

University of Wisconsin-Madison  
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES

STATEMENT OF FACULTY POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR  
THE SPECIALIST PROGRAM

Purpose and Scope

The goal of the program is to prepare librarians and information specialists for positions of advanced responsibility in their chosen areas. The Specialist Program is a post-masters graduate program which allows combining specialization in library and information studies with advanced work in an academic discipline or related professional field.

Admissions

1. The applicant must hold the masters degree in librarianship or information studies.
2. Application for admission to the Specialist Program requires an application to the School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS), and an online application for the Graduate School, accompanied by transcripts and three letters of reference. (Students who did their master's work at UW-Madison SLIS should contact the Admissions and Placement Adviser for instructions.)
3. Applicants will normally be expected to have professional experience in librarianship or information services as preparation for advanced study.
4. The applicant's qualification for admission will be reviewed by the Advanced Studies Committee, which will make an admissions recommendation to the Director. The Director, in turn, will make a recommendation to the Graduate School. Those reviewing applications will consider whether the Specialist Program is likely to meet the goals of the applicant and whether the applicant is likely to be able to complete the program successfully.

Requirements

1. Courses: The program includes a minimum of 24 graduate credits, half of which may be from outside departments related to the student's area of specialization.
  - a. The normal period of study for the Specialist Certificate is two semesters and a summer session.
  - b. The spirit and special demands of a post-masters program require a minimum of one semester of full-time study, including reading and reflection. [In exceptional

cases, a program that includes a minimum of a six credit term of on-campus study may be approved as satisfying this requirement.]

- c. Courses are selected by the student with the assistance of the academic adviser; each program is tailored to the particular needs of the student.
2. The project: The Specialist student is required to design and complete a study to be reported as a Specialist Project submitted two weeks prior to the end of the final term of study. The nature of the Specialist Project will be developed by the student and the major adviser so as to be relevant to the area of the student's specialty and to employ an appropriate method of inquiry. The reporting format should be such as to be permanent, storable, and retrievable and should conform to a recognized standard of academic presentation. The project should make a contribution beyond the information and education gained by the student.
3. Oral examination: The student must pass an oral examination in the area of specialty before the student's committee of three faculty members, at least two of whom must be from the School.

#### Procedures for development and submission of the Specialist Project

1. The topic of the Specialist Project will be determined jointly by the student and the major adviser.
2. The topic and the method of inquiry will be discussed and given final approval by the student's committee. This committee, chaired by the major adviser, is selected by the major adviser in conference with the student and appointed by the Director. Final approval of the topic and the method of inquiry should be settled no later than the end of the third week of the student's final term of study.
3. Normally the student will register for a three-credit independent reading and research course (LIS 999) under the guidance of the major adviser, for the purpose of completing the Specialist Project. The major adviser will assign a grade for this course upon the completion of the student's oral examination and the final acceptance of the project.
4. The student will submit three copies of the completed project two weeks prior to the end of the final semester of study.
5. The student will submit one copy of the finally approved Specialist Project for deposit in the School's library.

Treatment of topics typically acceptable for the Specialist Project may range widely in level of research methodology, including:

1. State-of-the-art study
2. Evaluative bibliography in a field of librarianship or information services
3. Survey of a library or a group of libraries
4. Development of a plan for an aspect of service or solution of a problem in a library
5. Experimental research in a small area of inquiry
6. Historical study

The Specialist Project must be based upon a well-organized plan of inquiry and employ appropriate methods in which the student has gained competence.

### The Specialist Oral Examination

The student shall take a final oral examination in the area of specialty. Normally this examination, scheduled for a two-hour period, will come near the end of the term of study. The student's Specialist Committee shall have reviewed the Specialist Project in advance and shall examine the student on the Project and on the area of the student's specialty to determine the student's eligibility for the Specialist Certificate.

Revisions of the Specialist Project required by the Committee on conclusion of the oral examination must be completed before approval of the student for award of the Specialist Certificate. Major revisions would require review by the student's full committee; minor revisions may be reviewed by the major adviser for final approval.

### Administration

The academic adviser. Taking account of student and faculty interests, the Director appoints an adviser from the School's tenured track faculty for each student.

The committee. A committee of three faculty members, at least two of whom must be from the School, is appointed for purposes of approving the project proposal, evaluating the project, and conducting the oral examination.

The completion of the requirements of the program is marked by the issuance of a certificate of Specialist in Librarianship and Information Studies, with the student's particular area of specialization designated.

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