

MAIS

MASTER OF ARTS IN
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

THESIS HANDBOOK (CAPSTONE PROJECT)



CONCORDIA
UNIVERSITY



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MAIS Program Specifications, Requirements and Guidelines
are subject to change as they are deemed appropriate or necessary by
Concordia University, Irvine.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Master of Arts in International Studies (MAIS) degree has concentrations in Business and Education alongside a 12-month internship in the People's Republic of China. This course of study culminates in a Capstone Project (Masters Thesis) that represents a consolidation, synthesis, and reflection of your academic, professional and personal experience in the program.

Students who are in the joint MAIS/MBA degree program, will be required to complete separate capstone projects for both the MAIS and MBA programs.

Capstone Project Outcomes and Rationale

The Masters Thesis provides an **end goal** for students as they enter the program, an outcome that guides and sustains their studies – both formal and informal – starting in the US at the Concordia University Irvine campus and throughout their year in China.

Furthermore, it is a **demonstration** of the student's knowledge, intellectual ability, cultural sensitivity, responsibility, maturity, diligence, resilience, independence, ethical character, and their commitment to learning, serving and leading.

Finally, the Capstone Project/Masters Thesis is a public document that benefits and informs the greater academic, professional and/or public community. It is a **contribution** towards the knowledge on China – suitable for publication and dissemination.

Capstone Project Goals

The following goals are foundational to the MAIS Capstone Project:

- Support original student scholarship and research as a culmination of his/her coursework and experience in China.
- Encourage students to personalize their experience by choosing a topic that is relevant to their educational/personal/professional goals, needs and interests.
- Assess students' academic skills and knowledge, their depth and breadth of experience in China, and their personal development and growth.
- Afford faculty the opportunity to deepen their knowledge, pursue scholarly interests and mentor students.

**Throughout this document the terms "Capstone Project" and "Masters Thesis" will be used interchangeably, both denoting the same meaning and usage.*

*A **thesis** is defined as:*

"...a detailed study based on original research and submitted for a Master's degree."

- University of Canterbury

"...a scholarly essay defending some proposition, usually a dissertation submitted for an academic degree"

- Oxford University Press

"...a dissertation embodying results of original research and especially substantiating a specific view"

- Merriam-Webster Dictionary

The Research Strand

The four courses in the research strand collectively and sequentially provide a continuum of preparation, support and accountability for the successful and timely completion of the Capstone Project/Masters Thesis.

SUMMER I (CUI)

MAIS 502 – International/Comparative Research Methods (4 units)

FALL I (China)

MAIS 503 – Ethnographic Field Research (3 units)

- Thesis research proposal due at the end of the course
- Preliminary contact with potential advisors by the end of the course

SPRING I (China)

MAIS 504 – Data Analysis (3 units)

- Secure advisor by the end of the course

SUMMER II & FALL II (location unrestricted)

MAIS 600 – Thesis Writing (4 units)

- Complete the writing and filing of the thesis by the end of the course

In the Summer Term in residence at Concordia University, Irvine (CUI), students begin the research strand with **MAIS 502 – International/Comparative Research Methods** (4 units), a survey course that is designed to provide students with fundamental research skills that can be applied to an international context. These include case study, surveys, interviews, discourse analysis, and other qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Students will also learn how to create a literature review, and subsequently, to utilize that knowledge to formulate a research plan.

During the Fall Term in China, students will continue to progress through the research strand with **MAIS 503 – Ethnographic Field Research** (3 units), an opportunity to put into practice and take to the field the research skills learned in MAIS 502. In this course, students will explore contemporary economic, social, and political issues impacting China through carefully designed field research experiments that evaluate documented data and results from the primary course text (*The return of the God of Wealth: The Transition to a Market Economy in Urban China* by Charlotte Ikels). This course will also provide exposure to a diverse array of viable topics for students to focus their own Masters Thesis on (and consequently, potential advisors). Students, as required by the course, will write a research proposal. Students are expected to contact potential advisors and submit their proposals to them by the end of this course. A list of potential advisors (along with their areas of expertise/interest and contact information) may be

found on the MAIS program web site at: <http://www.cui.edu/mais> - click on the left hand link “MAIS 600 Faculty Advisor Information.”

During the Spring Term in China, students will acquire the skills of quantitative data analysis in **MAIS 504 – Data Analysis** (3 units) to examine and make sense of both business and educational information. The course will focus on descriptive statistics and regressions, though other forms of analysis will also be covered. Students will be required to build on their research from MAIS 503 by either utilizing data that was already gathered through the ethnography or collecting additional quantitative data sufficient to run analyses on. By the end of this course, students may have completed all of the research steps up to data analysis, and are ready to finish their Masters Thesis by writing, editing and formatting their paper appropriately. Students may not collect data without the approval of their research proposal by an advisor, therefore it is essential that students have initiated contact and communication regarding their research with their likely advisor by this time. [Note that advisors are not officially assigned to students until they have enrolled in the MAIS 600 course towards the end of the Spring term.]

The research strand culminates in **MAIS 600 – Research Writing**, where students are officially assigned to a faculty advisor and are engaged in completing their research project by editing and publishing a final research paper that will meet the professional standards of validity, reliability and credibility. Once a student has selected/been assigned a faculty advisor they are required to complete their work with their advisor; students who desire to change their advisors after they are officially assigned will be assessed a \$500 Advisor Drop Fee. Students may not enroll in this course if they have any other courses that they have not passed by the beginning of the term. There is no requirement for students to be in residence during this time, as students’ work, communication and collaboration with their advisors can be accomplished over the internet, phone or other forms of correspondence. It is the advisor’s discretion to determine the

It is the expectation of Concordia University, Irvine (CUI) that students finish their Masters of Arts in International Studies (MAIS) Degree within 18-19 months (Summer I, Fall I, Spring I, Summer II, Fall II).

methodology and frequency of communication, though regular meetings are expected. The anticipated time allowed for the student to complete their research writing spans the Summer and Fall Terms, [note that students must register for the MAIS 600E-0 during the fall term at no charge]. Students who do

not file their Master’s Thesis by the end of the Fall Term may repeat the Research Writing course in the Spring Term, but must obtain their advisors approval. Students who obtain advisor approval to repeat the Research Writing course must again register for the 4 additional unit course (full tuition fees apply again). Students filing their theses during the following summer (the absolute latest deadline) will additionally be subject to a \$500 late filing fee and will need to register for the MAIS 600E-1 course. Students may file their thesis at any point within course – it is not necessary to wait until the end of the term. Students will receive a Pass or No Pass at the end of the course to indicate whether or not they have successfully completed all of the requirements for the MAIS degree.

MAIS 600 Project / Thesis Timeline

<u>summer term</u> [-----1 st Academic Year-----]			<u>summer term</u> [-----2 nd Academic Year-----]			<u>summer term</u> 3 rd Year
<u>fall term</u>	<u>spring term</u>		<u>fall term</u>	<u>spring term</u>		
MAIS 502	MAIS 503	MAIS 504	MAIS 600	MAIS 600E-0	MAIS 600	MAIS 600E-1
	<u>Proposal DUE</u>	Data Collection	Thesis Writing	No \$	full \$ tuition	\$500 extension fee
	Search for Advisor	Consult with Advisor	Advisor Assigned	Extension if necessary	Reenroll w/ Advisor's approval	Final Extension

MAIS 600E-0, No Charge Extension of MAIS 600 course

MAIS 600E-1, \$500 Charge for Extension of second MAIS 600 course

Microsoft Project 2007

It has been found to be extremely helpful to many MAIS advisors to utilize Microsoft Project 2007 with MAIS students. Your advisor may elect to utilize this software with you to keep track of and encourage progress towards completion of your thesis. Microsoft Project 2007 provides a visual timeline of tasks to be completed. The timeline tasks/steps are broken down into approximately 40-50 individual tasks that interrelate. These tasks can be modified to suit a student's individual project. The completion dates for each task provide a clear roadmap for both the student and advisor to follow and provide a realistic framework for good time management leading to a successful project thesis completion target being met. The Microsoft Project 2007 software is available for both advisor and student free for the educational purposes of this course via an internet download from Microsoft. If you are required to utilize this software, instructions on how to download and utilize the application will be provided by your advisor.

The Masters Thesis

A thesis consists of a question (and in many cases, a hypothesis) that is inspired by a variety of knowledge sources: experience, history and revelation (to name a few). A systematic approach is organized and implemented, and data/information/evidence is collected, analyzed and interpreted. These results are then compared to the original question (and hypothesis when posited) along with the body of knowledge surrounding the topic. A conclusion is drawn regarding the limitations, implications and future directions of the research. In most cases, a thesis does not endeavor to create new knowledge as much as it tests, modifies, or extends knowledge that already exists (although in some cases it may revolutionize the field). Though many definitions offer an argument, proposition or hypothesis as a central component of the thesis, it is not necessary, particularly given the nature of the MAIS program and the unique experience that it hopes to provide its students – one that is based on the humility of good anthropology (Murrell, 2001). By this we intend for MAIS students to be explorers and learners, challenging their preconceptions or preferably leaving them behind as they discover both the strange and familiar in China. Any argument, proposition or hypothesis must be at least tentative, testable, and malleable.

The documentation of the results from the research conducted will take a specified form with key components. In their MAIS 502 course (International/Comparative Research Methods), students will be thoroughly introduced to each of the requirements of and parts that make up the Masters Thesis. The details of the precise requirements of paper formatting will come later in this handbook (see the section titled: *Thesis Guidelines and Requirements* pgs. 9-11). The necessary components of the Masters Thesis for the MAIS program include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. Abstract
 - a. Summary of thesis: purpose, literature review, methods, findings and implications
2. Introduction
 - a. China – an Overview
 - b. Research Topic/Question/Issue/Problem/Proposition/Argument
 - c. Definitions of Key Terms
 - d. (optional) Rationale/Experiences/Potential Contributions and Benefits that the research is motivated by
3. Background
 - a. Literature Review (of the relevant research available)
 - b. (optional) Theoretical Framework/Lens/Perspective
4. Methodology
 - a. Research Approach & Tools (qualitative and/or quantitative)
 - b. Execution Plan (including timeline of steps/stages)
 - c. Subjects/Sampling
5. Results (Data Analysis)
 - a. Description of analyses utilized (including rationale)
 - b. Documentation & Interpretation of data (including charts and graphs)
 - c. Interpretation of the data
6. Discussion & Conclusion
 - a. Discussion of key findings (particularly as they relate to your original questions, propositions and arguments)
 - b. Presentation of limitation and implications
 - c. Suggestions for future research
7. (optional) Appendices
 - a. Research Instruments
 - b. Raw or Reorganized Data
 - c. Additional Information
8. References
 - a. Bibliography of all citations

Thesis Advisor

It is the goal of Concordia University, Irvine (CUI) to match appropriate advisors with students who are enrolled in the MAIS 600 (Thesis Writing) course and pursuing their Masters Thesis as a partial fulfillment and culminating project of the degree. This match depends not only on the expertise, availability and interest level of faculty, but also upon the students' goals, needs and interests. Even before an advisor is officially assigned, students should be working informally with a faculty member who will provide guidance for the development and implementation of a research plan. This interaction is also intended to provide time for both student and faculty to familiarize themselves and develop a positive working relationship with one another.

Once a suitable faculty member has been contacted by an MAIS student, their initial role is to consider approval for the student's research proposal. In most cases, this involves a negotiation between student and advisor, as an appropriate topic/question and methodology are determined (including a discussion of the resources required for successful implementation of the project). Thus students are expected to work closely with their advisor and under their guidance develop a clear and cogent research plan. It is up to the advisor whether or not to accept the research proposal, and thus it must meet their expectations, standards and consent.

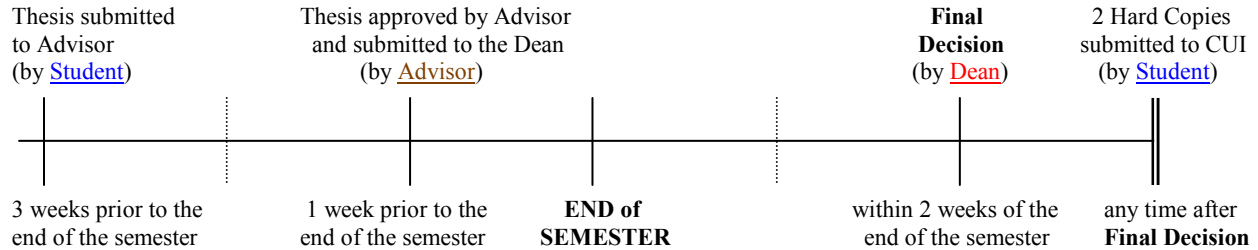
Once a proposal has been accepted by the advisor the student should complete and submit the Approval Form for Graduate Research Proposal / Thesis Project (see Appendix B), it will be forwarded to the Dean for his final approval. Once the Dean's approval has been granted, students will then initiate the collection of their data. Advisors should be regularly updated on the progress of data collection, particularly, but not limited to when there are issues or anomalies in the data. It is imperative to wait for approvals by the advisor and Dean before proceeding with the research, as you may be required to make major changes to your research plan. Once a student has selected/been assigned a faculty advisor they are required to complete their work with their advisor; students who desire to change their advisors after they are officially assigned will be assessed a \$500 Advisor Drop Fee.

The Research Proposal is an outline of why, what, when, where and how a student intends to proceed with their intended plan. It should be approximately 8-10 pages in length, and may also include a brief literature review.

*Why – Rationale/Purpose
What – Topic/Question
When – Timeline
Where – Sample/Setting
How – Methods/Instruments*

By this time, most students will be ready to begin the writing phase of their Capstone Project. The advisor guides students by reading drafts and offering helpful comments and insights. As with the research proposal, the advisor is responsible for evaluating the final product – with the advisor's signed approval necessary for the thesis to be forwarded then to the Dean for his final approval. The advisor is also required to provide his/her own written evaluation (1 page minimum) of the strengths, limitations and overall assessment of the masters thesis as submitted by the student. If students desire to complete their degree by the end of the term, they must submit the final draft of their masters thesis to their advisor no later than 3 weeks prior to the close of the semester. This provides advisors with at least 2 weeks to complete their evaluation of the thesis and to pass it on to the Dean.

Deadlines for Submission of Thesis



The two hard copies submitted to CUI must meet these specifications:

- √ *Tape Binding*
- √ *#100 lb. Paper Cover Stock on front and back. The front cover should contain cover page information. The back cover should be blank.*
- √ *Cover paper stock should follow the correct color scheme based on the year that they entered the program.*
 - *2005 (Group 1) – White*
 - *2006 (Group 2) – Red*
 - *2007 (Group 3) – Orange*
 - *2008 (Group 4) – Yellow*
 - *2009 (Group 5) – Green*
 - *2010 (Group 6) – Blue*
 - *2011 (Group 7) – Indigo*
 - *2012 (Group 8)– Violet*

** it is recommended that students utilize Kinko's, Office Max, or other commercial office service centers of comparable quality for the printing and binding of their thesis.*

** Theses should be mailed to:
Concordia University
Attn: MAIS Department
1530 Concordia West
Irvine, Ca 92612*

As the “professor of record,” the Dean will consider the submitted work along with the advisor’s recommendations in assigning the final grade for the MAIS 600 course. A passing grade indicates permission for students to submit and “file” two copies of their masters thesis to Concordia University, Irvine (CUI) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MAIS degree. **MAIS final Thesis project papers must contain an executive summary (no more than 100 words) and a list of “key words” so that they the Thesis papers can be more easily**

indexed (for those who want to try to find some research on the topic). Remember that even if a thesis has been accepted and a final grade of Pass entered, a student is not eligible to graduate until the two hard copies adhering to the program guidelines have been received, approved and filed at CUI.

One final note on advisement: Quite often, faculty members will see significant potential in a research project and may invite students to co-author a publication that is based on a Masters Thesis. Faculty advisors may choose to pursue publication of any thesis that they work on with an MAIS student. It must be co-authored with the student (who must, at minimum be named second author). Depending on who was involved in the development of the project, additional authors may be appropriately recognized as a co-author (e.g., the professor of a research strand course).

RECOMMENDATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

Recommendations

1. Build a positive relationship with your advisor – they can be your greatest asset.
 - a. Your advisor is committed to work with you to help you achieve your goal of completing your research project, but remember that faculty are not obligated to serve as advisors – impress and convince them that you are the type of student and yours is the type of project that they would like to work with/on.
 - b. Recognize that your advisor has other professional obligations (e.g., teaching a full load of courses, on Sabbatical, advising other students, or involved in a research project of his/her own.). Be mindful of your professor's time.
 - c. Students, who are genuinely interested in their studies, demonstrate enduring effort, are respectful and humble, and attend to appropriate detail, are a joy to their professors.
2. Take initiative and take advantage of the resources available to you.
 - a. Your advisor's job is to make sure that you are successful – and by this we don't merely mean that you graduate. Advisors are required to provide guidance, feedback and accountability for their advisees. They will ensure the quality of your experience and final product (i.e., the Masters Thesis). Heed their advice, listen to their counsel, seek their guidance, learn from them.
 - b. Do not hesitate to ask for assistance. Your advisor expects such requests, and is very willing to help by providing suggestions and direction. However, be sure you are not asking your advisor to do your work. If you are asking for more than assistance, you will be so informed. Your advisor will support you, but will not do your thinking, your research, and your writing.
 - c. Similarly, the library staff is more than eager to direct you to useful resources for your literature review. They will help you to plan your search strategy, if desired. However, it is not the librarian's task to search for references pertinent to your study or project, and to prepare a comprehensive report of search results.

3. Pursue excellence at every step of your project.
 - a. Of paramount importance to your advisor is the *quality of your thinking* as reflected on the pages of your masters thesis – for it is also a reflection of the degree to which your advisor has properly guided its development.
 - b. Your paper is a running log of decisions you have made—decisions about the value of literature reviewed, the framing of research questions, selection of subjects, methodology used, analysis of data, conclusions drawn, and so on. The *decision making* during your research is a prime indicator of the quality of your thinking.
 - c. The quality of student thinking is generally reflected in the quality of student writing. Selecting the right words (notice: decision making!) to express an idea is of critical importance. It is well worth the time and effort it takes.
4. Work incrementally, making steady progress towards your thesis.
 - a. Regularly monitor your schedule and tasks to be completed, and move ahead with steady, observable progress. If a problem with time implications arises, please consult with your advisor at your earliest opportunity.
 - b. If you procrastinate and attempt to squeeze your work into a tight span of time, your advisor or Concordia may not be able to accommodate that burden.
 - c. A rushed product is most likely an inferior one, as writing requires revision after revision – something you will not have time for if you attempt to cram it into too short of a schedule.

Thesis Guidelines and Requirements

1. Your masters thesis must be between 25-40 pages in length (in the formatting standards described below) which includes the cover page, table of contents, and references (but not including any appendices). There are specific requirements for the two bound hard-copies that you will file with CUI earlier in this handbook.
2. Use “Times” (or “Times New Roman”) type font in 12-point size that is double spaced throughout the paper.
3. Use one and one-half inch (1 1/2”) left margins and one-inch (1”) right margins for all pages. Use one-inch (1”) top and bottom margins for all pages except for the cover page.
4. The paper must be comprehensible in order to be a true contribution to the public audience. This does not mean “dumbing” down your language – rather it requires clear and concise definitions of terms that you employ throughout your thesis.
 - a. Define key terms in your paper (e.g., “at-risk student” or “joint venture”)
 - b. Make sure to write out every acronym the first time you use it in your Masters of Arts in International Studies (MAIS) Capstone Project.
5. You must utilize recognized and legitimate literature in you paper – Wikipedia is not an authoritative source (if you decide to utilize this reference, be sure to supplement with other validated sources). You must always fully cite your references, including websites (please refer to your APA or other Style handbook for conventions and requirements).
6. Adherence to reference rules and publication standards—a hallmark of professionalism—is very important for the sake of consistency as well as easy reading and understanding by other scholars and peers. It will be highly valued by your advisor. Please obtain your own copy of

the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th Edition)* and refer to it for answers to the numerous style questions that typically arise. Details do matter. The following are a few important ones that merit your attention.

- a. Your thesis or paper is an account of something you have done that has already happened. Even for the proposal, the language, should not be in future tense, since this will save you time in not needing to revise future tense verbs to past tense when writing the thesis or paper.
- b. Use simple language. If you have a choice of a long word or a short word to express the same idea, choose the short word. Avoid unjustified or undefined jargon. Omit needless words.
- c. Do not speak of yourself in first person in a quantitative study, e.g., “I surveyed teachers in 15 districts...” or “The researcher surveyed...” Rather, say “Surveys were sent to teachers in 15 districts...”
- d. Use the “Search and Replace” capabilities of your word processor. For example, search for double spaces and replace with single.
- e. Use your word processor’s spell checker. But don’t assume your spell checker will catch everything—proofreading is still needed to catch errors like “here” in place of “hear.” (By the way, Microsoft Word’s Spelling and Grammar Checker” catches extra spaces as well as repeated words.)
- f. Generally, use numerals to express numbers 10 and above, and words for numbers nine and below. However, there are exceptions. Please refer to the current *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.
- g. Paginate even early drafts, with the page number in the lower right-hand corner, one inch from the side (per APA rules). There is no rule about how far numbers should be from the bottom of the page. APA examples seem to show about ½ inch. Pagination should begin on the first page of text following your table of contents.
- h. Your reference list should only include sources that you cite in the body of your paper.
- i. Do *not* cite abstracts in your reference list. If the abstract seems to indicate a useful source, obtain the entire document, read, evaluate and cite as appropriate. Do *not* cite secondary sources unless it is virtually impossible to obtain the primary material. You should not cite secondary sources merely because of the effort or time required to obtain the source.

If you cite a reference, you are tacitly certifying that you have read the entire journal article or pertinent book chapter(s), are familiar with the contents, and have evaluated the substance of the work in terms of your task. Do not limit your reading only to introductory or concluding chapters or paragraphs, or an abstract.

- j. Be mindful of correct usages for dashes
 - Hyphens (-) should be used for hyphenating words or line breaks only.
 - An “en dash” (–), so called because it’s about the width of a lower-case “n”, is used between words indicating a duration, such as hourly time, months, years (February – March, 4:00 – 4:30 PM, 8 – 9 years old). Leave a space on either side of it.
 - An “em dash”—yes, twice as wide as an “en dash,” it is the width of a capital “M”—is often used as it just was in this sentence. It is often seen as a substitute for a colon or parentheses, or indicating an abrupt change in thought, and has no spaces on either side.

Here are all three for comparison:

-	hyphen
–	en dash
—	em dash

On the PC keyboard, the hyphen is in the upper right corner, with the underscore. For an “en dash,” you need to use the “Character Map” accessory to copy and paste one (yes, it is a hassle). For an “em dash” in Microsoft Word, simply type two hyphens followed by the next word you want, and when you hit the space bar following the word, the two hyphens are magically transformed into an “em dash”!

On the Macintosh, hyphen is the same as above. “En dash” is Option-Hyphen. “Em dash” is Option-Shift-Hyphen (Williams, 1990).

TITLE (CENTERED, 2 INCHES FROM TOP, ALL CAPS)

by

Student's Full Name

A(n) XXXXXXXX

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts International Studies in the
School of Business and Professional Studies at
Concordia University

Irvine, California
<date>

Approval Form
Graduate Research Proposal / Thesis Project
MA-International Studies program
School of Business & Professional Studies – Concordia University Irvine

This form must be completed and all blanks filled in (insert N/A if not applicable). Submit the original of this form with an **Executive Summary abstract (hard copy and electronic copy are required)** of your proposed research / thesis topic to the MAIS office located in the School of Business and Professional Studies on the Irvine campus.

TITLE OF PROJECT _____

STUDENT NAME: _____

CONTACT TELEPHONE NO. _____

CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS _____

MAILING ADDRESS (include city, state, zip code and country) _____

FACULTY ADVISOR SELECTION / REQUEST: Please indicate below the faculty advisor you have contacted and received agreement from to serve as your faculty advisor. This faculty advisor should be chosen from those listed on the MAIS faculty advisor web site or that meet Concordia Universities standards for faculty advisors for this program.

FACULTY ADVISOR (from CUI – MAIS web site: www.cui.edu/mais)

PLEASE PRINT ADVISOR'S FULL NAME HERE: _____

If faculty advisor is not listed on the CUI – MAIS web site please list above and also provide contact information for them here:

Phone _____, Email _____

-----or-----

_____ I WISH TO HAVE THE MAIS DEPARTMENT SELECT MY FACULTY ADVISOR AND AGREE TO ACCEPT AND WORK WITH THE FACULTY ADVISOR THAT IS CHOSEN FOR ME BY THE MAIS OFFICE. *YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED OF YOUR FACULTY ADVISOR IN A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME ONCE THIS COMPLETE FORM HAS BEEN RECEIVED.*

STUDENT *Signature*

Date

Please return this form to:

Concordia University
School of Business & Professional Studies; Attn: MAIS program
1530 Concordia West
Irvine, CA 92612
(949) 854-8002 xt. 1318