course of the next two years, to reach student levels similar to the healthiest years of the program in the last decade. As this happens, the program will be poised to take steps which will identify it as an exceptional program for student success and quality scholarship.

**Assessment of Senior Theses for the Program in Integrated Studies
at Utah Valley University
Friday, June 1, 2012**

Assessor: Dr. George Schoemaker (Ph.D. Indiana University, Folklore & Cultural Studies, currently eBusiness Project Manager and Business Analyst, Utah Division of Arts & Museums, State of Utah)

Questions to be addressed, based on a random sample of each thesis year:

Quality of research?
Quality of writing?
Quality of integration of disciplines?
Adherence to prescribed format and manual of style?
Use of primary and secondary sources?
Creativity?
Changes in quality year to year?

Six theses per year, specific notes on every third thesis read.

2009 Understanding the Abilities of the Disabled. Ellie Buckway. (52 pages)

- NO Approval page
- Table of Contents
- Abstract
- Not sure if this is a research-driven thesis or personal opinion piece on how mentally disabled are able to provide “help us all by their subconscious example to love, laugh, and accept. . . . but it comes as second nature to these individuals.”
- Is the author mentally challenged? What is her relationship to the community?
- Unclear thesis
- Unclear about what disciplines were selected to focus on and how they were integrated
- Focus of the thesis begins with the mentally challenged which would have been sufficient for the thesis scope, but then it introduces the elderly as a disabled group, obfuscating the focus of the thesis
- Citations use a fairly consistent punctuation style (MLA or APA);
- Citations are lacking page, or for internet sites, paragraph numbers
- Section headings provide a great “road map” to the structure of the argumentation
- Topic is engaging and integrates arguments from both Business and Science in a balanced manner
- Some of the arguments need better documentation, these are not “common knowledge” and I was looking for support
- Bibliography demonstrates great breadth and balance between digital and

conventional academic sources, and other “commercial” internet sites

- Good demonstration of research, but I was just not clear whether this was a research thesis or creative work (personal narrative)

2009 Branding of Mormon Elective Political Candidates and its Consequences: An Historical Analysis. William Swadley Jr. (36 pages)

- Approval page
- No Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- Great adherence to style, format, and structure
- Great presentation of ideas, focus on two Mormon presidential candidates, and historical trends of “Mormon branding” between Reed Smoot and Mitt Romney
- Great demonstration of research with adequate number of sources for a study of this kind
- Good demonstration of integration between Marketing and Religious Cultural Studies (for lack of a better term)

2009 Planning Communication and Marketing Strategies: Taking a Sociological Approach at Nu Skin. Steven Ronald Carlile. (98 pages)

- NO Approval page
- No Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- **What the hell is this?!!!** All I was able to see were 96 pages of marketing materials from Nu Skin and a two-page explanation of the author’s role in preparing those materials. Is this a creative work? Is there a new category of thesis? There is no original content and analysis of the material. The title page indicates that this is somehow the integration of Communications and Sociology. The Communications focus is apparent in marketing materials, but there is no research to demonstrate any kind of grounding within a tradition of marketing theory, and zero integration of a sociological framework in an attempt to demonstrate anything.

2009 Cryptozoology is a legitimate scientific filled worthy of the same level of attention and respect that any other science is allotted. Danny B Stewart. (99 pages)

- Approval page
- Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- **Glaring typo on Title Page** that completely obfuscates the description of the thesis.
- Clear thesis statement and explanation of research direction
- Great adherence to style, format, and structure
- Excellent demonstration of research with superior number of references (573) and

sources (approx 80) for a study of this kind

- Good demonstration of integration between History and Social Science, but it is not a stretch

2010 Speaking for a Silent People. Katrina Kindred Smith. (33 pages)

- Approval page
- Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- Clear thesis statement and direction of research
- Great adherence to style, format, and structure
- Devolves into personal narrative from her very good introduction and road map
- Good demonstration of integration between Community Health and Deaf Studies

2010 Biometrics: The Future of Payment and Key to Stopping Fraud. Todd Burnett. (40 pages)

- Approval page
- No Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- Clear thesis statement and direction of research
- Great adherence to style, format, and structure
- Unclear referents (this, these, those) to preceding ideas
- Unclear logical fallacy between many businesses having online presence “causing or creating” internet fraud. Shouldn’t “the economy” and unemployment be the catalyst for the rise in online fraudulent behavior?
- Great charts
- Good integration of Psychology (theoretical framework) and Business Management (online consumer fraud)

2010 Rushdie and a New Awakening to the World: A Reading of Salman Rushdie’s Life and Works. Preston Radford. (37 pages)

- Approval page
- No Table of Contents
- Abstract
- Clear thesis statement and direction of research
- Great adherence to style, format, and structure
- Good integration of Philosophy (theoretical framework) and Literature (novels of Salman Rushdie), but this integration is not a big stretch
- More than Adequate number of references to sound scholarship
- Engaging discussion and compelling arguments

2010 Making Every Drop Count: Economical and Environmental Benefits of Applying Technological Advances to the Western US Water Crisis. John Louis Strongo III. (21 pages)

- Approval page
- Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- WHOA! Single-spaced thesis? Really???
- Clear thesis statement and direction of research
- Adequate adherence to style, format, and structure
- Not an especially engaging or compelling read

2010 Psychological Effects of Breast Cancer. Virginia Van Patten. (25ish pages. No pagination really?)

- Approval page
- Creative Work, personal narrative with insights from research and reading that she has done about cancer
- Provocative read
- Not certain beyond the personal narrative if there was meant to be a point
- no adherence to style, format, and structure
- Is this a recycled paper from another course?

2010 Workplace Wellness for Obesity and Overall Health. Skyler Charles MacDonald. (35 pages)

- Approval page
- Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- Reads like an underclassman paper not a senior thesis. Too many short, choppy sentences, sweeping generalizations, and unsubstantiated claims
- Adequate adherence to style, format, and structure

2011 EGroup Text: A Community Engagement Texting Solution. Joshua A Heater. (80 pages)

- Approval page
- Table of Contents
- No Abstract but Executive Summary
- Basically a Business Plan for a startup company
- Is this a new category of thesis? Applied Thesis?
- Well researched, illustrated and well thought out

- Great adherence to style, format, and structure of a formal business plan

2011 Prophecies or Profit: Clashes of Native American Religion and Private Industry. Lucas Gallup. (47 pages)

- Approval page
- No Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- Clear thesis statement and direction of research
- Great adherence to style, format, and structure
- Good integration of Philosophy (theoretical framework) and Literature (novels of Salman Rushdie), but this integration is not a big stretch
- More than Adequate number of references to sound scholarship
- Engaging discussion and compelling arguments

2011 “The a la Menthe ou t’es Citron”: Problems in Translating French into English. Brycen Beck. (254 pages)

- Approval page
- Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- Clear thesis statement and direction of research
- Great adherence to style, format, and structure
- 26 pages of research and methodology behind translation of this play
- More than Adequate number of references to sound scholarship
- Would have liked to see more side-by-side translation comparisons excerpted from Appendices

2011 Student/Landlord Dispute Resolution. Bryan Kenneth Spuhler. (30 pages)

- Approval page
- No Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- Clear thesis statement and direction of research
- Great adherence to style, format, and structure
- Another Applied Thesis?
- Good focus
- Very engaging and well-written account of disputes between students and landlords
- Excellent documentation and supporting materials

2012 The Utah Tiger Muskellunge Project. Barry T Nielsen. (30 pages)

- Approval page
- Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- No pagination
- Clear thesis statement and direction of research
- Applied thesis on spawning Muskie with supporting documentation and illustrations

2012 Local Biases on Abstract Art and Classical Realism: A Fieldwork Approach Examining Trends in Visual Arts Education. Frances Robbins. (60 pages + appendices)

- Approval page
- Table of Contents
- No Abstract
- Clear thesis statement and direction of research, but begins thesis with a cliché. This practice is something I'd expect from a freshman writing course
- Great adherence to style, format, and structure
- Engaging and compelling read
- Great documentation and supporting materials
- Integrates personal narrative with her research
- Well-done.

Overall

- Wide varieties of topics from Cryptozoology and scrapbooking to health and business-related topics, and creative works of a graphic nature to personal narratives
- Still a wide disparity in quality, but with marked improvement overall—in other words—the good theses are really good, and while the really poor quality works still demonstrate a significant improvement from past years, I would have questioned whether the theses should pass the requirements, and yet they did. Passing a student based on poor performance will ultimately lower the overall quality and integrity of the program.
- Poor quality works by poor performers demonstrate a lack of supervision by advisors and faculty to meet regularly with students on theses progress
- Wondered about the originality of some of the theses or whether the papers had been “recycled” from other courses because of their lack of any clear attempts to integrate two disciplines
- Inconsistent page length. Is there a hard and fast requirement? Should there be? YES, students want to know what the least amount of work it will take to complete the task

Assessment Conclusions:

Senior theses from Utah Valley University (UVU), Integrated Studies Program were selected at random for semesters and terms occurring between the years 2009 through 2012. Compared to the previous three assessments performed on senior theses, the quality of research, writing, and compliance to prescribed styles for writing continues to improve steadily and significantly. It is clear that the faculty and administrators of the Integrated Studies Program have executed several of the recommendations from the previous assessments. Additionally, it is apparent that the quality of students attending UVU and participating in this program has risen. Both these factors contribute significantly to the increased quality of the senior theses.

While improved adherence to manuals of style has been more consistently enforced by faculty, there are still a few exceptions. The importance of adhering to the manuals begins in freshman writing courses, but falters in other courses requiring written work. Quite often in these courses, the faculty is unclear of writing expectations and grades are mostly based on content. This oversight of style and other mechanics signals to students that “it really does not matter”.

Continuous improvement in how well-integrated the topics or disciplines are in the theses has been clearly demonstrated over previous assessments. There were a few exceptions, but overall this concern demonstrated marked improvement. I attribute this improvement to more clear defined expectations being communicated to students. While this communication most likely takes place during consultations, it is also reinforced through the course syllabus. Here is an example taken from Nancy Rushforth’s syllabi and used in LI 511 taught by Scott Abbott:

The thesis should integrate the two emphases you have chosen for Integrated Studies. Each thesis should reflect serious academic research, clear and concise writing and should consist of an in-depth discussion and analysis of the topic. The length of the thesis should be determined by the topic and the disciplines involved. For instance, a thesis discussing a mathematical problem might be fully analyzed in a few pages, while a philosophical, theoretical thesis could take 30 pages to discuss. The thesis should include a clear statement of purpose or thesis statement, substantial supporting evidence for each assertion made, clear documentation of sources and a summary of the issues presented as a conclusion. The thesis should also include a works-cited section. Sources should include professional journals, books, articles, newspaper articles, documentaries, archives, personal interviews, etc. Internet sources may be used, but only with careful scrutiny as to original source and author and only to supplement other sources.

Recommendations

Expectations regarding thesis requirements have begun to improve and this clarity is reflected in the overall improved quality of writing. I will review previous recommendations and provide an evaluation of current status.

1. Development of Thesis Requirements

The development of Thesis Requirements should be based on three types of projects (or more as the case may be) so that these types of writing require similar kinds of rigor, discipline, research, and scholarship. These three types of projects might include, **Standard Research Thesis**, **Thesis Based on Primary Research**, and **Creative Thesis**. Some of the parameters might include:

- a bibliography demonstrating a balance of research in both areas of the integrated disciplines. The number of sources for a thesis should have an arbitrary measure (perhaps one to two unique sources for every page of writing). *Demonstrates considerable improvement.*
- A section discussing methodology for those theses which have primary research. *This section would be helpful for the reader to ascertain the how and why a particular approach was taken.*
- A section discussing an author's statement of purpose for a creative work, one grounded in some kind of theoretical framework
- Is there a common style manual that is expected of students or is it left to the discretion of the advisors? *It appears that there were primarily three manuals used, APA, MLA and Chicago. This issue has improved considerably.*
- *In the event of a Creative Thesis, is there a style manual to follow or a set of parameters that is expected by faculty? This particular type of theses needs better requirements and more explicit guidelines. A creative work is a major achievement, but how does it fulfill interdisciplinary integration? Perhaps in addition to the creative work, an analysis using integrated or comparative frameworks would provide the rigor required for the thesis requirement of the program. These requirements need to be clearly articulated. Are marketing materials created as part of a requirement of one's employment considered creative? If this type of thesis is acceptable, then there needs to be some kind of analytical framework equaling that of a research thesis.*

2. Performance Measures that Contribute to Raising Quality

While quantitative measures run counter to evaluation processes in the Humanities, in determining accreditation legislators and outside organizations speak this language and like metrics. There is a way to measure performance I renew recommendations below.

- Number of pages, number of poems, number of short stories, research sample, etc. all of these things can be measured and be included among

the thesis expectations to students/advisors

- Specific number of unique sources expected for a thesis of certain page ranges
- Demonstrated improvements in literacy skill levels in reading, in critical analysis, writing
- Implementation of a self-evaluation as part of the thesis process with guidelines to specific areas named above
- Assessing the value of doing the thesis: tracking and measuring students who have done the thesis and entered graduate school, what kinds of employment they entered, what kinds of scores they achieved on GRE, LSAT, GMAT, etc.
- Student exit surveys about the value of the thesis process in preparing them for other life activities
- Employment placement metrics
- Graduate and professional school acceptance rates metrics

Future Considerations

There seems to be a continued focus on traditional genres, communities and social conventions, most likely encouraged by faculty who are comfortable with those forms and topics. Technology has introduced a plethora of emerging and changing genres and communities that have no traditional dimensions of time and space or materiality. Virtual communities, social media communities, crowd-sourcing, etc await critical study and analysis. UVU students are right in the middle of this information revolution and there are scholars coming out with analytical critiques from several theoretical vantage points every week. Encouragement by faculty to explore these communities would push students to be more cognizant of their own roles in the changing world brought about by technological innovations. Including these communities as part of course materials would stimulate students to explore these communities in more depth.