

SUNYIT FAQ

1. Can you get the entire degree online?

Yes, you can complete the entire program online, though it is not possible to be a full-time online student at this time. The thesis proposal and final defense is given synchronously either on campus or via a virtual presentation method.

2. I would like to take a single course the first semester as a non-matriculated student. The course listing indicates permission is required to take the course if you are not already enrolled in the IDT program. Can I enroll in the next online course offering and if it is okay how/where do I start?

If you wish to take a course as a non-matriculated student you need to send me or Kathryn Stam (the co-coordinator of the program) information indicating you are prepared for a graduate level IDT course. This may be an unofficial transcript, an example of your writing - preferably a research paper or perhaps a white paper (if it's confidential perhaps you can just send a non-proprietary section) - or something else that you feel indicates your preparation for graduate level research. Once you do that we will let the registrar know that you have permission to take the class. We allow students to take up to 6 credits on a non-matriculated basis (without yet having gone through the application process).

In addition, non-matriculated students must fill out the non-matriculated application.

Here is the link:

http://www.sunyit.edu/pdf/registrar/non-matriculated_application.pdf

Complete the form and fax it to the Registrar (792-7802) ahead of time. When you call to register, you will not be allowed to if the application has not yet been received.

3. Is there a downside to taking courses as a non-matriculated student as opposed to applying and being admitted as a matriculated student?

One key advantage to matriculating is that once you are accepted into the program you can graduate under the current requirements even if those requirements change in the future. In addition, there is the possibility that NYS will impose an enrollment cap on all SUNY campuses in the next year, in light of the state's current fiscal problems, which could limit how many students are accepted into the program. Currently, we can accept virtually all qualified students. In any case, you can only bring in up to 6 credits of IDT coursework taken as a non-matriculated student. One final point - the IDT program gets resources, such as the number of course offerings and faculty lines, based, in part, on the number of students matriculated into the program. The bottom line is that it's best to matriculate as early as you can.

4. I'm wondering if it's feasible for me to work while getting my Masters.

Our program is largely for part time study so most of our students are working while taking classes. Most students who are working take one or two IDT courses every semester.

5. Is it possible to be a full time student in the IDT program?

It's difficult to take four courses and be a full time student as we generally offer two to three classes online in any given semester and two in the summer. Students who wish to go full time take a fourth class from another program and apply them toward the six credits of open electives that can be taken from any relevant and accredited graduate program (with prior approval). We also offer independent studies and directed studies classes for students close to graduation.

6. I don't see anything that indicates how long it will take to complete the program and when specific courses will be offered. What are your scheduled program course offerings and degree completion schedules?

We offer at least one of the three core classes every fall and spring. We also, offer at least one IDT elective online and one course in hybrid format on campus. If the numbers warrant, we will offer the course both online and in hybrid format. (Our on campus courses are in hybrid format - they meet every other week and on alternate weeks they meet online.) If you can handle two courses each semester and two in the summer you can graduate in two years as the program is 33 credits or 11 courses (all are 3 credits). If you are too busy to take two courses per semester, then it will probably take 2 1/2 to 3 years to complete the program.

7. I don't see any pre-requisites listed for any of the program courses nor did I see a specific required course sequence. Am I correct in assuming that the program doesn't require any particular course order and that all courses stand alone without pre-reqs?

Yes, that's correct. There is no required order and there are no pre-requisites for any IDT courses, which is one reason we have the requirement for admission into the program of an undergraduate degree in a related field. We recommend that students take the core classes (IDT501, IDT507, and IDT534) as early as possible as they are not offered every semester. Of course, if you have no background in the content of a particular course it may be more difficult than it will be for someone with background in that area.

8. I'm a little leery about online learning. How does it match up with traditional classes held on campus?

Yes, we were initially leery as well. Online learning does require strong personal organizational skills and discipline as it is your responsibility to stay on top of assignments and discussion postings. Nevertheless, we decided to move the program to an online/hybrid format this past fall for a number of reasons, including:

a. One of the goals of the Information Design and Technology program is to study new modes of information delivery

Since its inception, we have been studying, evaluating, and implementing new information techniques and technologies as part of our program. For instance, we've sought to understand social interaction through Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG) and through social networks such as Facebook and Second Life. It therefore makes sense to implement and analyze online learning, which may be one of the biggest changes in learning since the blackboard was invented. We try to use new learning technologies in our online (and on campus) classes - for instance, lectures in one class are video and audio podcasts and students posted responses by creating their own podcasts. Another class used a plug-in called a tidliwiki to create a literature review. (You can view a recent thesis, submitted as a tidliwiki, at: <http://xserve.sunyit.edu/~sunt/MollyPodcastingProject/> .

b. *The flexibility and convenience of online classes, particularly due to interest in the program from students living outside of the area.*

This means that you can still work during the day, you do not have to spend time traveling to class, you can study and participate whenever you are free, and you improve the environment by not driving as much. You can also sign up for more than one class without worrying about overlaps in time or changes in locations. And there is little wasted time in class as you can immediately read or listen to lectures and complete assignments.

c. *Improvements in the mode of delivery*

In the Angel Course Management System, which we now use, there are provisions for more robust discussion formats, for delivery of materials in new ways, such as via video podcasting, wikis, and other formats, and much easier tracking of your efforts throughout the semester. For instance, by using the online grade book you can track how you are doing, review comments from similar assignments before posting the next one, and learn about what is coming due.

d. *Online classes can offer a richer, more interactive environment than classes you take on campus*

This may sound counter intuitive, but it's true. At the beginning of the semester you introduce yourself to your fellow classmates and then throughout the semester you will discuss weekly topics with your classmates, often responding to their responses and adding your take on a particular issue. You are graded on the quality of your response so there is a strong motivation to move the discussion forward. You can often include imagery, animations, and references to outside websites and other sources in your discussions.

What's especially nice in the online format is that you can spend more time thinking about, researching, and writing your responses than you could in a traditional classroom. These in-depth, purposeful discussions, in which every one in the class is actively involved, are rare in a traditional classroom environment. We also hold small team discussions and teams present on topics and oversee discussions with the rest of the class. This "student-centered learning," method can be more useful for learning than the traditional lecture method.

Similarly, student forums are often set up where students can post questions about the readings, the assignments, or about projects that are coming due. In a sense, students learn to help each other as colleagues and teammates. For instance, if you are having difficulties with a software tool you can post a question to a forum and students or faculty will help you find an answer. You can also email the professor from within the class module or you can set up a synchronous online chat session with the professor or other students.

e. *Do your non-traditional or non-classroom students feel satisfied that they learned from the experience?*

We just started the wholly online program this past fall so it's not possible to provide information with statistical certainty but we have gotten very positive feedback. Here are two unsolicited emails:

Sean: "For the record, I appreciate the way this class has been run, with learning in mind-including the way grading has been done--the comments from my peers, and the opportunity to take part in my first online university course (and my first university course in a long, long while). I firmly believe that we learn by discourse and that by teaching others (such as our student presentations) we promote our own learning and reinforce concepts we have learned."

Anita: " I did want to say that I have learned quite a lot through class! And thank you so much for all of the support that you have provided through Jings, podcasts, etc. I was originally a little worried about how instruction would be provided through an online course, but I feel that everything was so clearly presented. My fiance is currently taking a design/Photoshop course online through ESC and his instruction has been somewhat lacking -- I was able to use what you put together to get a good grasp on things and then help him with some of the things in his class. I've had such a great experience that I have decided to formally apply for the program once we have wrapped up this course."

e. Access to global resources online

By using the web we can integrate presentations by experts in the field, experience new technologies as they are being introduced, and view animations and experience 3D environments. For instance, a recent class included a presentation by a world re-known photographer, a Nobel Laureate, and a Flash animator.

f. Insights as to the online process - one of the goals of the program

Because many of our graduates will be going into professions in which they will be creating or using online learning environments the class methodology itself becomes a learning experience.

g. Learning, taking part in activities, and reading at your own pace

Many students learn in different ways and at different rates; online learning often accounts for these different learning modalities.

h. How does the "online" aspect of your classes work? Is there any interaction among other students?

I can only answer for the courses I teach, but I believe other faculty use similar techniques. I have opening ice breaker discussion groups, where students introduce each other; I assign a number of team projects, where students jointly design presentations; and I have weekly discussion groups, where students post reactions to the team presentation and where they often post responses to other postings. As a teacher I provide video podcasts and presentations and topics covered in the class, and short videos in response to student concerns.

9. Do IDT courses include hands-on projects?

While the focus is on understanding how to analyze and evaluate new information design technologies, many of the courses include a hands-on project using various technology-based programs such as Flash, InDesign, Photoshop, and HTML. Although we do teach some basic skills in many design applications the program isn't focused on teaching software. You will get a taste of many design-related programs in the classes and we generally provide student forums where students can ask questions about the software. For instance, in a recent class on Instructional Design every student created a video podcast and in a class on Information Technology every student created a Tidliwiki (a Firefox plug-in).

10. Will I need to buy software to take your classes?

While it will be simpler if you buy the Adobe Suite of software (Photoshop, Flash, InDesign, Illustrator), it should not be necessary to do so as we try to work within the time limits of trial software or we use free software (such as Firefox Plug-ins or Google Docs) in classes. You can buy software at a considerable student discount through the SUNYwide purchase contract (for instance, currently \$227 for a package of Adobe software including InDesign CS4, Photoshop CS4, Illustrator CS4, and Acrobat 9 Pro; and 139.95 for Adobe Flash CS4). It is important that you have the basic Microsoft Office Suite, which you can purchase, if necessary, through the same contract (currently \$54.95 for the Mac version, \$68.95 for Win 2007).

Career Fields

1. What fields have your students gone into?

While we don't track where all of our students have ended up, we know that many are currently working as

K-12 Technology Specialists

K-12 teachers in Art, Math, and Science

Community College faculty members in Web design and design

University level adjuncts

Instructional Media experts in education and at the corporate level

Educational Technology staff

Web Development staff

Graphic Designers

Chief Information Officers

Health Services information officers

Database Administrators

Learning Management and Training Officers

Admissions Counselors

Systems Integration Analysts

2. Do you find that graduates advance in their careers or move on to higher level training positions? (is there such a thing?).

We've only run the online program for a semester but we've had a hybrid program (where students meet online and in class) and I know of a number of graduates who have gone on to teaching at Community Colleges and as adjuncts at four-year schools. I also know of a number who have become technical specialists and others who are in doctoral programs in the field. Others simply knew they'd be getting a raise once they completed the degree.

3. Would this Masters Program enable me to teach at a collegiate level? I've always had a secondary goal to one day instruct at a college.

We have graduates teaching at community colleges such as Herkimer County Community College and Mohawk Valley Community College. We also have alumni who teach as an adjunct at four-year schools or as a full-time non-tenure track lecturer. If you want to secure a tenure track faculty line at a four-year college or university you generally need to complete the IDT degree and then go on to a PhD program or for an MFA. We have had students go that route.

4. I am interested in the IDT program at SUNY IT. My eventual goal is to apply for NYS certification as an Educational Technology Specialist at a NYS high school. Can you provide me any information as if or whether the IDT program can be used to meet the NYSED requirements for the certification? I already have provisional certification in the field.

My understanding is that you get provisional certification with a bachelor's degree from an accredited university for the program in your field and to obtain permanent certification you need a masters degree from an accredited institution (like ours) and 12 credits in your subject area. NYSED has accepted at least one of our courses toward the 12-credit requirement: IDT507, Information Technologies. In any case, it's best to first check with NYSED on what courses they will accept in this field or in any other field.

Here's additional information from the local BOCES certification officer in our area (Oneida County) on this subject:

Teachers who are certified and considering completing the master's degree should contact NYS themselves to ask that question. And the sooner the better because it can take months for them to respond.

I would think that technology and educational technology specialist would be able to use [your degree]. But like I said NYS has the final say on it. Also, if someone is pursuing certification and has been evaluated and has a deficiency in the content area they can fill out a prior approval form and submit it to NYS for their answer.

Applying to the program - For more information see the graduate coordinator Maryrose Raab (maryrose.raab@sunyit.edu) and check the catalog at (<http://www.sunyit.edu/catalogs/>)

1. I noticed that you require a 3.0 GPA as an undergraduate. What if I'm just below that GPA and have experience or have already taken graduate classes?

In considering applications of those whose GPA is below 3.0 we take a close look at coursework related to the degree, we consider professional work in the field and we look closely at your portfolio. Some students take a class as a non-matriculated student, as a way of showing their ability to handle the workload.

2. Can I avoid having to submit a portfolio and letters of reference?

There is now a benefit to starting as a non-matriculated student - if you earn a B+ in at least one IDT course, then when you do go through the application process, you are not required to submit a portfolio or the 2 letters of reference - we waive these requirements.

3. Regarding references: Can I use personal references, past faculty references or job references? Which is preferred?

Faculty and work-related references are recommended. I would only use a personal reference if that person knows you professionally as well. However, if you don't have enough professional references you can include personal references.

4. Can I take courses on campus if I wish?

Yes, you can opt for either online or hybrid classes, which meet on campus every other week (usually Mondays or Wednesdays from 5-7:50 p.m.) and online on the alternate weeks (asynchronously).

5. Can I transfer in courses from another graduate program?

You can transfer in up to six credits of graduate level courses as long as they are considered relevant to the program. The courses you listed in your email seem to qualify though you'd have to fill out a petition and include the course descriptions. All SUNY graduate programs have a 27-credit residency requirement and since the MS in IDT is a 33-credit program we can only accept six credits from another school.