

Program Appointment Criteria & Procedures

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES(MA) YORK UNIVERSITY

Students are admitted to York's University's two-year MA Graduate Program in Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) on a purely individual basis. The program requires applicants to propose a program of individualized study focused on a research project that engages three recognized scholarly disciplines or fields of academic or creative enquiry. Each application also identifies courses at the graduate level of potential value for undertaking the proposed research, and suggests three graduate faculty who might serve as members of the applicant's supervisory committee, each member 'representing' one of the three disciplines or fields of enquiry constituting the applicant's anticipated program of study. The Director of IS interviews every applicant before they apply to the program, either in person or by telephone, to advise on how best to meet these application requirements, including suggestion for possible courses and potential supervisors. Upon receipt of application files, the program's Executive Committee (EC), which consists of eight faculty members serving in diverse disciplines and graduate programs across the university's various faculties, evaluates each file and where necessary proposes alternative supervisors to better represent the interdisciplinary interests of the applicants.

The individualized nature of the IS graduate program and of its conditions of admission in turn mean that faculty appointment to and participation in the program takes an unusual form. IS does not have its own faculty, nor does it offer its own courses. Since IS does not offer its own courses, it does not appoint course instructors. As indicated, however, every IS student requires three full supervisors. All such appointments are based on student need. Supervisors in the program are selected from the entire graduate faculty at York in accordance with the supervisory requirements of entering students.

Under normal circumstances, IS appoints supervisors from faculty listed as currently appointed to and active in the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS). Since each graduate program at York appoints faculty according to its own internal criteria, no one set of criteria determines the appointment of IS supervisors. Such appointments may be as 'Full Members,' 'Associate Members,' 'Members Emeriti,' or 'Adjunct Members,' and either 'continuing' or 'limited,' depending on the nature of an appointee's status in their home program. As with all graduate programs, potential supervisors for IS students are expected to demonstrate an established record of research, scholarship, creative or professional activity appropriate to their respective academic, artistic or vocational fields of enquiry and expertise. In addition, given the individualized nature of IS and of the conditions of admission to the program, both the Director and the Executive Committee carefully assess the ability of potential supervisors to meet the

particular needs of each student admitted. All three supervisory committee members are appointed as full supervisors and enjoy equal status. For administrative purposes, one member chairs the supervisory committee as Coordinating Supervisor.

In the event that the most appropriate potential supervisor is not a member of the graduate faculty at York, the program's Executive Committee will instruct the program Director to provide a rationale to the Dean of Graduate Studies for their appointment to serve as a member of an IS student's supervisory committee. For example, a potential IS supervisor may be a member of a department with an undergraduate program but no graduate program, or a potential IS supervisor may be newly appointed to York and not as yet appointed to the graduate program of their home unit. In other instances, a potential IS supervisor may simply be the sole member of the university's faculty with the scholarly or creative expertise necessary to oversee a certain aspect of an IS student's dialogical project, though not appointed to FGS by another graduate program.

In still other instances, IS may wish to extend an appointee's service as graduate supervisor beyond the limited term granted by their home unit.

In all such cases, the program Director implements several strategies and makes use of a number of resources when formulating a request to the Dean of Graduate Studies for a special supervisory appointment to IS. In the first instance, the Director draws upon the diverse expertise of the program's Executive Committee, whose members, as indicated, represent a wide range of disciplines and programs across the university. Such consultations take particular account of the curriculum vitae of every prospective appointee to IS graduate faculty, with special attention to teaching, scholarship, creative output, and other pertinent qualifications for supervising at the graduate level, as appropriate. In addition to discussions with the Executive Committee, where appropriate, the program Director consults informally with the chairperson of the department to which a potential supervisor is appointed, as well as with the director of the cognate graduate program, if applicable. Such discussions also focus on teaching, scholarship, creative output, and other pertinent qualifications for supervising at the graduate level in IS. The rationale and a recommendation for appointment are then submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies for the appointment. These procedures ensure that IS assesses the suitability of potential supervisors according to the same criteria used to appoint any present member of FGS. Such appointments may be of any status and continuing, limited or renewed, as required.

In rare instances, IS needs to appoint a graduate supervisor from outside York. For example, a student may be left with fewer than the required complement of three full supervisors if an appointed York supervisor dies or vacates the university for some reason, there being no suitably qualified replacement supervisor among York's graduate faculty. On other occasions, IS may wish to grant admission to an extremely promising applicant, fully recognizing that one of the three required supervisors will have to be appointed from outside York. In these sorts of instances, the IS Executive Committee instructs the Director to provide a rationale to the Dean of Graduate Studies, making the case for a suitably qualified supervisor to be appointed from

outside York. This rationale argues the special fit between the applicant's proposed course of study and research and the scholarly or creative profile of the prospective supervisor. As with instances internal to York, the IS Executive Committee and program Director carefully evaluate the prospective appointee's curriculum vitae. In addition, where appropriate, the program Director consults with the head of the prospective appointee's home university department or program, as well as with York faculty members acquainted with their scholarly or creative work. The rationale and a recommendation for appointment are then submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies for the candidate's appointment for the duration of the student's program of study in IS. To reiterate, these instances are rare, and such appointments are normally as Adjunct Members of the IS graduate program. An Adjunct Member does not serve as a Coordinating Supervisor.

Finally, the Director maintains regular and continual monitoring of all graduate supervision in the program. This monitoring is carried out in two ways: 1) informally, by speaking with students currently registered in the program; and 2), formally, through examination of written interim (fall) and annual (spring) progress reports, the latter as required of all graduate programs by FGS. These reports are designed to indicate the effectiveness of the supervisory relationship. The Director's bi-annual reports to the Executive Committee include summary assessments of all graduate supervision in the program.

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Graduate Program in Interdisciplinary Studies
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