

BASIC FACT SHEET  
MASTER OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES  
(MALS)

The purpose of this "fact sheet" is to present some basic material on MALS Programs that the DIF reviewed. In all, about 35 such programs were looked at. These are some of the common features in most of the programs. This material represents descriptive data of what seems to be out there.

1. TITLE. The general title seems to be Master of Arts in Liberal Studies; hence MALS. Other titles: Master of Liberal Studies Program; Master of Arts Degree in Liberal Studies; Graduate Institute in Liberal Education, etc.
2. CREDIT HOURS. The usual pattern is to require about 45 quarter hours for graduation.
3. CORE CURRICULUM. There seems to be a general agreement that core courses are offered in some form in the following areas: humanities; natural sciences; social sciences; and the arts. Sometimes programs also include core elements in history, philosophy, and religion; political science and community; and education. What is offered in the core is very much a function of the individual colleges, their strengths, and the values they perceive in offering the MALS program.
4. THESIS/PROJECT. There seems to be general agreement that some form of concluding experience is appropriate for the students in the MALS program. Flexibility and individual learning are stressed in the form this takes--traditional thesis, individual or group projects. At times oral and written exams are required before the starting of the thesis/project.
5. APPROACHES TO STUDY. Some programs focus on the "Great Books" approach to study. Others have fairly narrowly defined topics or themes in the humanities. A good many of the programs begin with current issues and problems in society and then work toward a fuller appreciation of the issues from history, tradition, and perhaps some interdisciplinary understandings. A large number of programs talk about the interdisciplinary approach to liberal studies. Not many of them actually deliver.
6. GENERAL GOALS. This varies greatly. Here is a sample: (1) to think critically and perceptively; to communicate with clarity; to be aware of self; to develop an appreciation of aesthetics; (2) to work toward an integrated achievement in learning, judgment, and self-fulfillment; (3) to investigate the life and movement of ideas in their historical setting; and (4) to enter into a personal search for challenging ideas and rich experience.
7. STUDENT CLIENTS. This too can vary with the institution. Some programs reach out to teachers; some to the general audience; some to special markets and targets. Most of the audience are adults and part-time students returning to college.

8. TIMES OF INSTRUCTION. Generally speaking, late afternoon and evening classes are the norm. Special summer programs may be offered. Intensives and week-end work show up occasionally.
9. PREREQUISITES FOR STUDY. The general norm is the BA or BS degree. Foreign language study is not generally required.
10. TEACHING STRATEGIES. Beyond the core curriculum, flexibility prevails: small seminars; colloquia; films; building of individual curriculum after the core; tutorials, individual contracts and graduate level courses from the general curriculum to build up electives.