

Frequently Asked Questions

M.S. in Computer Information Systems

Following are some of the most common queries that we receive concerning the Master of Science in Computer Information Systems (MS-CIS) program. If these FAQ's don't answer your questions, please contact the CIS Graduate Faculty Advisor via e-mail at WanY@uhv.edu or by calling 1-281-275-3375.

- **Can this degree be completed entirely online?**

Yes. We have made it possible for students in each of the four focus areas (see below for description of the focus areas) the option to do their entire curriculum fully online. However, we strongly encourage students to take the face-to-face sections, whenever possible.

But the focus area specialization courses we have listed are only recommendations, and are not mandatory to be followed exactly, as some students seem to think. Some of those courses may not be offered online, but you can complete the degree online taking other courses as they are offered toward specialization courses instead. All core courses and the integration course and enough specialization courses and electives will be offered in the online format.

- **Who enrolls in the MS-CIS program?**

1. Students with a baccalaureate degree in Computer Science, Information Systems, or a related field.
2. Students with a baccalaureate degree in another area who desire to develop new career skills in Computer Information Systems. These students will be required to take a number of leveling/prerequisite courses as determined by their background and experience.

Students enrolled in the MS-CIS program at University of Houston-Victoria bring various backgrounds and experiences to the classroom. This variety of experiences helps provide an active learning environment for students.

- **What are the different options or concentrations available in the program?**

We have planned twelve (12) specialization courses and organized them into three (3) focus areas, a fourth "general" option, and a thesis option. Each of the recommendations allows room for one-to-two courses as electives to be freely chosen by the student from any area of information systems. These focus areas may be turned into formal concentrations in the future. Additional courses may be offered in the future. The focus areas and suggested specialization courses in each are as follows. Deviations from these recommended lists are possible with advisor approval. In addition to these,

Special Topics (ISC 6300) classes will be offered from time to time on current topics, which may fit in one area or another.

We have made it possible for students in any of the focus areas the option to do their entire curriculum fully online. All but the two leveling courses, the entire core and the integration courses, and *most of the specialization courses* are available in the online format. However, students are encouraged to take the face-to-face sections, whenever possible.

1. **Information Systems and Database Management:** This focus area is intended to prepare students for leadership careers in the area of information systems development including web-based and database systems management.

Suggested specialization courses in this focus area are as follows (select 3-4):

- ISC 6329 Data Warehousing and Data Mining
- ISC 6337 Web Mining and Information Retrieval
- ISC 6357 Web Engineering
- ISC 6343 Intelligent Agents and Applications
- ISC 63XX Advanced IT Project Management
- MAS 6312 Multivariate Statistics

2. **System Administration and Management:** This focus area is intended to prepare students for leadership careers in system administration (often called the IT Department,) management of information systems functions, or a career in consulting that builds on expertise in one or more of these areas.

Suggested specialization courses in this focus area are as follows (select 3-4):

- ISC 6347 System Administration
- ISC 6353 Information Systems Security
- ISC 6351 Decision Support Systems
- ISC 6359 Advanced Computer Communication
- ISC 63XX Advanced IT Project Management

3. **Technology Management:** This focus area is intended to prepare students for careers in management of organizations/departments that involve intensive use of information technology.

Suggested specialization courses in this focus area are as follows (select 3-4):

- ISC 6353 Information Systems Security
- ISC 6357 Web Engineering
- ISC 63XX Advanced IT Project Management
- ISC 6320 Mobile, Ubiquitous and Pervasive Information Systems
- ISC 6337 Web Mining and Information Retrieval
- MAS 6312 Multivariate Statistics

4. **General Option:** A student may select a combination of specialization courses in his/her area of interest with advisor approval.
5. **Thesis Option:** Students in any of the above options have the option of writing a research-oriented thesis, in place of any two of the specialization courses in the student's focus area. This option is available for academically strong students wishing to advance their knowledge and, hopefully make a contribution, in a particular area of computer information systems. Approval for the thesis option by a faculty member, under whom the student has taken at least one course, and a minimum overall "B" average in the program, are required. Students approved for a thesis will register for the following courses, typically during two consecutive semesters in their second year of studies:

ISC 6308-6309 – Computer Information Systems Thesis Research

- **IS GRE required?**

Yes, GRE or GMAT is required, but a temporary graduate student can take up to 12 graduate hours (4 courses) prior to completing the GRE. Pre-requisite/leveling courses do not count towards the allowed 12 graduate hours.

For regular admission into the program an admissions index of 1,400 or higher is required, obtained by either of the following:

- a. GPA on at least the last 60 semester credit hours times 200
plus
GRE score (Verbal + Quantitative)
- or**
- b. GPA on at least the last 60 semester credit hours times 200
plus
GMAT score times 2

Applicants who already have a Masters degree are not required to submit GRE scores. However, the Dean of Arts and Science has to sign off on the application. So, barring a major problem with their previous Masters work, they will not require a GRE and the dean will sign off on it.

- **Where can I get information about the required exams (GMAT or GRE) - i.e. test locations and times**

Visit www.ets.org/gre for complete GRE information and www.mba.com for GMAT information.

- **What classes will be available from Victoria?**

The program can be completed fully online. A good portion of the classes we plan to offer online, a small number via ITV, and a handful of them face2face in Sugar Land.

- **Any exams would have to be taken in Sugar Land correct? Or could they be taken in Victoria with a proctor?**

I am pretty sure they may be taken in Victoria with a proctor.

- **What are the deadlines to apply?**

Students can apply for regular admissions for a semester any time through the first class day. Late registration and admission applications are approved on a case by case basis.

FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: The application deadline is June 1 for Fall semester students, and October 1 for Spring semester students. This means that all required documents must be received by Admissions by this date to provide ample time for processing. This deadline is for F-1 visa holders only. Applicants who hold other visas may be temporary graduates or conditionally approved for admission.

It is recommended that students apply for admissions as soon as possible to allow time for official transcripts to be received and all paperwork to be processed. All application materials are available online at www.uhv.edu, and also send the portfolio on your previous experience and coursework as mentioned below. For additional help with admission, you may contact the Office of Admissions and Records at Victoria at Admissions@uhv.edu, tel: (361) 570-4110 or toll free at (877) 970-4848, ext. 110. International students may contact Ms. Elois Kraatz at kraatz@uhv.edu, tel: (361) 570-4112, or tollfree at (877) 970-4848, ext. 112.

If a student intends to apply for financial aid it is important that they have their FAFSA (www.FAFSA.ed.gov) results sent to UHV. They will also be required to complete a UHV Scholarship Application that can be accessed on the Financial Aid website (<http://www.uhv.edu/ofa/>).

- **Will there be any scholarships/grants available for students enrolled in the MS-CIS program?**

We will have graduate assistantships and one or two graduate fellowships available. Scholarships are also available. Among them are several “Try UHV” (tuition and fee waiver for one course) scholarships for first time (to UHV) students. If you are an in-state resident student admitted into the MS-CIS program, and have not previously attended UHV, then the entire tuition and fees for the first course you take will be on us; it will be paid for by the “Try UHV” scholarship. However, please keep in mind that the “Try UHV” scholarships are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

If a student intends to apply for financial aid it is important that they have their FAFSA (www.FAFSA.ed.gov) results sent to UHV. They will also be required to complete a UHV Scholarship Application that can be accessed on the Financial Aid website (<http://www.uhv.edu/ofa/>).

- **If I am lacking some of the leveling coursework can I still take some of the graduate courses that are part of the program (for which I qualify) while completing my leveling courses so I can get started in the program with the understanding that I may not be allowed to continue with additional coursework beyond a certain limit until all leveling coursework is complete?**

Yes. You may take any course in the graduate program that you may have the prerequisite for. For example, a CS major with no business course work can start taking the computing courses that he/she has the prerequisites for in the MS-CIS program, and similarly a Business grad can start taking courses such as ISC 5325 IS policy & Strategy for which (s)he may have the prerequisites.

- **I have working knowledge of, but no degree or formal coursework in, some of the prerequisite courses. How do I request waiver or exemption for what I know?**

Documentation of prior learning which satisfies program prerequisite knowledge in part or full may be submitted to the CIS Graduate Program Advisor. This will be in the form of a portfolio of work for evaluation for exempting one or more prerequisite/leveling courses. Such work may include non-credit or non-academic course work, certifications held, and other demonstrated experience or knowledge in the subject area. Such exemption will be solely at the discretion of the CIS Graduate Program Advisor, and may involve interviews, tests, or contact of references. No such waiver for non-academic experience will be done for any part of the 36 semester hours beyond the prerequisite/leveling courses. If you have further questions about this, please contact Dr. Yun Wan, the CIS Graduate Faculty Advisor, via e-mail WanY@uhv.edu or by calling 1-281-275-3375. You may send the portfolio to him at University of Houston System at Sugar Land, 14000 University Boulevard, Sugar Land, TX 77479.

- **After reviewing the prerequisites list, I have determined that I have all of the prerequisites necessary except for the accounting classes. Is there anyway for me to get around the accounting prerequisite or will I be required to go back to the community college to take the two accounting classes there?**

You may take ACC 6351 at UHV and satisfy the ACC requirement instead of the 2-course sequence at a community college. Any upper division undergraduate ACC course will also suffice as a third possibility.

- **I have taken a few graduate courses in the subject that I would like to transfer. Can I? How many classes can I transfer into the program?**

You may transfer up to 25% of the needed credit hours (which translates to 3 courses) from another institution (50% if they are from another UH System university, or 6 courses.) There are some restrictions, see the UHV catalog for details.

- **I have a Masters degree in another field, is it possible for me to just take a few courses in the program, and not apply to the degree program?**

You could apply as “temporary non-degree seeking” grad student if this is what you want to do. But then you will only be able to take up to 12 hours (4 courses) that way. And graduate hours taken after the 12 hours may not be applicable to the degree requirements, if at a later date you want to get the degree. Lastly, non-degree seeking students are not eligible for financial aid.

For these and other reasons as well, I strongly encourage you to apply for regular admission to the MS-CIS program. It is a rather simple application, and UHV charges no application fee. The “Texas Common Application” is accessible at <http://www.uhv.edu/oar/admissionsinformation.asp>; and as a part of the application, official transcripts need to be sent over. You need not complete the degree and are free to take the courses that you want to take (subject to prerequisites or instructor permission, if lacking prerequisite.) Applicants who already have a Masters degree from an accredited university are not required to submit GRE scores, if the Dean of Arts and Science signs off on the application. If you have no Masters degree, then you can take up to 12 hours (4 courses) without GRE, and can have these hours counted a degree.

- **Please give me some information about the thesis option in the MS-CIS program. That is, how it works, requirements, its advantages & benefits, and risks.**

For general information on the thesis option, see above.

Process: If you want to do the thesis option, you would enroll in ISC 6308 and 6309 usually in two consecutive semesters. But before that you have to choose a thesis advisor, one of the CS faculty who knows you and whose research field is in your general area of interest. Then you would choose a thesis committee by requesting two other CS faculty to be members of such a committee; usually, this is decided by a discussion with the thesis advisor. In consultation with the thesis advisor, you would choose a thesis topic and work on it under his guidance. Toward the end of the second semester of the thesis course you would write the thesis and defend it to the Committee. See the catalog for other formalities in regard to the thesis.

Advantages, Risks etc. This is a great option to academically qualified and competent students. During the two semesters the student gets to do some research with the advisor and this can greatly benefit a Ph.D. admission later on, if the student so chooses that route. Even if Ph.D. is not in the student's plan, a thesis option can provide additional flexibility to the student who wants to plunge into an area and investigate it and study it deeply and, hopefully, make some contribution to it. An MS degree with a thesis option is highly valued by knowledgeable recruiters, because it stands for success and demonstrated ability on the part of the student in independent study, deeper investigation, critical analysis, and original thinking! All of these are valued skills in a number of responsible and creative positions. I see no risks at all for a good student.

I have a 3-year Bachelors degree from India and am interested to do my postgraduate studies at your institution. How do I proceed?

We have a “Three-year Bridge Program” which would allow you to enter our MS-CIS program. Here is the relevant portion from the revised admission requirements in the 2007-2008 catalog:

Program Admission under the “Three-Year Bachelor Bridge Program” option.

Graduates of three-year Bachelors degree programs who otherwise satisfy all the international admission requirements for the MS program in Computer Information Systems (MS-CIS,) and have the equivalent of a minimum 90 undergraduate semester credit hours, will be admitted as graduate students with the additional requirement that they must complete the Bridge program that would bring their total credit hours to the 122 hours required for a UHV Bachelor's degree. Completion of the Bridge program is necessary before the student can enroll in more than 18 graduate hours as required in the MS-CIS, not counting prerequisite and leveling courses.

Each student must satisfy the requirements of Sections I and II in the following, either by transfer credit or by UHV course work. Students admitted into the Bridge program must complete courses chosen under advisement from Section III to meet the total requirement of 122 hours.

The quality of a student's work must be kept at a 3.0 grade point average or better throughout the Bridge program. Courses in which the quality of work is lower than "C" must be repeated and no more than two "C"s may be applied toward the Bridge program. Courses may be repeated to achieve higher grades; in cases where courses have been repeated, both course grades remain on the transcript, but only the latest grade counts toward the grade point average for the degree. If a student's GPA falls below 3.0 during the Bridge program, the student will be placed on academic probation. Students on academic probation will be informed by the Dean of the School of Arts and Science of any conditions for removing the probationary status.

Section I. Required, 7 hours

- *Professional writing (ENG 3430)*
- *Advanced Public Speaking (COM 3325)*

Section II. Other Program Requirements, 21 hours

- *3 s.h. of Calculus, Discrete Structures, Discrete Mathematics, Operations Research, or Management Science*
- *3 s.h. of Statistics*
- *3 s.h. of Information Systems in Organizations*
- *3 s.h. of Principles of Management*
- *3 s.h. of upper division or graduate Accounting, or 6 s.h. of lower division Principles of Accounting I and II*
- *6 s.h. of programming and data structures using an object-oriented programming language.*

Section III. Selected by advisement

Any additional courses needed to total a minimum of 122, taken from upper division ISC or MAS courses.

Prepared by Dr. M. Damodaran, updated on 8/28/2008.