

CIS 8391 FIELD STUDY HANDBOOK



COMPUTER INFORMATION
SYSTEMS DEPARTMENT

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CIS 8391 FIELD STUDY HANDBOOK

CIS 8391 Field Study in Computer Information Systems is one of the graduation requirements for the MSIS program. This handbook describes the policies and procedures to fulfill the requirements.

ELIGIBILITIES FOR CIS 8391 FIELD STUDY COURSE CREDIT

The following eligibilities should be met:

- **Meet all prerequisites:** Students must have maintained a GPA of 3.3 or greater and completed one-semester coursework in the MSIS program.
- **Receive an offer letter/Employed in the IT field.** The position for the field study must be IT-related for the student to apply the knowledge and skill in their academic studies. The offer may be for a part-time, full-time (20+ hours/week), temporary or permanent position, as shown by the following documents:
 - The offer letter on the company letterhead or in an official email from HR (International students must review the offer letter requirements on the [CPT webpage](#) of the [GSU International Student & Scholar Services](#) (ISSS) and the *minimum duration* described below before committing the start and end dates of the field study.)
 - The evidence of employment such as a copy of the last paycheck/paystub (redact sensitive data), a photo of the employee badge, an employment letter from HR, and other documents.

Students are responsible for securing the positions to fulfill the field study requirements before the semester to graduate. The university and the college provide many career services on their career advancement website. Students should also search for open jobs on external career websites.

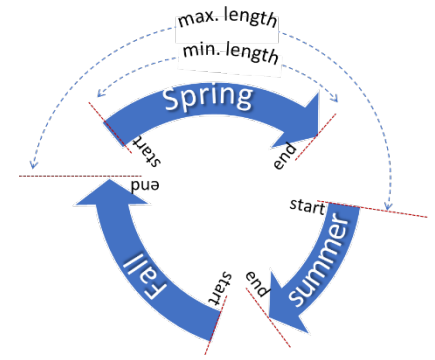
- **Meet the minimum duration.** The CIS 8391 is a full-semester (seven-week session in summer) course based on the [academic calendars](#) published on the registrar's website, thus,
 - The start date of the field study position must be no later than the end of the first week of the semester, and
 - The end date of the position cannot be earlier than the end of classes in the semester.

Note that:

- Positions shorter than the minimum semester duration are not eligible for the CIS 8391 course credit.
- CIS 8391 does not accept past employment for the field study credit.

The following notes are for **international students**:

- The maximum duration of a position may be from the date after the last date of the final exam of the proceeding semester to the date before the next semester starts, as illustrated by the *Max Length* in the diagram on the right. But, for students who graduate at the end of that semester, the end date of the position cannot be later than the last date of the final exams of the graduation semester in the academic calendar.
- If a position spans multiple semesters without an end date (e.g., a full-time, permanent position), the student must submit a new application for each following semester to receive additional CIS 8391 course credit. That is, the student can continue the position into the next semester without any gap between those two semesters.



FIELD STUDY APPLICATION PROCEDURE

If meeting all eligibilities described in the previous section, the student should follow the steps below to submit an application for the CIS 8391 course credit:

- **Two-Page Proposal.** A clear understanding of the field study needs to be documented in a two-page proposal. The proposal should be detail-oriented, describing the responsibilities and duties of the position: (Refer to [a sample proposal](#), and [the proposal template](#)). The proposal should specify the
 - *Semester and year* applying for the course credit
 - *Company and division* of the position
 - *Objectives* - What will you learn? (Example: I will learn about SQL)
 - *Tasks* - What will you be doing to learn? (Example: I will be creating SQL queries using the Oracle database.) Do not simply cut and paste a job description
 - *Milestones* - Self-directed dates when you will accomplish the tasks over the course of the semester (You must identify dates.)
 - *Academic justifications* (for international students only) - If the position requires you to work more than 20 hours per week, the ISSS office classifies it as a full-time position. International students must provide academic justifications in the proposal to explain why the position requires full-time. Examples of academic justifications may be a thorough understanding of the knowledge you learned in your academic study, applying specific skills to creating or developing IT systems (e.g., data-driven sales prediction models), and so on. Note that career development, job prospects, gaining working experience, etc., are **non-academic justifications** that cannot be used for full-time positions.
- **Supervisor Contact Form.** The worksite supervisor must complete the [Supervisor Contact Form](#). You must submit your field study proposal to the supervisor for review and approval as part of this step. If your supervisor is unknown until you start the job or unavailable to sign it, you may use the employee who signed your offer letter. You can update the form later after you know who your supervisor is. The contact information of your supervisor must be complete. The department may contact the supervisor for employment verification, performance checks, and other

purposes during the semester. Inaccurate information may delay the application process unnecessarily.

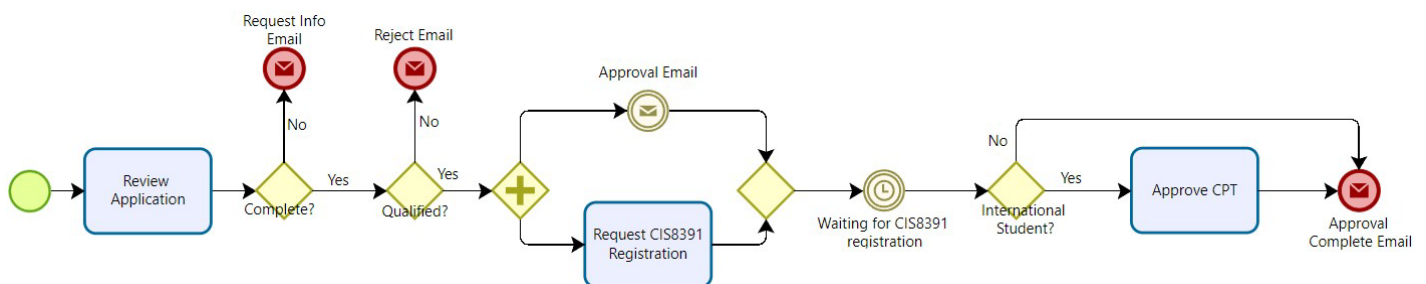
- **Field study application.** After preparing those three documents: *offer letter*, *field study proposal*, and *supervisor contact form*, you should submit your field study application on the [CIS field study web page](#). The online application link is "*Submit the Graduate Field Study Application*." Make sure you click the correct link because that page also contains the online application link for undergraduate students.
- **CPT authorization form (international students only).** International students require to initiate the CPT authorization forms from the iStart for paid positions. The field study approver designated by the CIS department should be entered as the secondary approval of the CPT form. The approver approves the CPT form after the completion of the CIS 8391 registration, to be discussed in the approval process in the next section.

You should enter accurate and complete information in the field study application form and attach the correct documents to avoid unnecessary delay in the application process.

If your application submission is successful, you should receive an acknowledgment message in your GSU email. If you do not receive the email acknowledgment, the system likely rejected the files you submitted due to some security reasons. You can resubmit a new online application without uploading your files and email those files to the CIS field study coordinator with an explanation.

FIELD STUDY APPROVAL PROCESS

Upon receiving a field study application, the department's field student approver starts the approval process, as illustrated by the process flow diagram below.



Note that

- The approval is based on the criteria described in the previous sections
- The approval process involves multiple units of the university and requires at least 4 working days after the application forms are submitted and approved
- All communications of the approval process are through GSU email, and you may need to search your GSU email inbox for those communication email messages about the status of your application
- For international students, CPT forms are approved only after the completion of CIS 8391 registration, and international students cannot start a paid field study before the CPTs are approved. Hence, international students should initiate CPT forms immediately after submitting field study applications to avoid unnecessary delay.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES AFTER THE FIELD STUDY STARTED

After the field study is started, students should achieve all learning objectives in the field study proposal and fulfill the commitment made to the companies. Unexpected changes are common in the workplace, which offers excellent learning opportunities to handle unforeseen events professionally and develop the capability of adapting to changes. However, whenever facing uncertainties, the students should always consult with the instructors on record for CIS 8391, the ISSS advisors, and the CIS department on all issues in the workplace and other matters related to the field study. The policies outlined in this section address only some common scenarios.

SWITCHING COMPANIES

Switching employers during field study is generally not approved. It would hurt the reputation of the MSIS program, and employers would be reluctant to hire future students. The current employer expects students to fulfill the commitment, as does the CIS department.

The CIS department considers the request switching employers only with acceptable academic justifications, such as

- Circumstances outside of the student's control, such as the employer terminating the position
- The position is no longer relevant to the student's academic studies. For example, the employer has significantly altered the roles and responsibilities which are no longer relevant to your academic studies
- You experienced a hostile or toxic work environment to continue the field study
- And other reasons related to the nature of work, workplace, and academic studies.

The student should submit the evidence to justify switching employers to the CIS department, and approval is **not** guaranteed. The CIS department reviews all facts and evidence to make the final decision.

After receiving the department's approval for switching companies, the student should submit a new field study application on the CIS field study website for the new position (job) with the offer letter, field study proposal, and supervisor contact form. Only after receiving the approval of the new field study position the student may proceed to the following steps:

- Discuss the early termination of the field study with the employer to obtain their agreement in an email/letter,
- Make necessary work arrangements to minimize disruptions caused by your resignation

Students would bear all consequences if failing to follow the policies described in this section.

FIELD STUDY EXTENSION

Extending the field study does not need the approval of the CIS department except for international students doing paid field study. To extend the field study, international students should

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- Consult the ISSS advisor on the duration and the required documents for the extension of the field study
- Provide the required documents to the CIS department for approval (The department will notify the ISSS office about the department's decision.)
- Follow the ISSS office's CPT extension procedure to extend the field study.