ISDS PhD program

I. Introduction

The purpose of this posting is to document the policies and procedures followed by the Information Systems and Decision Sciences (ISDS) Department in admitting and serving graduate students. It also includes certain Graduate School requirements which apply to all departments. The information contained here is not designed to supplant the LSU Graduate Catalog, and students are responsible for knowing current Catalog rules and regulations, especially various calendar deadlines. The following pages have been written for the benefit of those desiring to either a major or minor in ISDS.

Among the ISDS PhD program’s strengths are:

- A limited and selective enrollment that provides students opportunities to develop personal and professional ties with faculty and fellow students;
- Opportunities to work with faculty actively engaged in a wide range of on-going research projects, the results of which are published in leading academic and practitioner journals;
- Admitted students generally receive a competitive level of funding through departmental research or teaching assistantships. Students are also eligible for fellowships and other awards offered by the LSU Graduate School.
- A culture of collegiality that encourages students to work with multiple faculty and PhD students across different fields;
- Access to an extensive range of library resources, computerized and on-line databases, and statistical software for classroom applications and research;
- Access to the cultural riches of Baton Rouge (the state capital) and nearby New Orleans;
- Graduates typically accept employment at major colleges and universities in the US and abroad. Recent graduates have held positions at Cornell University, Louisiana Tech, University of South Florida, University of Louisiana – Lafayette, Southeastern University, Texas State University, Concordia University (Canada), IESE (Spain), among others.

II. Philosophy and Intent

The PhD is the terminal degree awarded in Business Administration at the Louisiana State University. As such, it is the highest degree that can be earned within the ISDS Department. Consequently, individuals must demonstrate an extraordinary devotion to scholarship and exhibit a mastery of research methodology and ISDS concepts and theories to be considered candidates for the PhD.

The primary mission of the PhD in Business Administration with a major in ISDS is to develop trained professionals who are qualified to instruct in a university environment and who are capable of conducting scholarly research. All candidates are required to demonstrate broad knowledge in the domain of ISDS as well as a detailed knowledge in a focused area of concentration within ISDS. The broad domain is represented by knowledge of Information Systems, Decision Sciences and Operations Management. The focused area of concentration can be selected from either 1) information systems or 2) operations management. Sample areas that students might focus their research on could be: information systems development, management of the IS function, outsourcing, technology adoption models, service oriented IT architectures, cloud computing, etc.
III. Admissions

Individuals desiring admission must make formal application to the university Office of Admissions. The following information should accompany all applications submitted to the graduate school: transcript(s) of undergraduate study, transcript(s) of all graduate work attempted or completed, GMAT score, TOEFL score (if an international student) and a statement of purpose. If Graduate School criteria are met, the documents will be sent to the E.J. Ourso College of Business for additional processing and to the ISDS Department’s PhD Policy and Admissions Committee for a final admission decision. The following materials should be submitted to the department: letters of recommendation, copies of transcripts, and a statement of purpose. The statement of purpose submitted to the department and graduate school should include:

- Career objectives and reasons for wanting to pursue a PhD;
- How has the applicant’s academic or professional background prepares them for PhD studies;
- Reasons for selecting the ISDS program at LSU;
- As best as possible, an outline of possible research interests;
- Any other information that may assist the department in their admission decision

To be considered for admission within the College and the Department, applicants should have successfully completed course work equivalent to the MBA or MS in ISDS. In general, a minimum GPA of 3.5 should have been maintained on prior graduate work and a score of 600 or above must have been achieved on the GMAT. Applicants who have graduated from non-U.S. institutions must take the TOEFL examination and receive a minimum score of at least 550; furthermore, applicants should display English language proficiency. Satisfaction of these threshold standards, however, does not guarantee admission. Final admission decisions will reflect a consideration of all relevant documents, as well as current Department resources.

The ISDS Department uses a rolling admission process. The application deadline is March 1 for fall admissions.

IV. Phases

The PhD program at LSU, similar to most other research-oriented schools, has three distinct phases: (1) course work, (2) general exams, and (3) the writing of a dissertation and its oral defense. Each of these phases is covered below.

V. Course work

After students have been accepted in the PhD program, they should schedule an interview with the Department’s Graduate Advisor before or during registration of their first semester of study. At this meeting, the Graduate Advisor will advise the student regarding course work to be taken during the first semester.

During the first year of study, all students will take a Qualifying Examination. This examination will be oral and will be administered by each student’s Advisory Committee. This examination serves two distinct purposes: (1) to determine whether a student is qualified to continue work on the doctorate in ISDS, and (2) to determine course work.

It is the individual student’s responsibility to request this examination. The request should be directed to the student’s Major Professor. Individual students, with the advice of their Major Professor, will arrange the examination. Care should be taken to schedule the examination sufficiently early in the Fall or Spring semester to permit the student to earn residency credit (See residency requirements in the Graduate Catalog).
As students pursue their course work, they will be expected to consult with their Major Professor (or the Graduate Advisor, if necessary) concerning academic or other problems that might arise, especially if any changes are to be requested in their program of study. The precise set of courses the student will take will be determined by the student's committee in accordance within departmental policies.

VI. General Examination

The General Examination consists of written and oral portions. Students who have completed all required course work are eligible to take the General Examination. After students have successfully completed the General Examination and an independent research project, they are admitted to candidacy for the PhD and begin to work on their dissertation. If a student does not complete the dissertation within four years of passing the General Examination, it must be retaken.

VII. Dissertation

The doctoral committee must be comprised of at least four members of the graduate faculty, including the Major Professor, who acts as chair. Doctoral committees must include a minimum of two graduate faculty members from the major department, at least one of whom must be a full member. The remaining members may be from the major department or may be from other departments pertinent to the student's area of concentration, with the proviso that at least one of the remaining members must be a full member of the graduate faculty. Any declared outside minors require representation either from among the first five members of the committee or by additional appointments to it.

After students have prepared a formal dissertation proposal, they present the proposal to the committee Chair for approval. With the Chair's approval, students may schedule a formal defense of the proposal before their entire committee. Students are responsible for arranging the date and time of the proposal defense, and inviting the ISDS faculty to attend. A copy of the proposal should be deposited with the department's Administrative Assistant five school days prior to the defense. The committee will approve the proposal in writing, or state in writing why the proposal is rejected. If rejected, the procedure is started over.

Students are responsible for scheduling the final examination, which is primarily a defense of the dissertation, at least three weeks in advance. They are responsible also for notifying the ISDS faculty of the date, time, and place of the exam at least two weeks prior to the date of the exam. Students shall be judged to pass the examination if not more than one member of the Dissertation Committee dissents. Results of the examination shall be reported to the Graduate School by the Chair. The Graduate Advisor must also be notified of examination results.

VIII. Selected Graduate School Rules

1. All students who have been admitted to the doctoral program are required by the Graduate School to register full-time each semester in order to stay in good standing.

2. Students with graduate assistantships, are required to sign up for 9 hours per Fall and Spring semester. If they also receive Summer assistantship, they are further required to sign up for 6 hours during the Summer semester. Students with fellowships are required to sign up for 9 hours per Fall and Spring semester and 6 hours per Summer semester.

3. A minimum of 9 hours of dissertation credit is required for the PhD degree.

4. If a student is aiming at a particular graduation date, the finished dissertation must be in the hands of the dissertation committee at least three weeks in advance of the date established by the Graduate School as the final day for submitting dissertations to the Graduate School.

5. At least one year must elapse between the passage of the oral comprehensive and the acceptance of the dissertation by the Graduate School.
IX. Orientation Guide

Although this guide offers useful information about the PhD program at LSU, there are always questions not answered in a standard guide, and each doctoral student has special needs. When questions arise, please seek help from the Graduate Advisor, other faculty members and/or fellow students.

- Length of Study

Most students should plan on spending four years in the program. Course work typically takes two full years; for example, 3 courses each in Fall and Spring semesters the first year, 2 courses in the Summer, then 3 courses each in Fall and Spring the second year to complete the minimum courses. Students who have taken such a schedule usually prepare for their Comprehensive Exam during their second Summer and sit for the exam in early Fall. Most doctoral students seek academic careers, and the central market for academic placement occurs a full year before positions are actually available.

- Sequence of Course work

Course work is usually sequenced as follows: Entering students tend to concentrate on research methods courses because they have not selected a supporting field. They also must take the four core ISDS doctoral-level seminars offered, usually only one per semester. In the first two semesters, then, a student would take 2 ISDS doctoral core courses, typically 2-3 research methodology courses, and 1 or 2 ISDS courses supporting their minor concentration. The second year of course work contains the balance of the ISDS doctoral core courses, research methodology, supporting field and ISDS course work, often including at least one independent study course to pursue special interest areas. Of course, all of this depends on how quickly you choose a supporting field and on the availability of courses.

- Research Assistantships

Research assistantships are an important part of your program because they provide “on the job training.” As mentioned above, you are expected to show initiative in research assistant duties. Also, you should expect to receive training via your assistantship. Assuming adequate progress in the PhD program is being made, research assistantships are renewed annually for up to four years.

A half-time research assistantship involves twenty hours of effort per week during the semester. The workload usually varies across the semester, though, so that some weeks require more time and some less.

X. Minor in ISDS

0. Students minoring in ISDS must take 12 hours of 5000 level or higher courses. At least six hours must be ISDS PhD core courses, i.e., 7950, 7080, 7081.
1. Students with a major outside the E. J. Ourso College of Business may be required to enroll in one or more remedial courses before taking other courses in the Department.
2. Students minoring in ISDS and with a GPA less than 3.5 in ISDS courses shall be required to take a four-hour written exam designed and evaluated by their Minor Professor.
3. The evaluation of the written exam shall be reported to the Graduate Advisor in the student’s major department rather than to the student.
XI. ISDS PhD program courses and course requirements

**Ph.D. Prerequisite Courses**
All students are expected to have completed the following prior to their PhD (or in the first year): 1) business breadth courses (equivalent of an MBA); and 2) elementary courses in Statistics (such as ISDS 7000 – Statistical Theory or EXT7003 – Experimental Statistics), and Information Systems (such as BADM 7050 (or ISDS 7050) – Information Systems).

In addition, students must be able to show mastery of the contextual knowledge of information systems; in particular students must have an understanding of how information systems and their associated technologies are used within organizations. Such knowledge could come from courses such as ISDS 7510 – Database Management; ISDS 7520 – Network Information Systems; ISDS 7530 – Information Systems Analysis and Design; and ISDS 7535 – Information Systems Management. If the doctoral student already has an undergraduate or graduate degree in ISDS or an MBA with a concentration in ISDS, it is expected that they would possess such mastery of IS. In some cases, it might be necessary for the student to show that they possess this contextual knowledge by taking an exam in each specific area. This test will be created by the faculty and must be completed by the end of the first year (this must be completed before a student may take comprehensive examinations).

**Major Field – ISDS PhD Core Courses (12 hours)**
Students are expected to take all of the following courses:
- ISDS 7950 - Philosophy of Science
- ISDS 7080 - Survey of IS Literature
- ISDS 7950 - Methodological Choices in IS Research
- ISDS 7081 - Critical Analysis of IS Research

These doctoral courses are intended not only to provide a detailed overview of the field of information systems but also to describe the professional responsibilities of a faculty member. Students will read, summarize, and critique a wide assortment of research papers that fall within the broad rubric of information systems research. They will also be exposed to the research interests of individual members of our faculty. They will see dissertation proposals, dissertations, papers from dissertations, reviews of papers, and so on. They will have opportunities to review papers and learn how editorial processes operate. They will learn about tenure, evaluations, external reviews, university governance, curriculum development, knowledge of the field’s journals, conferences, and associations, and the many other facets that make up the skill set of a well-rounded faculty member. They will also learn about the philosophical underpinnings of research and research methods.

**Minor Field (9 hours)**
Students must select nine hours from within the ISDS department. The choice of the courses will depend on the student’s specific research interests and will be decided upon in consultation with the student’s advisor.

**Research Methodology (12 hours)**
Students are expected to take at least four methodology courses. Possible courses include:
- ISDS 7022 - Multivariate methods
- ISDS 7021 - Survey design
- ISDS 7920 - Structural Equation Modeling
- ISDS 7025 - Experimental design
- ISDS 7024 - Regression
- ISDS 7920 - Qualitative methods
- Psychology 7117 - Advanced Research Methods and Design
- Management 9201 - Research Methods I
Supporting Field (6 hours)
Students need to take a minimum of six hours in a supporting field which they draw upon in their research. The depth and breadth of understanding required depends on the student's specific research interests, and will be determined in consultation with the student’s advisor. The supporting field must come from outside the ISDS department. Supporting fields may be found inside the Ourso College of Business (Finance, Accounting, Management, Marketing, etc.) or outside the College (Sociology, Psychology, Engineering, Computer Science, etc.).

Other Requirements
- Professional development activities (paper reviews, ICIS/AMCIS conference attendance, etc.)
- Teaching requirements: Teach ISDS 2000, 2001, 3100, 3110, 3115, 4120 or 4125 class (after 18 hours of PhD course credit)
- Dissertation credits: 12hrs.+ ISDS 9000