
Independent Scholars

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[Print Version of Catalog](#) ■

Independent Scholars Program

Mission Statement

The mission of the independent scholars major is to provide students with a learning environment in which they develop and pursue self-designed curricular pathways and research goals, identifying unique domains of inquiry and interweaving multiple modes of thinking. Students are empowered to cultivate their own academic and professional interests in ways that foster the ability to comprehend and contribute uniquely and innovatively to a wide array of topics, questions and problems.

Objectives

IS majors will:

- develop topic-based interests and inquiry strategies to pursue those interests.
- enhance creativity, self-directedness and perseverance required for inquiry.
- learn research, technical and communication skills relevant to their inquiry.
- situate their inquiry in relation to contemporary notions of disciplinary thinking.
- enhance aptitude and confidence in working independently and collectively.
- apply knowledge and skills in experiential-learning settings.

Admission to the Major

Acceptance into IS is competitive and open to all JMU students with a GPA of 3.25 or higher, or by permission.

Interested students will meet with one of the IS coordinators before the end of the first semester of their first year. Based on the advice of IS coordinators, students may then enroll in the IS exploration and major application course ([IND 200](#)), which is taught each fall. Students whose interests better align with existing JMU majors will be directed to those majors.

Decisions about acceptance into IS will be made by the [IND 200](#) instructor, IS coordinators and a faculty advisory committee at the end of each [IND 200](#) course. Successful applicants will:

- have a strong academic record that demonstrates exceptional motivation, curiosity, writing ability and independent research potential.
- have successfully recruited a faculty content expert to help the IS coordinators guide the student's IS inquiry.
- have performed well overall in the [IND 200](#) course, which includes writing a convincing inquiry proposal and feasible curriculum.

Students not accepted into IS at the end of [IND 200](#) will be carefully advised into other majors and can use the three IND credits as electives.

Degree and Major Requirements

Individualized curricula using existing courses across participating JMU units will be constructed with faculty oversight to help students pursue their own inquiry goals. Each student's curriculum will include:

- a cross disciplinary exploration course ([IND 200](#))
- at least 36 credit hours of course work beyond General Education requirements
- at least four credits of skill-enhancing workshops ([IND 300](#))
- a six-credit hour senior project ([IND 499A-C](#))
- the plans for relevant field experiences, internships and/or study abroad programs.

For students in the honors program, the IS senior project will fulfill the senior honors project requirement.

Bachelor of Arts in Independent Scholars

Required courses

[General Education](#)¹
 Philosophy course²
 Foreign Language
 Major requirements
 Electives

Credit Hours

41
 3
 1-14
 49
 13-27
 120

1 The [General Education program](#) contains a set of requirements each student must fulfill. The number of credit hours necessary to fulfill these requirements may vary.

2 In addition to course work taken to fulfill [General Education](#) requirement.

Bachelor of Science in Independent Scholars

Required courses

[General Education](#)¹
 Quantitative requirement²
 Scientific Literacy requirement²
 Major requirements
 Electives

Credit Hours

41
 3
 3-4
 49
 23-24
 120

1 The [General Education program](#) contains a set of requirements each student must fulfill. The number of credit hours necessary to fulfill these requirements may vary.

2 In addition to course work taken to fulfill [General Education](#) requirement.