

## MLS ACADEMIC POLICIES 2016-2017

### REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDY

Master of Liberal Studies (MLS) graduate students must meet the following minimums, deadlines and course or grade requirements to graduate in good standing from the university. These policies are based on the policies for all Rice graduate students. In case of questions or the need for further details the student is referred to the policies for graduate students in the General Announcements.

#### **Degree Requirements**

The MLS program consists of 33 credit hours, which include three core courses, seven electives and a capstone course. A student may take only one course in his or her entering session. The core courses – one in humanities, one in social sciences and one in natural sciences – are designed to acquaint first year students with the contrasting perspectives and methodological approaches that define academic inquiry in the three broad fields. Core courses must be completed before electives may be taken, with the exception of MLSC 600 Introduction to Graduate Research, Analysis and Exposition which is the first course to be taken by all students and will count toward the electives requirement. Electives may focus on just one “track” or may be chosen more broadly. All courses will require research papers; some may require tests or oral presentations. The capstone course is designed to help students integrate their knowledge through writing an extended paper or completing a project to be presented to MLS faculty and students. A thesis is not part of the degree program.

#### **Course of study**

The MLS program has three 10-11 week sessions per year. Classes are held in the evenings with a few Saturday meetings. Because it is a part-time degree program, one course per session (three courses per year) is considered a typical course load. For the entering session, a student should take no more than one course. After the entering session, a student may take up to two courses in a given session.

#### **Time to degree**

Typically, completion of a MLS degree will take approximately four years if one class is completed every session. Students are allowed to take up to seven years to complete the degree.

#### **Credit for previous degrees or coursework**

Because the MLS is a cohesive, interdisciplinary degree, credits earned in other degree programs at Rice or elsewhere will not be counted toward the MLS degree.

#### **Course registration**

Students may register for courses of study and drop or add courses only with the approval of the MLS Program Office.

#### **Deadlines**

Students must observe all program deadlines listed in the MLS calendar distributed each session.

#### **Grades**

Instructors are required to report a grade for all students whose names appear on the class list. They grade their students using the following conventional symbols: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F. According to policies listed in the Rice General Announcements:

INC (“Incomplete”)—Instructors report this designation to the Office of the Registrar when a student fails to complete a course because of verified illness or other circumstances beyond the student’s control that occur during the term.

For an incomplete received in the fall term, students must complete the work by the end of the fourth week of the winter term or an earlier date as defined by the instructor, and instructors must submit a revised grade by the end of the fifth week.

For an incomplete received in the winter term, students must complete the work by the end of the fourth week of the spring term or an earlier date as defined by the instructor, and instructors must submit a revised grade by the end of the fifth week.

For an incomplete received in the spring term, students must complete the work before the start of the fall term or an earlier date as defined by the instructor, and instructors must submit a revised grade by the end of the first week.

Students with an “incomplete” must be certain that tests, papers, and other materials affecting their grade or essential to completing a course requirement are delivered by hand or arrive via mail or email to the appropriate professor or office according to the above dates relevant to the appropriate term. This gives the instructor one week to grade the documents and submit the final grade to the Office of the Registrar by the deadlines specified above. Loss or lateness because of mail service is not an acceptable excuse for failing to meet academic deadlines.

A student who receives two “incompletes” in a term may not enroll in the next term. Students also should be aware that they may be placed on probation or suspension when the “incomplete” is changed to a grade, either by an instructor or by default.

In order to graduate, students must achieve at least a B (3.0) grade point average in courses counted toward the degree. All courses, with the exception of the capstone course, must be completed with a grade of B- or better. Courses for which the grade is below B- will not be counted toward the degree but will be included in the cumulative GPA calculation. If a student chooses to repeat the same course, the record of the first attempt (and grade) remains on the student transcript, and both grades are included in the cumulative GPA; however, the student receives credit for only that course where the grade is a B- or better. MLS students are required to make a B grade or better in the capstone course in order to graduate.

To compute grade point averages, the credits attempted in session hours for each course and the points for the grade earned (from A+ = 4.33 to F = 0.00) are multiplied, then the products (one for each course) are added together and the sum is divided by the total credits attempted.

### **Grade Change Petitions**

According to the Rice University General Announcements Faculty Grading Guidelines, instructors may not change a semester grade after the grade has been submitted to the Office of the Registrar, except when there is a clerical error in calculating the grade. This is a long-standing university rule of which the faculty are reminded by the Office of the Registrar at the end of each semester. It is designed, in part, to protect the faculty from student pressure for grade changes. All other grade changes, including retroactive change to withdrawal, incomplete, or other, must be approved by the Committee on Examinations and Standing on the basis of a written petition from the student and on information from the instructor.

In the event that a student feels that he or she has received the wrong grade in a MLS course, the student must first petition the MLS Faculty Steering Committee for a change of grade providing full details and explaining the reason for the request. The MLS Faculty Steering committee will examine the petition, if necessary confer with the instructor, and make a recommendation on the petition. If the petition is approved the request will be forwarded to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs for approval. If the MLS Steering Committee does not approve the petition the student is allowed one level of appeal to the Dean of the Glasscock School of Continuing Studies. If the Dean of the Glasscock School of Continuing Studies approves the petition, the request to change the grade will be forwarded to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs for approval then to the Committee on Examinations and Standing (as noted above). Note: grade changes that are the result of a bookkeeping error or other genuine error or mistake are exempt from this procedure.

### **Residency**

MLS students must be available to attend classes required for the entire program.

### **Continuous enrollment**

Students are expected to complete two to three courses a year unless granted an official leave of absence. The normal expectation is that students will successfully complete at least two courses an academic year and be enrolled in at least two sessions of the academic year. Students who wish to waive the policy of taking courses in two or more consecutive sessions must submit a Leave of Absence request with the MLS Program Office. Failure to request leave will result in a de facto withdrawal and students must reapply to continue study. See “Leaves or Withdrawals” below for more information.

## **LEAVES OR WITHDRAWALS**

### **Leave of absence**

A leave of absence is granted only by the Office of Graduate Studies upon the recommendation of the MLS Program Office and only to graduate students in good standing with the university. Students must obtain approval for a leave before the academic session in question. These requests, approved by the MLS program, must be received in the Office of Graduate Studies prior to the first day of classes.

Leaves are not granted after students register for courses or after the registration period passes. Normally, students may take a leave of absence for no more than two consecutive sessions. Students must pay a reinstatement fee of \$100 upon their return from an official leave.

### **Withdrawal and readmission**

Students who wish to withdraw from Rice during the session, for any reason, are to notify the MLS Program Office in writing.

The university may insist on a student's involuntary withdrawal if, in the judgment of the Dean of Graduate Studies, the student:

- Poses a threat to the lives or safety of him/herself or other members of the Rice community;
- Has a medical or psychological problem that cannot be properly treated in the university setting;
- Has a medical condition or demonstrates behavior that seriously interferes with the education of other members of the Rice community.

Students who later wish to resume study, whether after voluntary or involuntary withdrawal, must reapply to the university. Readmission requires the recommendation of the MLS Program Office and the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Accepted students must pay a readmission fee of \$350.

Students who withdraw for medical reasons must meet certain conditions when applying for readmission. They must submit a written petition for readmission to the Office of Graduate Studies at least one month before the start of the session in which they wish to resume their work at Rice. They must also provide evidence from a health professional that they have resolved the problems leading to their withdrawal. Some cases may require an interview with the director of the Rice Counseling Center, the director of Student Health Services or their designees.

### **Nonenrollment**

Work done at Rice or work involving Rice faculty or facilities during any period of nonenrollment may not be counted toward the MLS degree.

### **Personal leave**

If a graduate student cannot fulfill the requirements of his or her degree due to personal circumstances, for example a medical emergency, enrollment may be continued for up to two weeks. Students who have more than a short-term illness should contact the MLS Program Office.

## **REGISTRATION**

### **Overview**

Students new to the program will be required to attend an orientation session. The Rice Honor Code, course counseling, MLS academic policies and registration will be included in the orientation. Continuing students will be emailed before each session and invited to register for courses. Registration instructions will also be available online. In special circumstances, we will accept written requests for registration or registration changes. Please contact the MLS Program Office for more information. We do not accept any registrations, changes of registration or withdrawals from classes over the telephone.

Please note that a \$75 late fee will be assessed if registering for a course after the registration deadline.

### **Drop/Add**

During the first week of classes, students may change their registration without a penalty fee by adding or dropping courses with the MLS Program Office approval. Students must obtain approval of the MLS Program Office to add a course after the first week of classes. Class size is limited, so changing or adding courses is on a space-available basis. Students may not add courses after the third week of classes without the permission of the Office of Graduate Studies.

Students who drop a course after the third week of the session must petition the MLS Program Office. Petitions that are not approved are considered withdrawals. Please contact the MLS Program Office at 713-348-4767 regarding the petition procedure or with questions about dropping a course.

Students may not drop courses after the end of the fifth week of classes, except by approval of the Office of Graduate Studies (a \$50 fee is assessed for courses dropped after the fifth week by non-first-session students). The student's request for a late drop must be approved by the MLS Program Office and then forwarded to the dean for consideration. Students who receive approval to drop a course after the designated drop deadline will receive a grade of "W" for that course. When requests for late drops are denied, the registrar records the submitted grade (the grade earned by the student at the time the request was submitted).

### **Auditing Classes**

Admitted MLS students and MLS graduates may be allowed to audit MLS courses by following these guidelines:

- Space is available in the class,
- Instructor has given approval,
- Student pays \$800 fee per audited course; and
- Student understands h/she cannot later take the course for credit.

## **TUITION AND FEES**

As part of tuition and fees, students will be issued a campus ID from the campus police, a Rice e-mail account and Fondren Library privileges. A separate orientation to the library will be scheduled.

### **Tuition payment**

In the student's entering session, tuition payment is due at new student orientation. In succeeding sessions, the tuition is due no later than 15 business days before the session begins. Specific payment dates are posted in the MLS Academic Calendar.

### **Forms of payment**

For the application fees, the MLS program will accept checks, VISA, MasterCard or American Express. Tuition is payable only by check, MasterCard or e-check. There is a \$30 returned check fee.

### **Refund of tuition and fees**

All tuition refunds are subject to the refund schedule below:

1st Week	100% of tuition; fees are refunded
2nd Week	50% of tuition is refunded; fees are not refunded
3rd Week	25% of tuition is refunded; fees are not refunded

There are no tuition refunds after the third week of the session.

### **Billing**

After the student's entering session, tuition statements will be emailed via Esther before each session and should be paid no later than 15 business days before the session begins. If tuition is not paid by the due date, a late payment charge of \$140 will be added to the tuition bill. Students with a past-due balance are blocked from future registration.

### **Tuition reimbursement from employers**

If your employer will pay part or all of your tuition, inform the employer of the date on which your bill is due. Some employers will reimburse students only after successful completion of a course. In this case students must pay tuition and fees and be reimbursed from the employer later. MLS is not eligible for Rice tuition waiver.

### **Discount for Rice Staff**

Benefits-eligible Rice staff will receive a 10 percent tuition discount.

### **Discount for Rice Alumni**

Admitted students who are Rice graduates will receive a 15 percent tuition discount.

## **ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE**

Some academic discipline policies specified in the Rice General Announcements may not apply to the MLS program.

### **Probationary status**

Students whose cumulative grade point average or the average for the most recently completed session falls below 2.67 (B- average) are placed on probationary status. A second session of probationary status leads to automatic dismissal without the option of readmission by the Office of Graduate Studies, unless the MLS office presents a plea for exception that is approved by the dean of

Graduate Studies. The MLS Program Office is free to dismiss a student in the first session of probationary status if they issue a warning before taking action.

### **Dismissal**

Reasons for student dismissal include unsatisfactory progress as determined by the MLS Program Office or behavior judged by Rice to be disruptive or otherwise contrary to the best interests of either the university or the student.

### **Appeal**

Students may petition the Office of Graduate Studies regarding the application of any academic regulation. In some cases, the vice provost will seek the advice of the Graduate Council. For appeals regarding nonacademic matters, see below for "Procedures for resolution of problems."

### **Other disciplinary sanctions**

Additionally, the assistant dean of Student Judicial Programs may place students on probation or suspension for violating the Honor Code or Code of Student Conduct or for other disciplinary reasons. Students on disciplinary suspension (including for an Honor System violation) may not receive their degree even if they have met all academic requirements for graduation. They must leave the university within 48 hours of being informed of the dean's decision. Any tuition refund will be prorated from the official date of suspension, which is determined by the registrar. Students seeking admission after leaving the university because of a sanction imposed by the assistant dean should submit a petition in writing for review by the assistant dean of Student Judicial Programs.

### **Procedures for resolution of problems**

Problems or conflicts may arise during a student's graduate education. Students should take responsibility for informing the appropriate faculty of any such problem. All parties involved should work together amicably with the goal of resolving the problem informally if at all possible. When attempts to resolve a problem informally do not meet with success, the following grievance procedure should be adopted:

The student should submit the grievance in writing to the MLS Program Office, who will then attempt to resolve the problem. If the student remains unsatisfied, the problem should be presented to the MLS steering committee for resolution. Both the student and the program director should submit a written record of their views to this committee. If the student remains unsatisfied, the problem should be referred to a standing subcommittee designated at Graduate Council and composed of three faculty members (representing diverse disciplines within the university), one graduate student and the associate dean for Graduate Studies. A written report of proceedings at stage two should be presented to the chair of graduate council, for forwarding to the subcommittee, together with all other written materials generated during the investigation. The decision of this subcommittee will be considered final.