School of Individualized Study

Graduate Handbook

Because every tiger’s stripes are different.
The Professional Studies handbook was developed to assist prospective and current students to navigate all aspects of their college experience, from the first class to graduation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOIS Contacts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIT Contacts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Overview</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Overview</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration Offerings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Lead-the-Way* (PLTW)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Requirements</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan of Study Guidelines</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Review Committee Proposal</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capstone Proposal Instructions</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capstone Project Details</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capstone Project Report Instructions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid &amp; Scholarships</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Policies</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Year Graduation Rule</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative and Transfer Credit</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave of Absence Policy</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing a Plan of Study</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Requirements</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQ</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Professional Studies program enables learners, especially individuals with professional experience, the opportunity to customize their graduate Plan of Study; tailoring it to their personal and professional goals.

Students in the Professional Studies program can select courses from the more than 60 RIT graduate programs when creating their unique concentration areas. For example: interactive media design, human resource development, strategic training, information technology, project management, and health systems administration, to name just a few. These concentrations can be combined in order to enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to advance their careers, professional interests or personal goals.

The degree normally begins with the course Context and Trends and is completed with a practical, hands-on Capstone Project directly related to the student’s individualized concentration areas.

Many students complete the 33 semester credit degree program within 18-24 months, yet students have up to seven years to complete the degree. The degree can be completed full-time, part-time, on campus, or entirely online, which means students need not establish residency by actually living in New York State.
To begin the Professional Studies (MSPS) degree, each student designs a Plan of Study curriculum of 33 semester credit hours through one-on-one advisement with their academic advisor and by attending the gateway course Context & Trends.

**Required Courses:**

**PROF-705 Context and Trends (C&T)**
Context & Trends must be the first, or one of the first courses, taken in the Professional Studies program. During this course, the unique Plan of Study curriculum is designed and reviewed by the Graduate Review Committee. Students will also gain a variety of conceptual and analytical skills that will be useful in accomplishing their Graduate Review Committee Proposals (GRC Proposals) and subsequently in their professional careers. Students have the opportunity to explore a number of important trends (demographic, economic, technological, political and cultural) that will affect their choice of concentrations and ultimately their careers. In addition, the course will introduce or expand the ability of the student to use library resources and other general and field specific informational-data bases, bibliographies, professional literature, and the internet.

**PROF-770 Capstone Planning Seminar**
The Capstone Planning course (0 credits) must be completed in the term prior to enrollment of the Capstone course. This course guides the student through preparation of the Capstone Proposal that is required for the applied final course of his/her MS in Professional Studies degree - the Capstone Project. The course concludes with a written proposal describing the Capstone Project, including background and description, methodology, anticipated outcomes, and probable Capstone Mentor. Student will meet regularly with the course facilitator. Upon successful completion of this course (S grade), student will be registered for the Capstone Project.

**PROF-775 Capstone Project**
The Capstone Project is taken during the last semester of study. The Capstone is a culmination of a student's work and knowledge in the Professional Studies program. Even though the work is completed similar to an independent study, the Capstone is a supervised, hands-on experience in which the students apply the skills and knowledge developed through their individualized Plan of Study. Students demonstrate their reviewed work to others through an oral presentation and a written report.

Approval for the project must be granted by the Graduate Program Coordinator during the Capstone Planning Seminar before a student can be registered for the course.
Professional Studies students design two to three areas of “concentration” in collaboration with their academic advisor. Concentrations range from 9-15 credit hours unless a specific number is otherwise noted. All concentration course choices require approval from their perspective program chairs. Final approval is sought during Context and Trends. For most programs, courses cannot be taken until the student has completed Context and Trends and is accepted into the Professional Studies program.

### Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concentration Area</th>
<th>Concentration Restrictions/Pre-Requisites</th>
<th>Example Courses</th>
<th>Fully Online Option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied Statistics/Quality</td>
<td>Fundamentals of Statistics I &amp; II (RIT) or Statistical background</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Education</td>
<td>MSPS students not allowed to have this area as a concentration choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>MSPS students are limited to 3 courses from the College of Business.</td>
<td>Yes but very few options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication &amp; Media Technology</td>
<td>Students limited to pre-approved set of courses. Talk to your advisor.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Technologies (IT, Computer Science, Software Development)</td>
<td>MSPS students are limited to 4 courses from the Information Technology department. Should have programming background. If not, may have to take programming bridge program.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>Students should work with CJ chair to pick appropriate courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Studies: Systems; Industrial; Software; Microelectronic; Manufacturing; Electrical; Computer</td>
<td>SOIS grad advisors usually pre-screen individual with Engineering dept. to ensure student has sufficient educational background.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental, Health &amp; Safety Management</td>
<td>Environmental/science background preferred (sometimes required)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Management</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health System Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource Development</td>
<td>MSPS students are limited to 4 courses from the HR department</td>
<td>Human Capital Strategies; Business Acumen; Facilitation Skills; Leveraging</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaging Arts: Industrial Design; Graphic Design; Computer Graphics; Photography; Fine Arts, etc.</td>
<td>Portfolio review &amp; approval by CIAS faculty required for most Imaging Arts concentrations. Many studio-based courses take place during day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied &amp; Computational Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Concentration Offerings

- **Packaging Science**: Economics in background may be needed
  - Packaging Administration/ Packaging & Environment; The Legal Environment
- **Product Development & Design**: Training program for High-school technology teachers. Teachers can choose to have training turned into up to five RIT graduate courses by paying fee and taking test.
  - See page 8.
- **Project Lead the Way**: Statistical background and/or course, business background required
  - Intro to Project Management; Advanced Project Management; International Project Management
  - Yes
- **Project Management**: Students are limited to pre-approved set of courses: Required (choose at least 2): Readings in PP; Public Administration/Graduate Seminar; Electives (choose 2 to 3): Information and Comm Policy; Technological Innovations; Energy Policy; Special Topics
- **Public Policy**: Students are limited to pre-approved set of courses: Required (choose at least 2): Readings in PP; Public Administration/Graduate Seminar; Electives (choose 2 to 3): Information and Comm Policy; Technological Innovations; Energy Policy; Special Topics
- **School Psychology**: Psychology of Teaching & Learning; Developmental Psychology; Cultural Diversity in Education
- **Science: Color Science; Chemistry; Clinical Chemistry; Bioinformatics, etc.**: http://www.rit.edu/emcs/ptgrad/program_detail.php?id=1699
- **Secondary Education for Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing**: Many courses taught using ASL (American Sign Language)
  - Psych/Soc of Deaf Students; Deaf Students: Cultural Diversity; Political/Legal Environment
- **Service Management**: Concentrations usually approved on a course-by-course basis.
  - Yes
- **Sustainability**: Concentrations usually approved on a course-by-course basis.
  - Only on campus courses available
- **Telecommunications**: Yes
- **Training, Design & Assessment**: Yes

*Other concentrations areas may be available. Please consult with your academic advisor for more information.*
The Project Lead the Way curriculum is a four-year, flexible sequence of pre-engineering courses:

- Principles of Engineering
- Engineering Graphics/Solid Modeling
- Introduction to Design and Development
- Gateway to Technology
- Computer Integrated Manufacturing

PLTW teachers who attend RIT's National Technology Training Center may apply to receive graduate credit for those courses by successfully completing the course and passing the graduate examination. PLTW teachers can apply to the MSPS program during their PLTW enrollment or after completion of all courses. Upon acceptance, PLTW teachers can apply 20 semester credit hours, representing Concentration A, to their Professional Studies degree. PLTW students can either complete Concentration B by selecting three courses from the RIT Graduate Bulletin (9 credit hours), or transfer in 6 credit hours of graduate coursework completed at an accredited university and that meets their professional goals. PLTW students must also complete the required MSPS graduate courses: Context & Trends, Capstone Proposal Seminar, and the Capstone Project.

For more information on the PLTW program, visit the RIT Project Lead the Way home page at http://www.rit.edu/emcs/pltw or visit the national site at http://www.pltw.org

Example PLTW Curriculum (Semester)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Required</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROF-705 Context &amp; Trends</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concentration A: Pre-Engineering Technology Education (max. of 5 courses)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFET-700 Introduction to Engineering Design for PLTW Teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESHS-700 Civil Engineering/Architecture for PLTW Teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCET-700 Principles of Engineering for PLTW Teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFET-701 Computer Integrated Manufacturing for PLTW Teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCET-702 Engineering Design &amp; Development</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concentration B</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIT concentration (3 courses) or acceptable graduate transfer coursework of 6 semester credit hours + 1 RIT course</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Required</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROF-770 Capstone Proposal Seminar</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROF-775 Capstone Project</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The decision on how to complete Concentration B must be made at the time of admission to the program.

The Professional Studies program has been specifically designed to meet the needs of students who have formulated a clear idea of their career objectives. Students must complete both steps below in order to be fully accepted into the MSPS graduate program.

1. Application

Submit a Graduate Application to the RIT Admissions Office including:

- A personal statement of educational objectives that identifies areas of interest to be developed into concentration areas.
- Two letters of recommendations from individuals who have recently served as either a supervisor or an instructor are required. Letters from a manager or supervisor supporting the student's career and educational goals and intended Plan of Study are especially helpful.

Students must have achieved a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with an undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale.

International Students must submit the results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (with a minimum score of 550 (paper-based); 280 (computer based); 79 (internet based) as part of the formal application. The TOEFL requirement is waived for native speakers of English and/or those submitting educational transcripts and diplomas from American colleges or universities.

All Admissions standards must be met and a graduate application must be submitted to guarantee full consideration for admissions to the MSPS program.

2. Completion of Context & Trends

Context & Trends is the first required course of the MSPS graduate program and must be passed AND a Plan of Study must be approved by the Graduate Review Committee in order for student to continue taking graduate courses. The MSPS program cannot guarantee that courses taken prior to matriculation and the completion of Context and Trends will be accepted as part of the final, approved Plan of Study.

Application Exceptions:

- Students who are already accepted by another RIT graduate program, or who are currently enrolled in another RIT graduate program and are in good standing, do not have to reapply for graduate admissions. Instead, a Change of Program Form must be completed. All coursework prior to acceptance into the MSPS program is considered on an individual basis to determine applicability within the Professional Studies degree.

- Non-matriculated students who wish to matriculate into the MSPS program can do so after the completion of two RIT courses, one being Context and Trends. If this course is not completed, there is no guarantee that further coursework will be applied to the program.

- International Students whose undergraduate program consisted of only three years of study must enroll in 26 credit hours of upper division undergraduate courses before they can be fully admitted into the MSPS graduate program. The final four (4) credit hours of this 26 credit hour requirement may be the graduate course, Context & Trends, which will be the transition course into the graduate program.

- Application of the seven (7) year rule will be strictly adhered to. Students need to be aware of this rule as they will be expected to complete the required 33 credit hours within seven years in order to be certified. Special consideration needs to be given to any transfer credit as the seven year rule is applied to the date the course was taken and not to the date the course was transferred to RIT.
Plan of Study Guidelines

Concentrations may not exceed more than five (5) courses or 15 semester credit hours (whichever comes first) or be less than nine (9) semester credit hours.

Concentration A: must consist of no fewer than three (3) courses for a minimum of nine (9) semester credit hours drawn from a single graduate program.

Concentration B and C (if chosen) must each consist of no fewer than three (3) classes for a total of at least nine (9) semester credit hours. If a ‘concentration C’ is not chosen, students will have up to three (3) courses available as electives.

Exceptions to concentration development: College of Business, Information Technology, and Human Resources concentrations can only contain a max of three courses or 12 semester credit hours.

Each concentration must be from a different graduate content area.

The total number of credit hours, including the required Context & Trends and the Capstone Project, must total no fewer than 33 semester credit hours.

Each concentration must be approved by the appropriate concentration advisor or designee during Context & Trends. A list of appropriate concentration advisors will be made available to the student during Context & Trends and the student will contact the appropriate graduate concentration advisors or designees to obtain approval. Failure to obtain proper signatures of approval for concentrations could result in a student’s Plan of Study Proposal not being reviewed during the MSPS Graduate Review Committee meeting.

With approval, students can transfer in 6 semester credits of graduate coursework.

See your SOIS academic advisor for other concentration policies and rules. Many will be discussed in Context & Trends.

Graduate Review Committee Proposal

The Graduate Review Committee (GRC) Proposal is the main outcome of the first course, PROF-705 Context & Trends. In this proposal, students outline and justify the Plan of Study they have designed through five main sections:

1. Personal/Professional Introduction
2. Approved Plan of Study
3. Literature Review
4. Professional Development Plan
5. Professional Resume

The GRC Proposals are submitted to the Graduate Review Committee in approximately week 10 of the fall and spring semesters. All students in Context & Trends are required to submit the GRC Proposal or forfeit the right to take future graduate courses under the Professional Studies MS program.

1. Personal/Professional Introduction
The Personal/Professional Introduction is a one-three page summary of a student's professional and academic background with a focus on why they have chosen the Professional Studies degree program and also what they hope to do once completed with the program.

2. Plan of Study
(See examples on pg. 5)
An individualized Plan of Study consists of two or three concentrations drawn from existing RIT graduate programs. See Concentration guidelines on the previous page. These guidelines must be met in order for the GRC Proposal to go before the Graduate Review Committee.

3. Literature Review
The Literature Review is a well-reasoned, and supported (researched & cited) justification as to why your proposed Plan of Study is appropriate to your academic and professional goals; how the concentrations within the plan are complimentary to one another; and why the plan is relevant to the needs of a larger world.

4. Professional Development Plan
The Professional Development Plan should outline significant and complimentary professional development activities to be completed during the course of study in the Professional Studies degree. Many activities are selected by the student mapping professional/post-RIT goals with co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

5. Resume
A professional resume is the last tool the Graduate Review Committee can review to obtain a sense of a student's professional background and also how the chosen courses relate to a student's current or desired profession.

Full details and instructions for preparing the GRC Proposal will be provided in Context & Trends.
Capstone Proposal Instructions

The Capstone Proposal is the main outcome of the second-to-last course, PROF-770 Capstone Planning Seminar. In this proposal, students outline their Capstone Project concept and plan of work for completion of the project in six main sections:

1. Abstract
2. Problem Statement and Annotated Bibliography
3. Project Description
4. Anticipated Deliverables and Evaluation Methods
5. Capstone Project Mentor
6. Plan of Work, Timeline, and Budget

The Capstone Proposals are submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator near the end of the PROF-770 Capstone Planning Seminar semester. The Graduate Program Coordinator MUST approve the proposal idea before a student is enrolled in the PROF-775 Capstone Project course.

1. Abstract
Concisely introduces the problem/opportunity that the project will address, summarizes project work planned, and explains anticipated results/ accomplishments of the project.

2. Problem Statement and Annotated Bibliography
1-sentence that describes the nature and extent of the problem/opportunity to be addressed in the capstone project. Then a list of citations with short summaries that will be used as background information for the project and provide evidence for the problem statement.

3. Project Description
How the student plans to complete the Capstone Project including all of the major steps, who the student will work with, resources needed, and research methods and/or project management approaches to be used. Also outlines how the student’s concentrations qualify him/her to be able to successfully implement the project.

4. Anticipated Deliverables and Evaluation Methods
Explain anticipated project deliverables (e.g., a prototype, working model, demonstration project, manual, business/program plan, new service, etc.). Describe the plan and specific methods for evaluating the success of the capstone project (i.e., how you will know the solution was successful).

5. Capstone Project Mentor
A mentor is required to help guide and review the capstone project work. Mentors may be an RIT faculty member or a professional in the field with significant experience in one or both of the areas of the student’s professional concentrations.

6. Plan of Work, Timeline, and Budget
A timeline indicating showing important project phases and/or benchmark accomplishments. Can be a table, GANTT chart, PERT chart, or other visualization. Also indicate project budget with how expenditures relate to project objectives and list actual or potential sources of funding.

Full details and instructions for preparing the Capstone Proposal will be provided in the PROF-770 Capstone Planning Seminar.

Capstone Project Details & Report Instructions

Capstone Project Details
Capstone work is typically completed during PROF-775 Capstone Project Course, but work may be started anytime after the Capstone Proposal is approved and students often start working on their project during the intersession or summer session in between semesters.

Capstone Projects should:
- Address a real, multidisciplinary problem or opportunity.
- Have a solution to the problem including clear deliverables.
- Be relevant to the individual student’s unique areas of academic concentration within the MSPS degree (relate to the student’s Plan of Study).
- Be realistic in scope to be completed in the timeframe of 1 academic semester.
- Have a process for managing the implementation of the solution.
- Have an effective method for evaluating the success of the project.

For examples of past Capstone Projects, visit: http://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/SOIS/getting-started/graduate/capstone-projects

Students may be asked to consider signing a release form or otherwise giving written permission for their Capstone Project to be used as an example for future students, posted on the SOIS website, and/or displayed as demonstration pieces for internal or external SOIS marketing pieces.

Capstone Project Report Instructions
After completing the Capstone Project work, each student is required to submit a written Capstone Project Report that serves as a narrative to others of what the student did for their Capstone project and is a reflection on lessons learned. The report is written while the student is still enrolled in the PROF-775 Capstone Project course during the final semester of study. In many ways much of the information originally described in the Capstone Proposal document will be repeated and expanded in greater detail within the Capstone Project Report. There are six main sections:

1. Abstract
2. Problem Background
3. Project Description
4. Project Results
5. Conclusion and Recommendations
6. References Cited, and Appendices

Students must also give a 30-minute presentation summarizing this information in front of the Graduate Program Coordinator, SOIS faculty & staff, and any invited clients, mentors, and guests. Presentations can be done on campus or through virtual presentation tools and occur at the end of each semester.

(Continued on next page)
1. Abstract
Concisely introduces the problem/opportunity the project addressed, summarizes project work involved, and explains what the project ultimately accomplished or resulted in.

2. Problem Background
Using references and citations, describes the nature and extent of the problem/opportunity addressed by the Capstone Project. The goal is to explain why the problem needed the student’s attention and expertise, and why it was worth the student’s time and effort to solve.

3. Project Description
A chronological “story” about how the student went about completing the Capstone Project including all of the major steps, who the student worked with, resources utilized, and research methods and/or project management approaches employed.

4. Project Results
An explanation of what the student accomplished including examples of the Capstone Project work and deliverables, an explanation of the evaluation processes utilized, and statistical data and/or references to published comments demonstrating evaluation outcomes.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations
The student summarizes and reflects on his/her overall accomplishments, findings, and project solution(s). Includes how the project benefitted the client and any recommendations to the client or to other professionals regarding their project solution. Also explains how specific courses from course concentrations prepared and enabled him/her to complete their Capstone Project.

6. References Cited & Appendices
All factual assertions and information not based on personal knowledge must be cited in the text of the paper and also listed in the reference list. Students may also include any number of Appendices for supplemental materials including examples of project deliverables, accomplishments, survey instruments, etc. All appendix material should be referred to in the body of your paper (e.g., “see Appendix A”).

Full details and instructions for the Capstone Project Work, Report, and Presentation will be provided in PROF-770 Capstone Planning Seminar and PROF-775 Capstone Project.

Financial Aid & Scholarships
To apply for financial aid, students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA - available at http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/). RIT’s federal school code is 002806.

NOTE: RIT rarely awards full financial support for graduate students. Loans are available.

Professional Studies Scholarship Policies
The Professional Studies program currently distributes scholarships to qualified graduate students and program candidates. Awards normally range from $1,000 to $3,000 per student per academic year, are paid to students on a yearly basis in accordance with their program of study, progress, and are based on the following criteria:

- GPA above a 3.0
- Academic and community or professional service accomplishments earned prior to or while becoming a SOIS graduate student
- Entrepreneurial professional interests which are inherently multidisciplinary in nature and coincide with specific areas of recruiting or program development within SOIS

Scholarship Application, Approval and Award Process
All Professional Studies graduate students in good academic standing are eligible to apply for a scholarship.

In addition, application for a Graduate scholarship or assistantship is part of the RIT Graduate Application process (online or paper). Once a student’s application for admission is complete, the Graduate Program Coordinator and student’s academic advisor review the student’s file and qualifications to receive a scholarship.

If approved for a scholarship, students are notified of the award amount and time period during which their scholarship award disbursements will be made.

Scholarships are based on the RIT fiscal year calendar (June 1 – May 31), not academic years (e.g., fall through summer semesters). For renewal of a scholarship, students must reapply each spring. To begin the process, students must complete a Scholarship Application/Renewal form and submit it by the deadline date (normally the last Friday in May). The Professional Studies program will then make a renewal decision based on the criteria above combined with the student’s success to that point in the Professional Studies program.
Students must comply with RIT policies and Procedures as outlined in the RIT Policy and Procedures Manual located at https://www.rit.edu/policiesmanual/. Please make special note of Section D, Educational Policies.

Seven Year Graduation Rule (& Petitions for Extension)
Requirements for the degree must be completed within seven years of the date of the oldest course counted towards the student’s program. This policy is further outlined in Subsection V. Master’s Degree of Section D12.0 Graduation requirements (https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/policiesmanual/d120). At the time of matriculation, each graduate student will sign an acknowledgement of the date at which the seven-year period will expire. For example, if the first course counted towards the degree is taken in 2000-1 fall, the degree must be completed by the end of 2007-1 fall.

In cases where the fulfillment of degree requirements extends beyond the seven-year limit, the Graduate Program Coordinator must petition the Graduate Council for a formal extension. The student must start conversations regarding the need to petition with the Graduate Program Coordinator at least one full semester prior to the expiration of the seven-year time limit. The student will work with his/her academic advisor and the Graduate Program Coordinator to obtain all necessary documentation. Requirements for this petition are listed in the policy linked above. A subcommittee of Graduate Council will consider the petition. Decisions are usually made at the time of the meeting and students are notified directly by the Chair of Graduate Council.

Alternative and Transfer Credit
Credits for completing a Plan of Study are most commonly earned with RIT graduate courses. However, up to 6 graduate semester credit hours with a grade of B or better, earned at an accredited college or university, can be transferred to a Plan of Study where appropriate and applicable. The request to include these transfer credits as part of the MSPS program must be made at the time of admissions and then included when the Plan of Study is being developed for final approval by the Graduate Review Committee.

Students who transfer credits into the Plan of Study must keep in mind the seven (7) year rule as described on above as transfer credits follow this rule.

Students may also elect to apply for Prior Learning Assessment (credit by experience) or Independent Study as part of their degree plan. More information regarding these options can be discussed with a SOIS advisor, and found through the SOIS website at: http://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/SOIS/getting-started/alternative-forms-of-credit.

Graduation Requirements
To be certified in the MSPS program, students must:

- Complete the approved Plan of Study (of at least two professional concentration areas) totaling a minimum 33 semester credit hours including PROF-705 Context & Trends, PROF-770 Capstone Planning Seminar, and PROF-775 Capstone Project.
- Complete the program within seven years of the completion of the first course (if transfer credit is used, credit must have been earned within that seven year limit).
- Obtain an overall program GPA of at least 3.0, and obtain a 3.0 in the specific concentration areas.
- Discharge all financial obligations to RIT.
- Complete an Application for Graduation form electronically through the Student Information System in the semester you plan to graduate.

Leave of Absence Policy
A student who is contemplating a leave of absence should meet with their advisor to assist them with the process. In most cases, a leave of absence is not to extend beyond one year. The value of the leave of absence is that your matriculation will be maintained in your academic department for the given period of time. After an absence of more than a year, a student must reapply for admission to the Institute. If a longer period is requested, the student would be advised to withdraw from the Institute and reapply through the Admissions Office when appropriate.

Leaves of absences cannot be processed after the last day of classes for any given term.

Changing a Plan of Study
In approving a Plan of Study, the Graduate Review Committee cannot guarantee that all the courses listed in the original plan will be taught and available to the student at a future date. However, if a course is not available, the Graduate Program Coordinator and/or the student’s advisor will work with the student to arrange an appropriate substitution.

In certain circumstances, the student may wish to amend or alter their Plan of Study. Any and all course substitutions must be approved by the concentration advisor, and a substitution form must be signed by the concentration advisor and submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator and the student’s advisor. A change of three or more courses, either one at a time or all together, must be re-approved by the Graduate Review Committee. Substitution forms are available from the Graduate Program Coordinator and student’s advisor. Course substitutions or concentration amendments made without proper approval from the concentration advisor, the student’s academic advisor, and the Graduate Program Coordinator could result in the student not being certified for graduation due to noncompliance with this policy.
Q: Is the Master's degree in Professional Studies accredited?
A: Yes. All RIT degrees have been accredited by the Middle States Associations Commission on Higher Education and approved by the New York State Department of Education.

Q: What are the entry requirements?
A: The MSPS program requires students to have a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university and an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. All students must submit a completed Graduate Application to RIT's Office of Graduate Admissions. Letters of reference from two individuals who have recently served as either a supervisor or instructor are also required. Letters from a manager or supervisor supporting a student's career and educational goals and intended Plan of Study are especially helpful.

International Students must submit the results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). A minimum score of 550 is required for the paper-based test; 280 for the computer-based test. The TOEFL requirement is waived for those international students submitting educational transcripts and diplomas from an American college of university.

Q: Is an entrance exam required?
A: No. Entrance exams are not required, with the exception of the TOEFL exam for international students.

Q: How long is the program?
A: The program is 33 semester credit hours and can be completed either through full-time or part-time study. It is also possible to complete the program in an online format if a student’s concentration areas are developed from online learning courses.

Q: What is a concentration?
A: A concentration is a grouping of at least 3 courses but no more than 5 courses from a single graduate program or topic area. Concentrations are developed with assistance from a student’s academic advisor.

Q: Is it possible to transfer in credits? If so, how many?
A: Yes. Up to 6 semester credits of graduate work with a grade of B or better may be eligible for transfer. The credits must be from an accredited graduate school and will be evaluated when the student applies to RIT. The request to include these transfer credits must be made when the Plan of Study is developed. They must be appropriate and applicable to the student’s program. The final approval for transfer credits will be made when your program is reviewed by the Graduate Review Committee.

Q: Do all the courses in a given concentration have to come from a single graduate degree program?
A: Usually yes, courses in a concentration often come from one RIT graduate degree program, but concentrations made up of courses from different departments are also possible by working with your academic advisor.

Q: How many graduate courses can I take from the College of Business?
A: Because of requirements of the College of Business's accrediting body, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, students who are not matriculated in a College of Business graduate program are limited to four courses.

Q: Are all of RIT's graduate courses available on a part-time basis in the evenings?
A: No. Some programs are designed to accommodate part-time evening students and offer a complete schedule of courses on evenings, weekends or online. Others require full-time attendance and offer courses exclusively or almost exclusively during weekday hours on campus.

Q: When is my program approved?
A: Your Plan of Study will be approved at the end of Context and Trends. A committee of RIT faculty and program coordinators from SOIS will review your Graduate Proposal (containing your Plan of Study and other supporting documents). Their acceptance of your Plan of Study becomes your approved curriculum.

Q: Can I take classes towards the MSPS program before I apply?
A: It is possible for some students to obtain approval from the MSPS program to register for Context & Trends before they are admitted into the program. However, they must be able to demonstrate that their graduate application is in progress, they have provided a transcript showing a GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale, and they can describe a preliminary Plan of Study. Formal acceptance into the MSPS degree is contingent upon receipt of all required application materials, committee review, and plan acceptance. Classes taken prior to matriculation cannot be guaranteed to be accepted as part of the finalized Plan of Study.

Q: Will my MSPS degree be recognized by employers or graduate professional programs to which I might seek admissions?
A: Yes, the Master’s degree has been designed for individuals who have decided that a conventional graduate program will not serve their career interests or meet the needs of current and future employers for cross-functional expertise. The MSPS program is not appropriate for those who are seeking advancement in fields which require completion of approved and certified programs of study such as public accounting or school psychology.

Q: How can I decide if the Master’s in Professional Studies degree is right for me?
A: Make an appointment with the Graduate Program Coordinator or a SOIS Graduate Academic Advisor. Please bring a copy of your transcript and/or resume if possible. Appointments can be made by calling 585.475.2234 or by emailing SOIS@rit.edu. Appointments can be done via phone or on-campus.