

## Frequently Asked Questions About the IDT Program

Last Update: January 25, 2010

Editor: Co-coordinators Dr. Russell L. Kahn, Dr. Kathryn Stam

<b>I. Courseloads, Course Content, and Transferring In Courses .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1. Can you get the entire degree online?.....	2
2. Is it possible to be a full time student in the IDT program? .....	2
3. Can I enroll in a course as a non-matriculated student? .....	2
4. Is there a downside to taking courses as a non-matriculated student as opposed to applying and being admitted as a matriculated student? .....	2
5. I'm wondering if it's feasible for me to work while getting my Master's degree.....	3
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? .....	3
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?.....	3
8. I'm a little leery about online learning. How does it match up with traditional classes held on campus? .....	3
9. Do IDT courses include hands-on projects? .....	5
10. Will I need to buy software to take your classes? .....	6
<b>II. Career Fields .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1. What fields have your students gone into?.....	6
2. 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. ....	6
3. Can the IDT program be used to meet the NYSED requirements for the certification? .	6
<b>III. Applying to the program .....</b>	<b>7</b>
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?.....	7
2. Can I avoid having to submit a portfolio and letters of reference? .....	7
3. Regarding references: Can I use personal references, past faculty references or job references? Which is preferred? .....	7
4. Can I take courses on campus if I wish? .....	7
5. Can I transfer in courses from another graduate program?.....	8
6. Can I get credit for professional experience or can I use on-the-job experience in an internship?.....	8
7. Your application requires a degree in a related field or 15 credits deemed related to the degree. I have what may be considered an unrelated undergraduate degree but I have many years in a related field.....	8
<b>IV. Quality of Faculty, Accreditation, Costs, Financial Aid .....</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Are you an accredited program? .....	8
2. Are SUNY online degrees real degrees? .....	9
3. What is the cost of the degree? .....	9
4. What are the qualifications of your faculty? .....	9
5. Do you provide financial aid? .....	9
<b>V. How can I find out what's being offered any particular semester? .....</b>	<b>9</b>

## **I. Courseloads, Course Content, and Transferring In Courses**

### **1. Can you get the entire degree online?**

Yes, you can complete the entire program online. In fact, it is no longer possible to take more than one course on campus in any given semester. The program is basically an online degree. The thesis proposal and final defense is given synchronously either on campus or via a virtual presentation method.

### **2. Is it possible to be a full time student in the IDT program?**

**Yes, it is possible but three courses is the highest recommended number. For financial aid purposes, students generally must take 3 or 4 courses, but please check with the Financial Aid Office before making those decisions.**

It's difficult to take four courses and be a full time student as we generally offer between 3-6 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 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. Since we only offer one of the three cores (IDT501, 507, 534) each semester, the minimum time to complete the coursework is three semesters. It will generally take at least one additional semester to complete your thesis.

### **3. Can I enroll in a course as a non-matriculated student?**

If you wish to take a course as a non-matriculated student you need to send Dr. Russell Kahn or Dr. Kathryn Stam (the co-coordinator of the program) information indicating you are prepared for a graduate level IDT course. This should include 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 12 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](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.

### **4. 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 we will impose an enrollment cap on the IDT program in the next year based on resources and faculty availability in light of the state's current fiscal problems. This could limit how many students are accepted into the program. 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.

**5. I'm wondering if it's feasible for me to work while getting my Master's degree.**

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. There are some students who take three or even four classes, and they find it very demanding.

**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 one of the three core classes every fall and spring. We also, offer at least two IDT electives online every semester.

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. The fastest you can complete the program in in three semesters, or a year and a half, but we suggest that two years is more realistic for most students.

**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 foundation courses. Of course, if you have no background in the content of a particular course, the coursework may take more of your time than it would for someone with a 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 in 2008-09 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 plugin 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/> .

**a. 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 decrease impact on 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. There is little wasted time in class as you can immediately read or listen to lectures and complete assignments.

**b. 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. In addition, we use many open source applications and resources from the Internet and direct you to them through links in Angel.

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

This may sound counterintuitive, 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.

#### **d. 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.

#### **e. 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.

#### **f. 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.

### **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 plugin).

This past semester students created Flash animations in the Information Theory class to show if they could apply Human-Centered Design concepts covered in the class. I'm attaching one of the submissions here (open it with a flash player):

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

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 Plugins, GimpShop, or Google Docs) in classes. Depending on your skills and interests as well as the classes you are taking, it might be helpful if you buy the Adobe Suite of software (PhotoShop, Flash, InDesign, Illustrator). 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 \$56.95 for the Mac version, \$59.95 for Win 2007), although there are open source options (Open Office) available as well.

## **II. 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
- Help Desk staff
- Graphic Designers
- Health Services information officers
- Database Administrators
- Learning Management and Training Officers
- Admissions Counselors
- Systems Integration Analysts

### **2. 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 adjuncts 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.

### **3. Can the IDT program be used to meet the NYSED requirements for the certification?**

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.

We have had a number of students use our degrees and become K-12 technology and new media specialists and other students have used the degree to permanent certification in fields ranging from math to social studies.

In the case of any of the "Generalist" certificates (Early Childhood Education Birth- Grade 2, Childhood Education Grades 1-6, Generalist in Middle Childhood Education Grades 5-9, Students with Disabilities Birth-Grade 2, Students with Disabilities Grades 1-6 and Students with Disabilities Generalist Grades 5-9), the master's degree may be in any of the Liberal Arts & Sciences.

See <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/relatedmasters.html> for details.

### **III. Applying to the program**

**For more information see the graduate coordinator Maryrose Raab ([maryrose.raab@sunyit.edu](mailto: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 and how long it's been since you received your undergraduate degree. We also 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 graduate level work.

#### **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 take one or more IDT courses as a non-matriculated student and receive a B+ or higher in those courses, then you are not required to submit a portfolio or the two letters of reference when you apply - we waive these requirements.

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

Faculty, professional/work-related references are required.

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

Almost all of our courses are offered completely online. On occasion, you can opt to take a hybrid class, which meets 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. You'll need to send us transcripts and course descriptions. You must receive a B or higher from an accredited university. 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.

#### **6. Can I get credit for professional experience or can I use on-the-job experience in an internship?**

We do not award credit for life experience. Many of the students in the IDT program are professionals in various fields and their experience on the job plays a key role in responding to many of the discussions held during online activities and in completing the projects and papers. You might also decide to work on projects in classes that relate to your job and to complete your thesis work based on new information technologies that are being used or which might be used at your job. Thus, there will be ample opportunity to utilize your life experiences in the classes themselves. But we do not give direct credit for that experience.

As regards Independent Study or Internship coursework - we don't approve an internship or independent study until after you have completed the core coursework (IDT501, 507, 534) in the program and complete a proposal which shows how you will apply theory learned from the coursework in the independent study or internship. The key difference, as I see it, with an independent study or internship at the graduate level and one done at the undergraduate level is the much stronger theoretical underpinnings required for 500-level credit. What's likely, if you're interested, is you can request Independent Study credit for working on a research project with a faculty member.

#### **7. Your application requires a degree in a related field or 15 credits deemed related to the degree. I have what may be considered an unrelated undergraduate degree but I have many years in a related field.**

If your degree is deemed as unrelated field then there is a requirement for 15 undergraduate credits related to the degree. However, we will consider relevant professional experience. I would encourage you to submit your transcripts, and samples of your work to admissions for a determination.

### **IV. Quality of Faculty, Accreditation, Costs, Financial Aid**

#### **1. Are you an accredited program?**

SUNY Institute of Technology is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

## **2. Are SUNY online degrees real degrees?**

When you register and complete the IDT online degree program at a SUNYIT, your online degree is a real, accredited degree. The credits you earn while studying online are from SUNYIT and your degree will come from SUNYIT, which is accredited by the State University of New York.

## **3. What is the cost of the degree?**

SUNY campuses vary on cost-per-credit, and you'll need to contact the campus offering the degree program you are interested in.

Below are some average costs-per-credit for the majority of SUNY Campuses offering online courses\*:

## **4. What are the qualifications of your faculty?**

The qualifications of the core full-time faculty follow. In addition, we often have experts in various fields teach classes in the program.

**Mona de Vestel**, Assistant Professor; M.P.S., Interactive Telecommunications, New York University.

**Russell L. Kahn**, Associate Professor; Ph.D., Information Science, Rockefeller College of Public Policy, University at Albany.

**Steven Schneider**, Professor, Interim Dean; Ph.D., Computer mediated communication and computer mediated instructional systems, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

**Kathryn Stam**, Assistant Professor; Ph.D., Social and ethical aspects of information technology in work organizations; Syracuse University.

Our part-time faculty almost always have terminal degrees in their fields.

## **5. Do you provide financial aid?**

We have a very limited number of graduate assistantships. Fill out the form in the back of the admissions catalog (<http://www.sunyit.edu/catalogs/>) and email Dr. Kahn or Dr. Stam if you are interested, or fill out the form as part of the application process.

For other forms of financial aid contact Maryrose Raab in admissions [maryrose.raab@sunyit.edu](mailto:maryrose.raab@sunyit.edu)

## **V. How can I find out what's being offered any particular semester?**

Go to <http://bannerweb.sunyit.edu> and choose "Search Schedule" to see a current list of classes. Check the catalog <http://www.sunyit.edu/catalogs/> for course descriptions.

We also offer a directed study if you need an additional class, contact Dr. Kahn or Dr. Stam for details.

Russell L. Kahn, PhD  
Co-Program Coordinator, Masters in Information, Design, and Technology  
Winner Gould Award for Excellence in Teaching  
Associate Fellow, STC  
SUNY Institute of Technology  
FAX 792 7503  
Office 792 7438

Kathryn Stam, Ph.D.  
Asst. Prof. of Anthropology  
Co-Program Coordinator, Masters in Information, Design, and Technology  
SUNY Institute of Technology  
Email: [stamk@sunyit.edu](mailto:stamk@sunyit.edu)  
Phone: 315-792-7334 (please leave message)