College of Continuing Education
University of Minnesota

MASTER of LIBERAL STUDIES PROGRAM OVERVIEW and
PROCESS for LEARNING OUTCOMES

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December 2014

Master of Liberal Studies Program Overview

The University of Minnesota’s Master of Liberal Studies (MLS) degree is offered through the College of Continuing Education. Broadly interdisciplinary, this program asks students to connect the perspectives and methodologies of more than one academic area in order to study a topic or answer a question that cannot be addressed by a single discipline or profession. MLS students blend interdisciplinary Liberal Studies seminars, electives, and a final project to create a personalized graduate degree tailored to their specific interests. One might combine the humanities and health care, for example, or business and philosophy, or artistic expression and politics.
The program gets at the heart of liberal learning, encouraging breadth of vision, growth of broad-based knowledge, use of complex ideas, and development of skill in communicating, integrating, and synthesizing information. It is aimed at part-time adult students. Discussion-oriented evening seminars, coupled with comprehensive student services, provide busy adults with the flexibility and support they need to continue their education.

**The process by which MLS Program goals and outcomes were identified**

The MLS Program’s first step in establishing an updated list of outcomes for the program was its participation in the Spring 2014 Graduate Research and Improvement Program (GRIP). One of the core elements of this program was a survey that gave our graduate students an opportunity to offer a comprehensive assessment of the MLS Program’s strengths and its opportunities given the rapidly changing environment for graduate study. Student responses were factored into a review of the existing outcomes as presented on the MLS website conducted by the Director of Graduate Studies and the core administrative staff (Connie Hessburg-Odland and Kathleen Corley) of the MLS Program. This team collaboratively prepared a revised set of outcomes and this revision was a main topic at the fall meeting of the MLS Steering Committee. The revision developed in that
meeting was then discussed and revised substantially by the committee over a period of ten days following the Steering Committee meeting. At the conclusion of this process, a “final candidate” draft was voted on by the Committee with no members voting against the proposed language. This draft was then reviewed with minor technical adjustments by the MLS’s core administrative team (Logie, Hessberg-Odland, Corley) and forwarded to the leadership of the College of Continuing Education on December 22, 2014.

**Future Applications of these Outcomes**

The revised outcomes (attached) will replace the outcomes listed on the MLS website. There they will serve as a statement of the program’s core priorities for both current and incoming students. Additionally, in keeping with current practice, the MLS learning outcomes will be circulated to MLS faculty for review and consideration as they develop their classes for the program. Finally, the discussions that led to this language have enriched our ongoing conversations about the program’s core and the ways we communicate that core to our students. We anticipate that this discussion will continue as the new outcomes are rolled out to the MLS community, and we look forward to helping our students connect these outcomes to their next steps, whether professional, academic, or personal.
Master of Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes

During their Master of Liberal Studies Program, students will:

1. Improve critical and creative thinking skills in the context of interdisciplinary knowledge-building.

2. Recognize how knowledge is constructed within selected disciplines, and apply methods from selected disciplines to the interdisciplinary study of a topic.

3. Make meaningful connections between practices, theories, and methods of selected disciplines.

4. Construct research-based arguments that demonstrate an interdisciplinary approach to scholarly, professional, or creative practice.

5. Communicate fluently to diverse audiences across disciplines in writing and speech.

The precise weighting of these outcomes will vary according to student skill and needs, but all of these outcomes are essential for students pursuing our degree.