



**CENTER FOR
INTELLIGENCE AND
SECURITY STUDIES**
THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI®

Graduate Student Handbook

Master of Arts in Global Security Leadership (MAGSL)

Academic Year 2026–2027

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Revised April 2026

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1. Program Overview & Mission

Program Description

Degree Awarded: Master of Arts (MA) in Global Security Leadership

The Master of Arts program in Global Security Leadership is an interdisciplinary, fully online program designed to prepare students for successful careers leading and managing within national security, intelligence, homeland protection, and private sector agencies.

Faculty with direct experience working in their teaching fields guide students through a hands-on, project-based curriculum. The MA program is anchored on four key pillars:

- Regional Security
- Intelligence Operations
- Strategy Development
- Cyber Security Policy

Students may focus on one area to earn a certificate or take a broader approach toward the full master's degree. The program can be completed in one year, but students may also advance at their own pace. This fully online program is highly flexible and designed for students from varied backgrounds and with existing professional responsibilities.

Program Goals & Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the degree, graduates will be able to:

1. Advance their careers in global and regional security, intelligence, strategy and planning, diplomacy, homeland security, and other related fields.
2. Articulate how nations translate their security goals into policy plans and actions.
3. Appraise diplomatic, military, intelligence, homeland security, and private organizations' policy planning and execution.
4. Design policy proposals tailored to individual career goals.
5. Develop institutional leadership skills.
6. Network with leading professionals in global security, military strategy, intelligence operations, and corporate leadership.

Program Concentrations

The MA in Global Security Leadership offers four concentrations, allowing students to focus on the area that best aligns with their career goals. Students who complete 12 credit hours within a single concentration will receive a certificate in that specialization in addition to the degree.

Concentration 1: Global and Regional Security

This concentration focuses on the key issues related to near-peer competitors and regional conflict fault lines. Students gain a thorough understanding of the geopolitical dynamics shaping international security.

Concentration 2: Intelligence Operations

This concentration prepares students for career success in the National Intelligence Community and related organizations, covering collection, analysis, and the application of intelligence in national security contexts.

Concentration 3: Strategy Development

This concentration equips students with the knowledge and skills to analyze national security issues, develop policy options, and articulate those options to senior policymakers.

Concentration 4: Cyber Security Policy and Planning

This concentration creates graduates focused on the constantly evolving cyber threat landscape and how nations can build whole-of-government approaches to limit those threats.

2. Admission Requirements

General Eligibility

Applicants to the MA in Global Security Leadership program must meet the general admission requirements of the University of Mississippi Graduate School as well as program-specific requirements. Admission is competitive and based on a holistic review of each applicant's academic record, professional experience, and career goals.

Application Requirements

All applicants must submit the following materials through the University of Mississippi Graduate School application portal:

- Completed online graduate application form
- Official transcripts from all colleges and universities previously attended (minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale recommended)
- Current resume or curriculum vitae documenting professional and academic experience
- A writing sample of no less than 7 pages in length. This sample can be a thesis or essay used in another academic class or program.
- English language proficiency scores (for international applicants whose primary language is not English): TOEFL minimum score of 79 (iBT) or IELTS minimum score of 6.5

Application Deadlines

The program accepts applications on a rolling basis. Applicants are encouraged to apply early to ensure availability and timely financial aid processing. Recommended deadlines are as follows:

Term	Priority Deadline	Final Deadline
Fall	July 1	August 1
Spring	November 1	December 1
Summer	March 1	April 1

Transfer Credit

Students may petition to transfer a maximum of 6 credit hours of graduate-level coursework from an accredited institution, subject to Graduate School approval. Transfer credits must have been earned within the past five years with a grade of B or better and must align with program requirements.

3. Degree Requirements & Curriculum

Degree Overview

The MA in Global Security Leadership requires the successful completion of 30 credit hours, divided across required core courses, elective/concentration courses, and a culminating capstone experience. All coursework is delivered entirely online, allowing students to complete the program from anywhere in the world.

Credit Hour Summary

Requirement	Credit Hours	Courses
Required Core	6	2
Electives / Concentration	21	7
Culminating Experience (Capstone)	3	1
Total	30	10

Required Core Courses (6 Credit Hours)

All students must complete the following two foundational courses as part of the program core:

- ISS 6010 – The National Security Structure and Process (3 credit hours)
- ISS 6090 – Creative Organizational Leadership (3 credit hours)

Elective & Concentration Courses (21 Credit Hours)

Students select 21 credit hours of elective coursework from one or more of the four concentrations listed below. Students who complete 12 or more credit hours within a single concentration will earn a certificate in that specialization in addition to the MA degree.

Concentration 1: Global and Regional Security

Course No.	Course Title
ISS 6100	National Security Strategy
ISS 6110	Russia and Global Security
ISS 6120	European Security
ISS 6130	Middle Eastern & African Security
ISS 6140	China and Global Security

Concentration 2: Intelligence Operations

Course No.	Course Title
ISS 6300	Intelligence and Global Security
ISS 6310	Intelligence in the 21st Century
ISS 6320	Technology and Intelligence
ISS 6330	Law Enforcement Intelligence
ISS 6340	Counterintelligence

Concentration 3: Strategy Development

Course No.	Course Title
ISS 6500	War, Conflict, and Global Security
ISS 6510	Emerging Technology and the Future of War
ISS 6520	Terrorism, Insurgency, and Global Security
ISS 6530	Economic, Environmental, & Health Security
ISS 6540	Climate Security

Concentration 4: Cyber Security Policy and Planning

Course No.	Course Title
ISS 6700	Overview of Cyber Policy
ISS 6710	Cyber Threats and Trends
ISS 6720	Developing a Cyber Strategy
ISS 6730	Cyber & the Military Element of Power
ISS 6740	Cyber Law and National Security

Culminating Experience (3 Credit Hours)

The capstone course serves as the program's culminating experience. See Section 4 for detailed guidelines.

- ISS 6900 – Capstone Policy Proposal (3 credit hours)

Academic Progress & Time to Completion

Students are expected to maintain satisfactory academic progress throughout the program. The program can be completed in as little as one year (five terms of full-time study) or extended over a longer period for part-time students. The maximum time to complete the degree is six years from the date of first enrollment.

4. Capstone / Culminating Experience Guidelines

Overview

ISS 6900: Capstone Policy Proposal is the culminating experience for the MA in Global Security Leadership. This 3-credit-hour course requires students to synthesize the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the program and apply them to a real-world policy challenge in their chosen area of specialization.

The capstone is not a traditional thesis. Rather, it is a professionally oriented policy proposal document intended to demonstrate the student's capacity to analyze a national or international security issue and propose actionable policy recommendations.

Eligibility Requirements

To enroll in ISS 6900, students must meet the following prerequisites:

- Completion of both required core courses (ISS 6010 and ISS 6090)
- Completion of at least 18 credit hours of program coursework
- Cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Submission of a completed Capstone Enrollment Form, approved by the graduate program coordinator.

Capstone Policy Proposal Structure

The capstone policy proposal should be approximately 5,000–8,000 words in length (excluding references and appendices) and must include the following sections:

7. Executive Summary – A concise overview of the policy problem and proposed recommendations (300–400 words)
8. Problem Definition – A clear articulation of the security issue being addressed, including historical context and current significance
9. Stakeholder Analysis – Identification of key governmental, intergovernmental, and private-sector actors relevant to the issue
10. Policy Options – A minimum of three distinct policy alternatives with analysis of advantages and disadvantages
11. Recommended Course of Action – The student's preferred policy recommendation with supporting rationale
12. Implementation Plan – A realistic plan for executing the recommended policy, including timeline, resource requirements, and potential obstacles
13. Conclusion – Summary of findings and reflection on the policy's broader implications
14. References – Full citations in Chicago Author-Date or APA format (consistent throughout)

Advising & Supervision

Each capstone student is assigned a faculty advisor with expertise relevant to the student's chosen topic. Students should expect to meet with their advisor at a minimum of three times

during the capstone course: at project inception, at the mid-point review, and prior to final submission.

Evaluation & Grading

The capstone proposal will be evaluated by the assigned faculty advisor and one additional program faculty member. Grading criteria include:

- Analytical rigor and depth of research
- Clarity and quality of written communication
- Feasibility and originality of policy recommendations
- Proper use of evidence, citations, and academic sources
- Professional presentation and adherence to formatting guidelines

A grade of B (3.0) or higher is required to satisfy the capstone requirement. Students who do not achieve a passing grade may petition to revise and resubmit once within the same academic year.

Academic Integrity

All capstone work must be the student's own original scholarship. The use of generative AI tools must be disclosed and is subject to program-specific guidelines issued each term. Plagiarism or academic dishonesty of any kind will result in a failing grade and referral to the Graduate School for disciplinary action.

5. Academic Policies & Procedures

Grading Scale

The University of Mississippi Graduate School uses the following grading scale for graduate coursework:

Grade	Quality Points	Description
A	4.0	Excellent
B	3.0	Good
C	2.0	Satisfactory (minimum passing)
D	1.0	Poor (does not count toward degree)
F	0.0	Failure

Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 (B average) or higher to remain in good academic standing. A student whose GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation.

Academic Probation & Dismissal

A student placed on academic probation has two subsequent terms of enrollment to raise their cumulative GPA to 3.0. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the program. A student who receives two grades of C or lower, or any grade of F, in program coursework is subject to immediate dismissal.

Course Load & Full-Time Status

Graduate students enrolled in 6 or more credit hours per term are considered full-time students. The maximum course load is 9 credit hours per term without special permission from the program director. Part-time enrollment of 3 credit hours per term is permitted.

Attendance & Participation

As a fully online program, regular and active participation in course activities, discussion boards, and virtual sessions is expected. Individual course syllabi specify participation requirements. Students who fail to engage in a course for two consecutive weeks without notifying the instructor may be administratively withdrawn.

Late Withdrawal & Incomplete Grades

Students who need to withdraw from a course after the official drop/add period must follow the Graduate School withdrawal procedures. A grade of Incomplete (I) may be assigned only when a student has completed the majority of coursework but is unable to finish due to extraordinary circumstances beyond their control. An incomplete must be resolved within one calendar year or it converts to a failing grade.

Academic Integrity

The University of Mississippi is committed to academic integrity. All students are bound by the M-Book Student Handbook and the Graduate School Academic Integrity Policy. Violations including plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, and unauthorized collaboration will be referred to the Graduate School for adjudication and may result in course failure or program dismissal.

Grade Appeal Process

Students who believe a grade has been assigned in error may initiate a grade appeal within 30 days of the grade being posted. The appeal process proceeds as follows:

- Step 1: Informal discussion with the course instructor
- Step 2: If unresolved, written appeal to the program director
- Step 3: If unresolved, formal appeal to the Graduate School Academic Appeals Committee

Decisions of the Graduate School Academic Appeals Committee are final.

6. Student Resources & Support

Academic Advising

The Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) will act as the academic advisor for all students enrolled in the Global Security Leadership program. The GPC assists with course selection, degree planning, concentration choices, and professional development guidance. Students are encouraged to meet with their advisor at least once per term.

Online Learning Support

As an entirely online program, students have access to a range of digital learning support services through the University of Mississippi:

- Blackboard Learning Management System – All course materials, communications, and assignments are managed through the university's Blackboard platform. Technical support is available 24/7 through the IT Helpdesk.
- Online Library Services – Students have full access to the J.D. Williams Library's digital collections, including academic databases, research guides, and interlibrary loan services, through their Ole Miss network credentials.
- Writing Center – The University of Mississippi Writing Center offers synchronous and asynchronous online tutoring for graduate students at all stages of the writing process.

Career & Professional Development

The program maintains active relationships with professionals in the national security, intelligence, and policy communities. Resources available to students include:

- Guest lecture series and virtual networking events with practitioners from government, military, and private-sector security organizations
- Career advising through the University of Mississippi Career Center, including resume review, mock interviews, and job search assistance
- Access to the University's alumni network and program-specific professional communities
- Guidance on security clearance application processes and federal employment pathways

Disability Services

The University of Mississippi is committed to providing equal access to all students. Students with documented disabilities who require academic accommodations must register with Student Disability Services (SDS) and provide documentation to their instructors in accordance with SDS guidelines. Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis.

Students may contact Student Disability Services at: sds@olemiss.edu | (662) 915-7128

Counseling & Mental Health

Graduate study can be demanding, and the university recognizes the importance of student well-being. The University Counseling Center provides confidential counseling services to all enrolled students, including telehealth options for online students. Students in need of support are encouraged to reach out proactively.

University Counseling Center: (662) 915-3784 | counseling.olemiss.edu

Grievance Procedures

Students who have complaints about course instruction, program administration, or other academic matters that cannot be resolved informally should follow the Graduate School student grievance procedure. Formal grievances must be filed in writing with the Graduate School Dean's Office within 60 days of the incident giving rise to the complaint.

Student Organizations & Community

Students are encouraged to connect with peers and engage with the broader security studies community through:

- The University of Mississippi Graduate Student Council
- Program-sponsored virtual study groups and professional forums
- National student organizations in international affairs, intelligence studies, and security policy

Important Contacts

Office / Resource	Contact
Graduate Program Coordinator	Dr. Morris cfmorris@olemiss.edu (719) 439-3498
Graduate School	gradschool.olemiss.edu (662) 915-7474
University Registrar	registrar.olemiss.edu (662) 915-3177
Financial Aid Office	financialaid.olemiss.edu (662) 915-7175
IT Helpdesk (24/7)	(662) 915-5222 techhelp@olemiss.edu
J.D. Williams Library	libraries.olemiss.edu (662) 915-5858
Student Disability Services	(662) 915-7128 sds@olemiss.edu
University Counseling Center	(662) 915-3784

This handbook is subject to revision. Students will be notified of significant changes via their university email. The most current version of this handbook is available on the program's official website.

7. Course Descriptions

Required Core

ISS 6010: The National Security Structure and Process

This core course introduces students to the essential elements of the U.S. national security framework, including its structure, key stakeholders, and the process of crafting national security strategy. It provides an in-depth overview of the U.S. national security system, emphasizing strategic planning, decision-making, and interagency collaboration. Students will examine national security policy through the lens of interests, tools, and processes, while also reviewing the diplomatic, military, informational, and intelligence capabilities employed to achieve these objectives within domestic and international contexts.

ISS 6090: Creative Organizational Leadership

This core course is designed to cultivate leadership skills, focusing on innovation, adaptability, and change management within the dynamic, high-stakes field of national security. It explores key aspects of strategic leadership, including organizational dynamics, ethical decision-making, team-building, and effective communication. Students will learn to develop strategic visions, formulate actionable strategies, and execute plans to drive organizational success in the context of intelligence and national security policymaking.

Concentration 1: Global and Regional Security

ISS 6100: National Security Strategy

This course explores the theory and practice of grand strategy, the comprehensive alignment of national power to achieve long-term objectives in complex and competitive environments. Focusing on the United States, students will examine both historical and contemporary approaches to strategy, including how leaders have defined interests, assessed threats, and employed diplomatic, military, economic, and informational tools of power. The course equips students with the tools to critically evaluate the role strategy plays in shaping the global security environment.

ISS 6110: Russia and Global Security

This course provides an overview of Russia's evolving role in international security and its impact on global and regional stability. Students will explore the historical legacies, strategic culture, and policy choices that shape Russia's behavior in the contemporary world. The course covers critical topics such as the modernization of Russia's military, its nuclear deterrence strategy, and the employment of hybrid tactics, including cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns. The course equips students with the tools to critically assess the dynamics and implications of U.S.-Russian relations in the contemporary world.

ISS 6120: European Security

This course examines the complex and evolving security landscape of Europe in the 21st century. The course explores the interplay between NATO, the European Union, and national defense policies as the continent adjusts to evolving geopolitical realities. Students will analyze traditional and emerging security threats such as hybrid warfare, energy insecurity, migration flows, and political fragmentation with an emphasis on transatlantic relations. The course equips students

with the tools to critically assess the dynamics and implications of U.S.-European relations in the contemporary world.

ISS 6130: Middle Eastern & African Security

This course examines the complex security challenges shaping the Middle East and Africa, two of the world's most turbulent regions. The course explores the intersection of political, social, and economic dynamics that drive state fragility, terrorism, insurgency, and proxy conflicts, while also analyzing the influence of great power competition and regional rivalries. The course equips students with the tools to critically assess the obstacles and opportunities for peace-building, governance reform, and regional cooperation in the Middle East and Africa.

ISS 6140: China and Global Security

This course explores China's ascent as a global power, with a focus on its military advancements, regional strategies in the Indo-Pacific, and global ambitions. Students will examine the strategic rivalry between the U.S. and China, analyzing key areas of competition, including trade, security, technology, and global influence. The course equips students with the tools to critically assess the dynamics and implications of U.S.-China relations in the contemporary world.

Concentration 2: Intelligence Operations

ISS 6300: Intelligence and Global Security

This course examines the fundamental and evolving role of intelligence in shaping national and international security. Particular emphasis is placed on the impact of leadership, institutional culture, and interagency dynamics on intelligence performance. The course also examines the complex relationship between intelligence and democratic governance, exploring issues of oversight, secrecy, and accountability. Students will develop the skills to critically assess intelligence successes, failures, and future challenges in an era of rapid technological and geopolitical change.

ISS 6310: Intelligence in the 21st Century

This course examines the application of intelligence in response to emerging 21st century global challenges, including non-state actors, terrorism, cyber warfare, and intensifying great power competition. Students will explore how these forces reshape the priorities, strategies, and operations of the intelligence community. Students will develop analytical tools to evaluate current intelligence practices, anticipate emerging trends, and assess their implications for national and global security.

ISS 6320: Technology and Intelligence

This course explores the transformative effects of emerging technologies—such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and advanced surveillance systems—on intelligence collection, analysis, and operations. Students will examine innovative tools and methods used in data gathering, threat evaluation, and strategic planning, while critically assessing how innovation enhances intelligence capabilities and raises ethical challenges. The course equips students with skills to evaluate how technology is integrated into intelligence operations, preparing them to shape the future of intelligence in a rapidly changing global environment.

ISS 6330: Law Enforcement Intelligence

This course examines the role of intelligence in law enforcement and public safety, with emphasis on its evolution, purpose, and legal foundations. Students explore the challenges of interagency collaboration within the U.S. federal system, assess organizational and technological factors

shaping intelligence practices, and analyze ethical considerations in collection and dissemination. The course equips students with skills to develop informed, policy-oriented solutions that balance security needs with civil liberties and community trust.

ISS 6340: Counterintelligence

This course examines the strategies, methods, and challenges involved in counterintelligence—protecting national security against espionage, insider threats, and foreign intelligence operations. Students study historical and contemporary cases to understand how counterintelligence has evolved and explore techniques for detecting vulnerabilities, neutralizing threats, and safeguarding sensitive information. Students will develop analytical tools to evaluate current counterintelligence practices, anticipate emerging threats, and assess their implications for organizational and national security.

Concentration 3: Strategy Development

ISS 6500: War, Conflict, and Global Security

This course examines the causes, conduct, and consequences of armed conflict in the contemporary international system, with a focus on how states and non-state actors employ military force to achieve strategic objectives. Students will analyze the relationship between war and political outcomes, the evolution of modern warfare, and key theoretical frameworks for understanding conflict. The course equips students with the tools to critically assess the dynamics and implications of armed conflict for global and regional security.

ISS 6510: Emerging Technology and the Future of War

This course examines how emerging technologies—including artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, hypersonic weapons, and directed-energy weapons—are reshaping the character and conduct of armed conflict. Students will analyze how these innovations alter military doctrine, force structure, and the balance of power, while exploring the ethical and legal challenges they present. The course equips students to critically assess the strategic implications of technological change for the future of warfare and national security policy.

ISS 6520: Terrorism, Insurgency, and Global Security

This course examines the origins, dynamics, and strategic implications of terrorism and insurgency in the contemporary world. Students will explore the ideological, political, and socioeconomic factors that drive political violence, as well as the strategies and tactics employed by non-state armed groups. The course also analyzes state and international responses to terrorism and insurgency, including counterterrorism policy, counterinsurgency doctrine, and multilateral cooperation. The course equips students with tools to critically assess the threats posed by terrorism and insurgency to global security.

ISS 6530: Economic, Environmental, & Health Security

This course examines non-traditional threats to national and global security, including economic instability, environmental degradation, and global health crises. Students will explore how these challenges intersect with traditional security concerns and analyze how governments and international organizations develop policies to address them. The course equips students with the tools to critically assess the security implications of economic vulnerability, climate change, resource competition, and pandemic threats.

ISS 6540: Climate Security

This course examines the national and international security implications of climate change, including its role as a threat multiplier that intensifies existing vulnerabilities such as resource scarcity, state fragility, and forced migration. Students will analyze how governments, militaries, and international organizations are integrating climate considerations into security policy and strategic planning. The course equips students with the tools to critically assess the relationship between environmental change and conflict, and to develop policy responses that address climate-related security risks.

Concentration 4: Cyber Security Policy and Planning

ISS 6700: Overview of Cyber Policy

This course explores the evolving field of national cyber policy and its role in shaping security, governance, and international relations in the digital age. Students will examine how governments develop strategies to address cyber threats, protect critical infrastructure, and balance competing priorities such as privacy, economic growth, and national defense. The course covers foundations of cyber policy, U.S. and international approaches to cybersecurity, the role of public–private partnerships, legal and ethical considerations, and emerging cyber challenges. Students will develop analytical tools to evaluate current cyber policy, anticipate emerging cyber threats, and assess their implications for organizational and national security.

ISS 6710: Cyber Threats and Trends

This course examines the evolving landscape of cyber threats and the key actors shaping today's digital security environment. Students will explore current and emerging cyber risks while analyzing the tactics, techniques, and motivations of various malicious cyber actors. Through case studies and threat intelligence frameworks, participants will gain insights into the global cyber threat ecosystem, identify major trends driving future risks, and develop a deeper understanding of how technological innovation and geopolitical dynamics influence the cyber domain. Students will develop analytical tools to evaluate threats to the digital security environment and assess their implications for organizational and national security.

ISS 6720: Developing a Cyber Strategy

This course examines the principles, frameworks, and practices involved in designing national-level cyber defense strategies and risk mitigation plans. Students will explore how nations develop and implement cybersecurity policies to protect critical infrastructure, safeguard national interests, and counter evolving cyber threats from state and non-state actors. The course integrates concepts from international relations, cybersecurity governance, intelligence analysis, and risk management to provide a multidisciplinary approach to strategic cyber defense. Students will develop the skills to create effective organizational cyber defense strategies and risk mitigation plans, equipping them to address the dynamic and evolving challenges of the cyber domain.

ISS 6730: Cyber and the Military Element of Power

This course examines the role of cyberspace operations within the military element of national power, focusing on how cyber capabilities shape modern conflict, deterrence, and defense strategy. Students will explore the integration of cyber tools into joint military operations, the challenges of defending critical infrastructure, and the strategic implications of offensive and defensive cyber operations. Students will develop analytical tools to evaluate how militaries leverage cyberspace as a domain of warfare alongside land, sea, air, and space.

ISS 6740: Cyber Law and National Security

This course explores the complex interplay of law, ethics, and national security within the rapidly evolving cyber domain. Students will explore the legal frameworks, policies, and ethical dilemmas that shape how states and organizations conduct cyber operations, employ surveillance technologies, and defend national interests in cyberspace. Students will develop analytical tools to evaluate how governments legally and ethically balance security imperatives with democratic values, human rights, and international norms.

Culminating Experience

ISS 6900: Capstone Policy Proposal

The Global Security Leadership Capstone serves as the culminating experience for the degree program, challenging students to integrate learning across the program. In this course, students will research, analyze, and evaluate a real-world security problem, policy, or program—developing a comprehensive policy proposal to address the topic. Students will identify a targeted issue to investigate, gather and evaluate research evidence, develop a project proposal, and complete a capstone paper.