

INFORMAL EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION (MA)

Degree: Master of Arts

INTRODUCTION

Not all education takes place in a formal classroom setting. Museums, zoos, aquariums, nature centers, and historic sites all aim to educate visitors. This unique masters program is geared towards those interested in education outside of the classroom. As a primarily online program, it is ideally suited to individuals working in the field who aim to enhance their qualifications and gain additional expertise. A week-long, on-campus intensive experience is required during the first summer of the program. All other coursework is online.

ADMISSION

For detailed information on application requirements, go to our Admissions webpage (<https://www.canisius.edu/academics/programs/graduate/informal-education-interpretation/informal-education-interpretation/>) or contact GradAdm@canisius.edu.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Informal Education & Interpretation graduate program focuses on the many locations where learning happens outside of classrooms and institutions of higher education. This interdisciplinary program provides a broad introduction to teaching and learning about topics of cultural, historical, and environmental importance in museums, galleries, zoos/aquaria, nature centers, visitor centers, parks, historical sites, tourist locations, and even through various forms of media and web content. The IEI program is particularly concerned with discourse and action around social and environmental justice, encouraging students to examine the interconnections of local and global movements. The IEI program is also highly adaptable. Students can tailor their coursework, internships, and research projects so that their own topics of interest can be explored in depth.

Curriculum

Code	Title	Credits
IEI 501	Foundations of Informal and Non-Formal Education	3
IEI 502	Natural, Cultural, and Historical Interpretation	3
IEI 503	Non-Profit Leadership	3
IEI 504	Program Development & Evaluation	3
IEI 505	Lifelong Learning	3
EDT 503	Instructional Design and Emerging Technology	3
EDT 506	Research Methods New Literacies and Evidence-Based Practice	3
IEI 699	IEI Capstone Experience	3-6
One specialization course based on interest:		3
ANZ 510	Animals in Humane Education	
IEI 520	Education in Museums and Galleries	
IEI 525	Environmental Education & Nature Interpretation	
IEI 530	Interpretation and Tourism	

Electives 3-6 credits (depending on capstone)	3-6
Total Credits	30-36

Electives

The remaining 3-6 credits (depending on capstone) would be chosen from amongst the following electives:

Code	Title	Credits
IEI 510	Grant Writing	3
IEI 515	Exhibit Design and Development	3
EDT 501	Learning with Technology	3
EDT 502	Instructional Design Theories and Models	3
EDT 508	Technology for Social Change	3

Roadmap

		Summer
First Year		IEI 500
Fall	Spring	
IEI 501	IEI 502	
IEI Elective	IEI 503	
EDT Elective	IEI 504	
Second Year		
Fall	Spring	
IEI 505	IEI 699	
EDT 503	IEI Elective (if needed)	
Specialization Course		

Learning Goals and Objectives

Learning Goal 1

Students will demonstrate critical, interdisciplinary thinking in their understanding of the role of informal education and interpretation in society.

Students will:

- **Objective A:** Synthesize interdisciplinary research as it relates informal education and interpretation.
- **Objective B:** Articulate the role of informal education and interpretation in the promotion of social and/or ecological justice through written work.

Learning Goal 2

Students demonstrate proficiency in skills that are key to the successful integration of informal education and interpretation in diverse settings.

Students will:

- **Objective A:** Deliver an oral presentation on a topic related to their specific content area in informal education and interpretation.
- **Objective B:** Compose a research outline, grant proposal, exhibit (virtual or physical), or program plan that would serve the mission of a relevant organization through the use of informal education and/or interpretation.

Courses

IEI 500 Introduction to Informal Education and Interpretation 1 Credit

This introductory, one-credit, on-campus course runs in the first summer of a student's program experience. Over this week, students will travel to Canisius where they will attend classes and workshops, hear from guest speakers, and take field trips to various museums, zoos, and historical sites. This introductory course helps students build community and familiarizes them with practical experiences and lessons on informal education and interpretation.

Offered: every summer.

IEI 501 Foundations of Informal and Non-Formal Education 3 Credits

This foundational course is taken in the first Fall semester in the program. Students will be introduced to history, theory, and contemporary research involving education in informal and non-formal settings. A variety of ways of thinking about the role of education in cultural, historical, and scientific institutions will be explored, including discussions and critical reflections on the role of education in addressing social, cultural, and ecological issues.

Offered: every fall.

IEI 502 Natural, Cultural, and Historical Interpretation 3 Credits

This course will cover the role of interpreters and educators in narrating and describing natural history, cultural movements, and historical events in a range of contexts including museums, parks, zoos/aquariums, tourist attractions, nature-based settings, and beyond. Students will critically explore the role of oral traditions, narrative theories, messaging, interactive displays, and exhibit design as interpretive methods for diverse audiences.

Offered: Every other year.

IEI 503 Non-Profit Leadership 3 Credits

This course provides an overview and fundamentals of managing non-profit organizations. Topics will include organizational management, fund-raising, program development and publicity, and membership recruitment. Students will connect these concepts to educational outreach and program development.

Offered: Every other year.

IEI 504 Program Development & Evaluation 3 Credits

Highlighting the importance of assessment strategies for cultural and environmental organizations, this course covers foundational theories and practices related to program design, implementation, and evaluation. A variety of evaluation strategies will be covered and their suitability for assessing learning outcomes, achieving organizational objectives, and securing funding opportunities will be explored.

Offered: Every other year.

IEI 505 Lifelong Learning 3 Credits

This course covers theories and research highlighting learning as a lifelong endeavour from birth through old age. With an emphasis on various cognitive, behavioral, affective, constructivist, and transformative learning theories, students will critically examine best practices in informal education and interpretation.

Offered: Every other year.

IEI 510 Grant Writing 3 Credits

Students are introduced to the fundamental principles and strategies in researching, proposing, and securing small and large grants for education, research, and/or institutional support. Various types of grants will be covered and students will create a grant proposal as their culminating project.

Offered: Every other year.

IEI 515 Exhibit Design and Development 3 Credits

How does the space itself shape teaching and learning and what kinds of messages are conveyed in immersive experiences? With a focus on galleries, exhibits, and even digital learning spaces, this course highlights the ways storytelling and design can work together to achieve educational goals.

Offered: Every other year.

IEI 520 Education in Museums and Galleries 3 Credits

This course will introduce students to the many ways in which museums and galleries utilize education to shape visitor experiences. Students will learn about the evolving role of education in museum collections, exhibit and gallery design, presentations, guided tours, digital learning, and more.

Offered: Every other year.

IEI 525 Environmental Education & Nature Interpretation 3 Credits

This course provides an introduction to environmental education and interpretation of natural history, focusing on theoretical and practical applications. Students will examine models of environmental literacy at various scales and in diverse geographic settings. Environmental education programming in formal, non-formal, and informal contexts will be highlighted.

Offered: Every other year.

IEI 530 Interpretation and Tourism 3 Credits

This course focuses on both ecotourism and the growing field of heritage tourism. Students will learn about strategies for engaging diverse groups spanning a range of ages in experiential learning environments of natural, historic, and cultural significance.

Offered: Every other year.

IEI 699 IEI Capstone Experience 3-6 Credits

A 3-credit or 6-credit capstone experience will be required of students for the completion of their degree in Informal Education and Interpretation. The capstone can be conducted as an internship or research or service project under the supervision of program faculty.

Offered: every spring.