



Program Goals and Priorities

2018/19 – 2021/22

Introduction

The School of Information Studies (ÉSIS) was established in 2009, following approval by the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies and the University of Ottawa Senate for the creation of a Master of Information Studies (MIS) program and a Graduate Diploma in Information Studies (GDIS). That same year, ÉSIS completed the hiring of its first professors and welcomed its initial cohort of students. Since that time, we have continued to work closely with our community, remaining responsive to their needs as we carry out our mandate to serve Canada's bilingual and bicultural information market, with a particular focus on the requirements of the National Capital Region. The MIS program offered by the School of Information Studies was granted initial accreditation by ALA in 2014, for a period of seven years.

The school has defined its mission as follows:

ÉSIS is a centre of research and teaching excellence that offers a competitive professional education based on a comprehensive understanding of the theory and practice of the production, collection, organization, retrieval, transformation and management of data, information and knowledge. ÉSIS fosters a learning environment that prepares information professionals in the 21st century to assume leadership and research roles for the benefit of citizens in Canada's bilingual and multi-cultural knowledge-based economy and information society.

The school's program objectives are framed with reference to student learning outcomes – i.e., the knowledge, skills, values, and personal qualities that students are expected to demonstrate on successful completion of the program. Those student learning outcomes reflect the expectations of both the professional community (as set out in the American Library Association's Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies) and the Council of Ontario Universities (as outlined in the Guide to Learning Outcomes, Degree Level Expectations and the Quality Assurance Process in Ontario).

The key strengths that distinguish the school are:

- its bilingual character
- its CO-OP and experiential learning components
- the range of expertise and the accessibility of its faculty
- its strong ties with the professional community
- the quality of its graduates

Bilingualism

Students, employers, and faculty all recognize the unique strength of the school's bilingual and bicultural character, both in the way the interchange between the two languages and cultures enriches the overall student experience, and in the advantages it provides with respect to employment. The MIS program offered by ÉSIS is the only bilingual (French-English) master's program in information studies in North America. It was designed specifically to meet the needs of students preparing for professional careers in a bilingual environment, and to serve the community that provides library and information services in both of Canada's official languages, in the National Capital Region and beyond.

CO-OP and experiential learning

The CO-OP and experiential learning components of the MIS program are highly valued by students for the opportunities they provide to apply the knowledge and skills gained in the classroom, to work with and learn from professionals in the field, and to begin establishing the networks of professional relationships that will assist them in pursuing their careers.

Faculty expertise and accessibility

Students appreciate the range of expertise that exists within the school's teaching faculty—among regular, cross-appointed, and adjunct professors, as well as sessional and guest lecturers—and the way in which their various areas of expertise complement one another. They also appreciate the opportunities they have to engage with members of the faculty, benefitting not only from the relatively small size of classes but also through the counselling that is provided by faculty advisors and thesis supervisors, and the opportunities that they have to work with faculty members as research assistants.

Ties with the community

Students, faculty, and employers all recognize the benefits gained through the strong ties that exist and are nurtured between the school and the professional community, particularly the community within the National Capital Region. The MIS program is richer for the advice and feedback it receives from the school's External Advisory Committee, the Curriculum Advisory Committee, and those who participate in various ad hoc planning and evaluation initiatives. The relationship between the school and employers participating in the CO-OP and experiential learning components of the program benefits both students and employers, not only in the immediate context of work assignments but with respect to longer term employment prospects as well. The school's alumni also share their work experiences with current students and offer advice on potential career paths.

Quality of graduates

The success of students in gaining professional employment after graduating from the MIS program, in participating in the professional community, and in advancing their careers attests to the quality of the program. Employment rates among recent graduates are impressively high, and employers are quick to

recognize the quality of the graduates they hire and eager to draw on future pools of students graduating from the program.

Planning framework

The school's program goals for the period 2018/19 to 2021/22 were developed in accordance with the program planning framework that was developed and approved by the school's departmental assembly in 2012.

The planning process operates on a revolving four-year cycle, with each of the four years focusing in turn on:

- mission, goals, and objectives
- teaching and learning
- research
- community engagement

In 2018/19 the school conducted a reaffirmation of its mission, a review of progress made on the goals and objectives that had been established for the previous four-year planning cycle, and an assessment of current challenges. On that basis, an updated set of program goals and priorities was defined for the planning period 2018/19 to 2021/22. The review and assessment process incorporated input from the program's key stakeholders – students, faculty, research partners, university administrators, employers, and the broader community of information professionals.

Current challenges

The assessment of challenges faced by the school in fulfilling its mission and meeting its goals and objectives is an ongoing process. Over the past several years that process has been further formalized in part by the requirement to submit biennial status reports to the ALA Committee on Accreditation as well as through the institutional quality assurance regime established by the University of Ottawa.

The school continues to face a number of the major challenges that were identified in reports submitted by the school to ALA at the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2018, as well as in the self-study submitted as part of the university's cyclical program review process in 2016. Those challenges fall under three major areas of strategic significance:

- resources
- student enrolment
- leadership

Resources

The school's MIS program was one of only six ALA-accredited programs reporting total income and expenditures of less than \$1 million for 2016-2017. With a total of only five full-time faculty positions, the school is among the five smallest of the sixty programs accredited by ALA. The resources allocated to the administration of the school's programs currently total little more than 1 FTE, including approximately 80% of the interim director's time, 5% of the time of an administrative assistant and a secretary shared with the Department of Communication, and 20% of an academic assistant's time shared with other graduate programs in the Faculty of Arts.

Student enrolment

With an average Fall enrolment over the past five years of fewer than fifty students, the school is limited in the number of courses it can offer, and frequently has to cancel courses because the number of students registering for the course is fewer than the minimum of six. The school is currently reviewing all aspects of the program that have the potential to significantly increase the rate of enrolment (recruitment strategies, admission criteria, program requirements, course offerings, program delivery options, student financial aid, etc.), and will assess the costs of any proposals put forward for consideration relative to the potential gains to be made in enrolment.

Leadership

Meeting the enrolment-related demands facing the school will be particularly challenging given the fact that there are no immediate prospects of filling the Director's position on a longer-term basis and the level of administrative support for the program remains minimal at best.

Program goals

The program goals established for the 2018/19 – 2021/22 planning period are:

- to increase student enrolment in the MIS and GDIM programs
- to enrich the student experience through refinement of the curriculum
- to maintain the MIS program's accreditation status
- to maintain the MIS program's post-degree employment rate

Priorities for the 2018/19 – 2021/22 planning period

The review of progress made on the goals and objectives that had been established for the previous four-year planning cycle, the assessment of current challenges, and the program goals for the 2018/19 – 2021/22 planning period form the basis for setting the school's current priorities.

For the purposes of program planning, ÉSIS identifies its priorities under five key areas of focus:

- curriculum and the student experience
- research development
- resources and leadership
- community engagement
- marketing and visibility

The priorities identified under each of those key areas for the 2018/19 – 2021/22 planning period are as follows:

Curriculum and the student experience

Program changes:

- Implement the new Graduate Diploma in Information Management
- Modify the MIS program requirements to address changes required in CO-OP option
- Orient students to subject "tracks" within the MIS program
- Experiment with and evaluate hybrid courses
- Review the results of the special alumni survey with the Curriculum Advisory Committee

Improving second-language skills:

- Explore with ILOB options for supporting ISI professors teaching in their second language

- Promote ILOB FSL and ESL courses available to ÉSIS students
- Explore the potential for offering a first-semester core course as a bilingual course

Digital Humanities:

- Participate in the Digital Humanities minor and open selected ISI courses to fourth-year DH students
- Incorporate project-based components into courses related to digital culture and curation

Digital Transformation and Innovation

- Offer relevant ISI elective courses to students in Telfer's new Master of Digital Transformation and Innovation program

Research development

Promoting the faculty's research expertise:

- Add a research page to the ÉSIS website
- Expand research partnerships and networks

Resources and leadership

- Increase the level of administrative support for the ongoing work involved in maintaining the program's accreditation
- Advocate for a three-year appointment to the director's position

Community engagement

Partners in the National Capital Region:

- Continue to work with employers in the NCR to strengthen the Information Studies CO-OP program and experiential learning opportunities
- Continue participation in the Public Servant in Residence Program
- Nurture formal partnerships within the NCR

Alumni:

- Promote increased involvement by alumni in the ongoing development of the program
- Conduct a focus group and survey of alumni on career progression

Marketing and visibility

Student recruitment:

- Strengthen the capacity of the school to develop and implement a strategic marketing plan
- Formalize ÉSIS links with the Digital Humanities program
- Identify and promote international MIS exchange programs

Promotion:

- Promote the school's programs with the External Advisory Committee and employers participating in CO-OP and experiential learning
- Review and update the ÉSIS website to serve as a more effective marketing and recruitment tool

The priorities identified above will be continuously reviewed, revised, and augmented as necessary, and progress made in achieving the school's program goals and objectives will be periodically assessed over the course of the four-year planning period as the planning process focuses in greater depth on teaching and learning, research, and community engagement, in turn.