Information Design and Strategy

Choose from a specialization in learning design, data science and analytics or content strategy.
You’ve got the data — now tell the story.

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INFORMATION DESIGN AND STRATEGY

Consider the apps on your devices, an infographic, an electronic medical record, online education, or even a credit card interface. New digital technologies and vast new sources of data require effective visual problem-solving and presentation.

The field of information design has grown and evolved rapidly in recent years in response to the proliferation of data. Organizations of all types are acutely in need of professionals who can translate this information into compelling visual forms and narratives, particularly within digital media. In fact, hiring trends now favor professionals with a “big picture” understanding of information design rather than those with more narrow digital or creative skill sets.

Our flexible online Master of Science in Information Design and Strategy program gives professionals the knowledge to hit the ground running in this emerging field. Our renowned faculty teach students how to blend information architecture with customer experience needs, create highly effective visual communication, and understand how research and data analytics fit into these activities. Students graduate prepared to lead digital strategies and fill multiple roles across disciplines. They also gain an additional competitive edge through the program’s career-ready specializations in either learning design, data science and analytics, or content strategy.

A single degree that covers all areas of information design — the only one of its kind offered by a school of Northwestern’s caliber — offers significant value for those considering how to reboot their careers, change fields, or simply get ahead of a trend that’s transforming nearly every industry.
The Master of Science in Information Design and Strategy requires completion of 12 courses to obtain a degree. These requirements cover eight core courses, three elective courses corresponding to a declared specialization and a capstone project (498) or thesis (590).

**CORE COURSES (9 COURSES)**
- LEADERS 481 Leadership
- MS IDS 401 User-Centered Design
- MS IDS 403 Effective Communication
- MS IDS 405 User Research
- MS IDS 407 Info and Content Strategy
- MS IDS 409 Data Management Principles
- MS IDS 411 Info Design and Architecture
- MS IDS 413 Visual Communication
- MS IDS 498 Capstone Project or MS IDS 590 Thesis Research

**AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION (3 COURSES)**
A specialization should be declared as part of the application process. Students who already have experience in one area of specialization may create a custom course of study by selecting any three elective courses. Current students should refer to curriculum requirements in place at time of entry into the program.

**Content Strategy**
Professional writers today must adapt content to multiple platforms and channels, but how do they do this while retaining the essential messages? The content strategy specialization will enable students to improve the impact of their writing and make full use of the expressive possibilities of digital media.
- MS IDS 432 Advanced Writing Workshop
- MS IDS 433 Social Media and Content Curation
- MS IDS 435 Persuasion

**Data Science and Analytics**
The data science and analytics specialization will give designers the tools they need to communicate complex data accurately and effectively. The courses in this specialization will enable students to work with data analysts within their organizations to translate data into images and stories that executives and customers can understand.
- MS IDS 452 Introduction to Data Collection and Analytics
- MS IDS 453 Introduction to Techniques of Predictive Analytics
- MS IDS 455 Data and Text Visualization

**Learning Design**
Effective educators design new information in ways that people can engage with, understand, and use. The Learning Design specialization will help prepare educators, corporate training professionals, online learning designers, librarians, and museum professionals create meaningful and pedagogically sound digital learning experiences.
- MS IDS 422 Introduction to Learning Theory
- MS IDS 423 Instructional Design
- MS IDS 425 Learning Environment Design

**Interdisciplinary Studies**
Students who already have experience in one area of specialization may create a custom course of study by selecting any three elective courses. In consultation with their student adviser, students may also create their own course of study from available online courses in other programs, such as Health Informatics, Information Systems, and Global Health.

**Final Project**
Students may pursue their capstone experience independently or as part of a team. As their final course, students take either the individual research project in an independent study format or the classroom final project class in which students integrate the knowledge they have gained in the core curriculum in a project presented by the instructor. In both cases students are guided by faculty in exploring the body of knowledge on information design and strategy while contributing research of practical value to the field. The capstone independent project and capstone class project count as one unit of credit.
- MS IDS 498 Capstone Project or
- MS IDS 590 Thesis Research
Applicants must hold a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution or its foreign equivalent. A competitive undergraduate record that indicates strong academic ability is required, though applicants need not have extensive academic experience in information design. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is not required, but strong scores bolster chances for admission. GRE scores and/or new, relevant coursework at the undergraduate level are recommended for applicants whose previous academic performance was below a B average.

**DURATION**
The IDS program is designed to be completed in two to three years of uninterrupted part-time study (one to two classes per quarter), although students are allowed five years to finish the program.

**APPLICATION CHECKLIST**
Online application — access from sps.northwestern.edu/design and then click “Start Application Process.”

- $75 nonrefundable application fee
- Sealed copies of official transcripts from ALL attended colleges and universities.
- Official transcripts must arrive in our office in the original sealed envelope issued by the institution. Northwestern University School of Professional Studies accepts electronic transcripts from U.S. institutions via secure electronic transcript providers. Consult with your institution to see if they are part of a secure e-delivery network. All electronic transcripts should be sent to spsadmissions@northwestern.edu. Please note transcripts are not accepted by fax or personal email.
- Applicants with international transcripts must request an official course-by-course evaluation of transcripts from a NACES member such as WES or ECE. A course-by-course evaluation will translate courses, degrees and grades to U.S. equivalency.
- Two letters of recommendation focusing on academic achievement and writing ability
- Statement of purpose (see following)
- Current resume or curriculum vitae

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**
Applicants must submit a 300-word statement of purpose explaining how the degree program will help them meet their academic and professional goals. Applicants who did not major in information design or a related field should explain how other academic and nonacademic experiences have equipped them to undertake graduate study in this program.

For detailed admission information visit sps.northwestern.edu/design
For application assistance call 312-503-2579 or email ids@northwestern.edu.

**Application Deadlines**

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**TUITION**

- 2017–18 Tuition per course: $3,411
  Technology Fee: $120
- Estimated cost for entire program: $42,372
“We will always need specialists like writers, designers, and developers. But today, there’s a growing need for information design experts who can lead collaborative multidisciplinary teams of specialists, understand every person's role, and see the forest for the trees.”

Jake Setlak, IDS Advisory Board Member, Vice President, Planning Director, Energy BBDO

“How we present data has profound implications for every field. Information design is the vehicle through which we tell the stories of big data.”

Eric Patrick
IDS faculty, animator, filmmaker, Associate Professor
School of Communication at Northwestern University
You’ve got the data — now tell the story.

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