

Isys Ph.D. Prep Program Questions and Answers

Question: Do I have to enroll in the Ph.D. preparation program to get into a Ph.D. program?

Answer: Absolutely not. Several of our graduates have enrolled in Ph.D. programs without any additional preparation other than their Master's degrees. However, our program dramatically increases your odds of getting in. Just as important, it helps you decide whether to pursue a Ph.D. or not. We expose you to the scientific method, to research, to key literature and theory, to the nature of academic careers, and to general academic thinking. This exposure is combined with hands-on mentoring on research, writing, and statistics. We also advise you on where you should focus your research interests and what kinds of programs you should apply to. This intimate experience also ends up giving you far better academic references from our faculty, because they actually have specific, positive research experiences with you that they can write about. This greatly impresses Ph.D. schools.

Ph.D. programs who have accepted our students are thrilled with this program because a student's completion of this program gives programs more assurance that the student is serious about a Ph.D. and have been properly advised. Despite the formal courses you take as part of the prep program, our intention is not to have you waive similar courses in your Ph.D. program; instead, we want you assimilate more quickly and do better than most of the other students, and thus finish in a timelier manner. Our experience is these positive outcomes occur in our graduates, which outcomes increase the demand for our Ph.D. preparation students.

Question: How do I enroll in the MACC (Master's of Accounting) pre-Ph.D. program?

Answer: The MACC pre-Ph.D. program is limited in size and thus requires a formal application; however, any interested student is encouraged to apply (non-MACC students are allowed in the program if they have adequate background). Please email Doug Prawitt for more information (Doug_Prawitt@BYU.edu).

Question: How do I enroll in the MISM (Master's of Information Systems Management) pre-Ph.D. program?

Answer: The MISM pre-Ph.D. program is limited in size and thus requires a formal application; however, any interested student is encouraged to apply (non-MISM students are allowed in the program if they have adequate background. The application for the IS pre-Ph.D program can be found on the following web page:

http://marriottschool.byu.edu/soais/programs/phd_prep/phd_prep.cfm

Please download and complete this application using Microsoft Word, and send it directly to Dr. Lowry (email: Paul.Lowry@BYU.edu).

Question: How do I enroll in the first Ph.D. preparation seminars (Isys571 or Acc571)?

Answer: You must be formally admitted into the Ph.D. preparation program to enroll in Isys571 (taught by Dr. Lowry) or Acc571 (taught by Dr. Prawitt). (Note these were previously numbered Isys611 and Acc611, respectively). The reason for this is that these

seminars are very demanding and not geared toward average graduate students. Further, these seminars are kept at very small sizes (often less than 10 students) so that Dr. Lowry and Dr. Prawitt can best provide mentoring that is similar to what you would receive at a Ph.D. school.

Isys571 and Acc571 are wonderful experiences because they simulate an actual Ph.D.-level seminar and introduce you to academic research and to academic careers. Thus, there is no better way to discover if a Ph.D. is right for you, other than enrolling in a Ph.D. program (which is risky if you are not sure it is right for you). Continuing in the preparation program is subject to your adequate performance in Isys571 or Acc571.

Note that the Isys program has a follow-up seminar, Isys572, which naturally builds on Isys571. In Isys572 you will engage in an actual quantitative study that builds on your work from Isys571.

Enrollment for first-year MISM's: First-year MISM students can take Isys571 their first year and have it waive the requirement to take Isys532. All other courses in the Ph.D. prep track generally replace electives in your course plan (see sample schedule). Under special circumstances we are able to waive or replace additional required courses to provide the specialized education you desire (e.g., further specialization in Computer Science or Psychology, and so forth). All first-year MISM's enrolling in Isys571 or other Ph.D. prep courses need to fill out a course plan (see 560 TNRB, April Hillquist) and email it to Dr. Lowry (Paul.Lowry@BYU.edu) and April Hillquist (April_hillquist@byu.edu) for approval. It is your responsibility to do this **EVERY time** you make a change in your plan (this is necessary so you do not have any graduation surprises).

Enrollment for second-year MISM's: Second-year MISM students can take Isys571 and the other Ph.D. prep courses as electives. However, under special circumstances we can waive or replace additional required courses to provide the specialized education you desire (e.g., further specialization in Computer Science or Psychology, and so forth). All second-year MISM's enrolling in Isys571 or other Ph.D. prep courses need to fill out a course plan (see 560 TNRB, April Hillquist) and email it to Dr. Lowry (Paul.Lowry@BYU.edu) and April Hillquist (April_hillquist@byu.edu) for approval. It is your responsibility to do this **EVERY time** you make a change in your plan (this is necessary so you do not have any graduation surprises).

Enrollment for MACC's: Please email Doug Prawitt for more information (Doug_Prawitt@BYU.edu).

Question: What if after enrolling in the pre-Ph.D. program I decide I don't want to get a Ph.D.?

Answer: We want students to be as committed as possible when enrolling in the pre-Ph.D. program because faculty members are going to take a lot of extra time helping you prepare for a Ph.D. However, if you are unable to attend a Ph.D. program, or change your mind at the last minute, you will still receive a highly marketable MISM or MACC degree that you can use for a job in industry. Some students also choose to work before attending a Ph.D. program. Work experience actually greatly benefits IS or Accounting Ph.D.s. The only downside is that working can be disruptive and make it harder to earn a Ph.D.

Question: Is the course load any higher than the normal MISM, and what are the courses?

Answer: The total number of required credits is no different than the normal MISM. The main difference is that we require you to take some classes to get you started into research so you can research with faculty members here and greatly increase your chances of getting into a Ph.D. program. The program has fewer required courses and MANY more potential electives (most outside of IS) so we can tailor the preparation to your individual needs.

Question: I hate programming and techie stuff (or I hate management and softie stuff). Thus, on what type of topics can I focus with my pre-Ph.D. track and eventual Ph.D.?

Answer: Information Systems is a highly diverse field. Researchers and Ph.D. programs can specialize in everything from software engineering, ERP, systems design, HCI, ethnography, Psychology, OR/OM, CS, management, strategy, and so on. Thus, what is useful preparation for one academic is not always useful for another. The only real common denominator between most areas of IS research is the use of basic statistics and research methods (not necessarily mathematics, and definitely not programming). On this basis, students wanting to complete the entire Ph.D. preparation track should definitely take Isys571, Isys572, and some type of statistics courses. Most students who have taken Stats221, should take Stats511 then Stats512. If you feel weak in statistics you should start with Stats510. Additionally, we encourage students to work with a faculty member on a mentored research project in the form of an Isys693R project course. In addition, we have many electives that you can take (subject to your course plan approval) throughout the university to help you further specialize in a topic or area of research (see Ph.D. sample schedules and prep curriculum list).