

# INDIVIDUALIZED STUDY, BIS

Banner Code: LA-BIS-INDV

A253 Robinson Hall  
Fairfax Campus

Website: [bis.gmu.edu/programs/la-bis-indv](http://bis.gmu.edu/programs/la-bis-indv)

The Bachelor of Individualized Study (BIS) Program at George Mason University is an undergraduate degree completion program with a 42-year history of serving adult students. The program combines an interdisciplinary academic framework and a writing-intensive, research-based curriculum to provide students with individualized degree plans. The BIS Program offers students intensive support services, course flexibility, and generous transfer credit options. Students create interdisciplinary concentrations to meet their own educational needs: to advance in their current employment, to prepare for graduate or professional programs, or to plan a path toward a career change.

## Admissions & Policies

### Admissions

Students who are interested in the bachelor of individualized study degree must attend an information session. In addition to applying to Mason through the Office of Admissions, they need to apply separately to the BIS Program. The schedule of BIS information sessions and the BIS application are available on the BIS Program website (<http://bis.gmu.edu>).

### Eligibility

Adult transfer applicants, age 25 or older may be considered for the BIS only with the following minimum criteria:

1. 12 credits of transferable college coursework as determined by the Office of Admissions
2. Cumulative collegiate grade point average of 2.00+

Admission is directly to BIS with no change to another major without reapplying. The concentration in early childhood education studies is an exception to the age requirement.

### Policies

Students pursuing a bachelor of individualized study must meet the baccalaureate degree requirements for all undergraduates: they need to complete 120 credits with 45 credits at or above the 300 level and at least 30 credits at Mason.

BIS students may elect to take a minor in addition to their BIS concentration. 15 credits of the minor must be applied uniquely to the minor and not to the concentration. For students pursuing the concentration in early childhood studies, the minor is required for the degree.

For policies governing all undergraduate degrees, see AP.5 Undergraduate Policies.

### Credit for Nontraditional Modes of Learning

The BIS program allows students to receive college credit for learning acquired through a variety of nontraditional methods indicated below. The maximum allowable credits are indicated for each category.

- Nationally recognized exam programs such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) when the particular exam has been approved for Mason credit: See CLEP Examination for an approved list. A maximum of 45 maximum credits can be earned through exams. After matriculation, students are limited to taking and applying credits for the CLEP exam in "Information Systems and Computer Applications". Students with a qualifying score on this exam will be awarded credit for IT 104T. Students receiving credit for IT 104T must still meet the university information technology ethics requirement (see Mason Core section of this catalog). Credit for other CLEP exams awarded after matriculation may not be applied.
- Certain university approved industry, government, or military training credits if such credits are indexed and recommended as college-level credit by the American Council on Education (ACE). To be eligible for Mason credit, training and course specifics must exactly match what is in the ACE guide and be approved for Mason credit. The specific credits must also be approved by the program director and the dean. A maximum of 45 credits can be earned through ACE-approved training. A maximum of 60 total combined credits can be accepted for exams and ACE-approved training. For example, if 45 credits are accepted by ACE-approved training, a maximum of 15 credits can be accepted for exams. Students may not take these courses for credit once they have matriculated at Mason.
- Experiential learning demonstrated by portfolios subject to approval by the program director and the dean (30 maximum credits).
- College-level credit earned at institutions accredited by bodies other than recognized regional accrediting organizations subject to approval by the program director and the dean. These credits can only be considered if the institution is listed in *Accredited Institutions of Postsecondary Education* published by ACE (30 maximum credits) and only if they are taken before the student matriculates at Mason.

Students may not pursue credit for options 1, 2, and 4 once they have matriculated at Mason. They must complete the third option within their first 30 credits after matriculation. Although the types of credit noted above may be applied to a bachelor of individualized study degree, if a BIS student changes majors, credit awarded in these ways cannot be used toward other majors. These nontraditional credits are not transferable to other degree programs at Mason.

## Requirements

### Degree Requirements

Total credits: minimum 120

Students should be aware of the specific policies associated with this program, located on the Admissions & Policies tab.

Students pursuing a bachelor of individualized study degree must complete four required courses and one concentration.

## Core Courses in the Major

Students must complete each of the four core courses with a minimum grade of 2.00.

In BIS 390 The Research Process (or BIS 391 The Research Process for Honors for students pursuing honors in the major), students develop a project proposal. An approved proposal from BIS 390 The Research Process or BIS 391 The Research Process for Honors is a prerequisite to enroll in BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core).

In BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), students complete a senior capstone project that varies according to the individual program of study. It may be an investigative or creative project, and must be appropriate to the student's interdisciplinary concentration. This course requires significant writing and fulfills the Mason Core synthesis requirement. It is a research intensive course designated RS by OSCAR. The project is evaluated by the BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core) instructor in consultation with the student's faculty mentor and others as determined by the BIS director.

BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core) and BIS 491 Senior Project Presentation are taken concurrently when no more than 6 credits remain in the concentration.

BIS 300	Understanding Interdisciplinary Studies	3
BIS 390 or BIS 391	The Research Process The Research Process for Honors	3
BIS 490	RS: Senior Project (Mason Core)	3
BIS 491	Senior Project Presentation	1
Total Credits		10

## Concentrations in the Major

Students must complete one concentration of 24-42 credits. Of the credits applied to the concentration, at least 15 credits must be at the 300 level or above and a maximum of 6 credits can have grades of C- or D (grades below 2.00). The total credits applied to the concentration must represent a minimum GPA of 2.00.

Courses applied to a concentration may not also be used to fulfill Mason Core requirements.

### Individualized Concentration (IND)

Students may do an individualized concentration to meet their own academic needs and interests. The concentration is developed in close consultation with BIS staff and a faculty mentor. Students may incorporate into their individualized concentrations up to 9 credits of previously earned college course work or previously earned nontraditional credit from other institutions. In addition to the 4 core courses, students complete between 24 and 36 credits, depending on the topic and the student's preparation.

Select 24 to 36 credits from a minimum of two disciplines	24-36
Total Credits	24-36

Students are encouraged to include UNIV 304 Bachelor Individualized Studies Transfer Transition in the concentration. Students are also encouraged to include BIS 489 Directed Readings and Research and complete it before taking BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core).

### Concentration in Early Childhood Education Studies (ECES)

This concentration offers students holding a Northern Virginia Community College associate's degree in applied science in early

childhood development the opportunity to obtain a BIS in early childhood education studies and a minor in business or other relevant minor. This concentration does not lead to teacher licensure in early childhood education.

To receive this concentration, students complete a minimum of 34 credits beyond the associate's degree in addition to the four core BIS courses, electives, and Mason Core requirements needed to reach at least 120 credits.

### Admission Requirements

Students are eligible for this concentration if they have an associate's degree in applied science in early childhood development. Unlike the individualized concentration, there is no age restriction regarding admission into this BIS concentration.

### Interdisciplinary Courses

#### Human Growth and Development

EDUC 302	Human Growth and Development	3
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#### Course Focused on Diverse Young Learners

ECED 402	Foundations of Language and Literacy for Diverse Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Learners	3
or ECED 403	Inclusive Curriculum for Young Learners: Planning Instruction and Guidance	

#### Linguistic Development of Infants and Toddlers

ECED 422	Developing Language, Literacy, and Communication of Diverse Infants and Toddlers	3
or ECED 423	Early Intervention for Infants Toddlers with Disabilities: Collaborative Consultative Approaches	

#### Research Methods

GOVT 300	Research Methods and Analysis (Mason Core)	4
or SOCI 303	Methods and Logic of Inquiry	

#### Electives at the 300-400-level

Select 6 credits of electives relevant to the concentration in consultation with their faculty mentor	6
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Total Credits	19
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## Optional Self-Selected Minor

Select 15-23 credits of self-selected minor	15-23
Total Credits	15-23

## Mason Core

BIS students complete a modified Mason Core program of 36 credits. The Mason Core requirements may include courses not listed here; consult the BIS program for more information. Courses used to meet the Mason Core requirements cannot be used to meet a requirement for a concentration.

Students pursuing the concentration in early childhood education studies meet Mason Core requirements as specified in the advising agreement between NVCC and Mason.

### Mason Core for Early Childhood Education Studies Concentration NVCC Coursework

ENGH 101	Composition (Mason Core) (lower level written communication)	3
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COMM 100	Public Speaking (Mason Core) (oral communication)	3
Social Sciences		6
MATH or STAT		3
Information Technology		3
<b>Mason</b>		
ENGH 302	Advanced Composition (Mason Core) (upper level written communication)	3
Natural Science		3-4
Humanities (including 3 credits of arts)		6
Social Science		3
BIS 490	RS: Senior Project (Mason Core) (synthesis)	3
Total Credits		36-37

### Mason Core for Individualized Concentration

#### English Composition

ENGH 101	Composition (Mason Core)	3
ENGH 302	Advanced Composition (Mason Core)	3
Total Credits		6

#### Humanities

Select three courses from the following:	9
Any ARTH course	
Any AVT course	
Any COMM course	
Any DANC course	
Any ENGH course <sup>1</sup>	
Any MUSI course	
Any PHIL course <sup>2</sup>	
Any RELI course	
Any THR course	
Any course from a foreign language department	
Total Credits	9

<sup>1</sup> Except for ENGH 100 Composition for Multilingual Writers (Mason Core), ENGH 101 Composition (Mason Core), ENGH 302 Advanced Composition (Mason Core)

<sup>2</sup> Except for PHIL 173 Logic and Critical Thinking, PHIL 376 Symbolic Logic

#### Social and Behavioral Science

Select three courses from the following:	9	
Any ANTH course		
Any CRIM course		
Any ECON course		
Any GGS course <sup>1</sup>		
Any GOVT course		
Any HIST course		
Any LING course		
Any PSYC course		
Any SOCI course		
WMST 200	Introduction to Women and Gender Studies (Mason Core)	
Total Credits		9

<sup>1</sup> Except for GGS 102 Physical Geography (Mason Core), GGS 309 Meteorology and Climate

#### Mathematics or Statistics

Select one course from the following:	3	
MATH 106	Quantitative Reasoning (Mason Core) (or any MATH course above 106)	
STAT 250	Introductory Statistics I (Mason Core)	
Total Credits		3

#### Information Technology

Select one from the following:	3	
IT 104	Introduction to Computing (Mason Core)	
Any course that fulfills the Mason Core IT proficiency requirement (all components including ethics)		
Total Credits		3

#### Natural Science

Select any 3-4 credit lab or non lab course from the following:	3-4	
Any ASTR course		
Any BIOL course		
Any CHEM course		
Any CLIM course		
Any EVPP course		
Any GEOL course		
Any PHYS course		
CONS 401	Conservation Theory	
GGS 102	Physical Geography (Mason Core)	
GGS 309	Meteorology and Climate	
INTS 301	Science in the News	
INTS 318	Exploring Virginia's Watersheds	
INTS 395	Field-Based Work	
INTS 401	Conservation Biology	
Total Credits		3-4

#### Synthesis Course

BIS 490	RS: Senior Project (Mason Core)	3
Total Credits		3

#### Additional Electives

Any remaining credits may be completed with electives to bring the degree total to 120.

## Honors

### Honors in the Major

Highly-qualified students may apply to graduate with honors in the major. Students should apply the semester before they intend to enroll in BIS 390 The Research Process. If accepted, students must complete BIS 391 The Research Process for Honors in place of BIS 390 The Research Process, in addition to an individualized section of BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core). To graduate with honors in the major, students must complete these two courses with a minimum GPA of 3.50, maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.75, and successfully present

their research during the Senior Capstone Project presentations (by earning a grade of 2.0 or better in BIS 491 Senior Project Presentation)

## Accelerated Master's

The accelerated master's programs in the list below specify the individualized study BIS as a feeder degree for their programs. It is important to note, however, that many accelerated master's programs are available for any bachelor's degree at Mason, including this one. See the full list of master's degrees with accelerated programs at George Mason

## Individualized Study, BIS/Applied Information Technology, Accelerated MS Overview

Highly-qualified students in the Individualized Study, BIS have the option of obtaining an accelerated Applied Information Technology, MS.

For more detailed information, see AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees. For policies governing all graduate degrees, see AP.6 Graduate Policies.

### Application Requirements

Applicants to all graduate programs at George Mason University must meet the admission standards and application requirements for graduate study as specified in Graduate Admissions. Mason undergraduate students in the BIS Program can apply in the semester in which they will have completed 90 or more credits (including 15 Mason resident credits) applicable toward the BIS. Students must have an overall GPA of at least 3.30 to apply to the program. Criteria for admission are identical to criteria for admission into the MS in AIT Program, except that students do not need to have completed an undergraduate degree prior to acceptance into the accelerated program.

### Reserve Graduate Credit

Students may take up to 6 additional graduate credits as reserve graduate credit. These credits do not apply to the undergraduate degree. The ability to take courses for reserve graduate credit is available to all high achieving undergraduates with the permission of the department. Permission to take a graduate course for reserve graduate credit is normally granted only to Mason seniors within 15 hours of graduation.

To apply these credits to the master's degree, students must request that the credits be moved from the undergraduate degree to the graduate degree using the Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Transition Form (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms>).

### Accelerated Option Requirements

Students in the accelerated master's option must maintain a minimum 3.30 GPA in the undergraduate segment until they have satisfied all requirements for the BIS degree. On completion and conferral of the undergraduate degree they submit the Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Transition Form (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms>) and are admitted to graduate status.

As graduate students, accelerated master's students have an advanced standing. Students must complete all credits that satisfy requirements of the BIS program and those of the MSAIT program, with two courses overlapping from the courses necessary to earn the BIS with a

concentration IND (individualized), applied information technology emphasis as listed below.

Note: All of the prerequisite courses indicated below must be passed with a grade of C or higher.

### Emerging Technologies

Code	Title	Credits
AIT 597	Developing IT Leaders of Integrity	3
GBUS 540	Analysis of Financial Decisions	3
Total Credits		6

### Cyber Security

Code	Title	Credits
AIT 673	Cyber Incident Handling and Response	3
ISA 650	Security Policy	3
Total Credits		6

### Intelligence Technologies

Code	Title	Credits
Select two from the following:		6
AIT 675	Overview of the National Intelligence Community	
AIT 676	Intelligence Technologies, Research and Development in the Intelligence Community	
AIT 677	Intelligence Analysis Methods	
AIT 678	National Security Challenges	
Total Credits		6

## Individualized Study, BIS/Telecommunications, Accelerated MS Overview

Highly-qualified students in the Individualized Study, BIS have the option of obtaining an accelerated Telecommunications, MS.

For more detailed information, see AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees. For policies governing all graduate degrees, see AP.6 Graduate Policies.

### Admission Requirements

Students in the Individualized Study, BIS program may apply for this option if they have earned 90 undergraduate credits (including 15 Mason resident credits) with an overall GPA of at least 3.25. Criteria for admission are identical to criteria for admission to the Telecommunications, MS program.

### Accelerated Option Requirements

Students must complete all requirements for the BIS and MS programs, with 6 credits overlap.

Students select TCOM courses from the list below to meet the requirements of the accelerated program. Six credits of TCOM courses will be applied to meet the requirements of both the BIS and MS TCOM programs. An additional three credits of TCOM courses is required for the BIS Individualized Concentration (IND) with emphasis on telecommunication. Note that accelerated students can only take the

courses in the list below if they passed the listed prerequisite course with a B or higher.

## BIS Concentration

Total credits: 34-46

Students who are pursuing the Individualized Study, BIS, Individualized concentration (IND) with an emphasis on telecommunications must take:

Code	Title	Credits
Select an additional 500-level TCOM course(s) from the list below		3
BIS 300	Understanding Interdisciplinary Studies	3
BIS 390	The Research Process	3
BIS 490	RS: Senior Project (Mason Core)	3
BIS 491	Senior Project Presentation	1
ECE 301	Digital Electronics	3
IT 341	Data Communications and Network Principles	3
TCOM 500	Modern Telecommunications	3
Select additional courses related to telecommunication <sup>1</sup>		9-21
Total Credits		31-43

<sup>1</sup> Required to reach the necessary number of credits for the BIS Individualized concentration.

## Telecommunications Courses

Code	Title	Credits
TCOM 500	Modern Telecommunications	3
TCOM 505	Networked Multicomputer Systems	1.5
TCOM 510	Client-Server Architectures and Applications	1.5
TCOM 530	Data Communications Fundamentals	3
TCOM 535	The TCP/IP Suite of Internet Protocols	3
TCOM 551	Digital Communication Systems	3
TCOM 607	Satellite Communications	3
TCOM 608	Optical Communications Systems	3
TCOM 631	Voice Over IP	3

Note:

Accelerated students who have passed IT 341 Data Communications and Network Principles with a grade of B or higher will not be required to take TCOM 530 in the Telecommunications, MS core. Other TCOM courses may be approved on a case-by-case basis.

See each course for individual prerequisite requirements.

## Degree Conferral

Students must apply the semester before they expect to complete the BIS requirements to have the BS degree conferred. In addition, at the beginning of the student's final undergraduate semester, students must complete a Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Transition form that is submitted to the Office of the University Registrar and the VSE Graduate Admissions Office. At the completion of MS requirements, a master's degree is conferred.