



vpacad@sfu.ca
www.sfu.ca/vpacademic
TEL: 778.782.3925
FAX: 778.782.5876

8888 University Drive
Burnaby, BC
Canada V5A 1S6

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Senate **DATE** January 14, 2026
FROM Dilson Rassier, Provost and Vice-President Academic, and Chair, SCUP **PAGES** 1/5
RE: Suspension of Admission to the Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies Pathway (SCUP 26-08)


At its meeting on January 14, 2026, SCUP reviewed and approved the suspension of admission to the Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies Pathway within the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Motion: That Senate approve the suspension of admission to the Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies Pathway within the Faculty of Graduate Studies, effective Fall 2026.

C: Mary O'Brien, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Senate Committee on University Priorities (SCUP) **DATE** January 9, 2026

FROM Mary O'Brien,
Chair of Senate Graduate Studies
Committee (SGSC) 

RE: Suspension of Admission: Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies (INS) Pathway

For Approval: At its meeting on **January 6, 2026**, the SGSC approved the suspension of admission for the Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies (INS) pathway and is recommending it to SCUP for approval, effective **Fall 2026**.

Motion:

That SCUP approve and recommend to Senate the pathway suspension of admission, effective **Fall 2026**.

Background:

What we know as the current INS pathway was approved in 1972 by Senate as “Special Arrangements” (SAR) pathway through graduate studies. This was an option that enabled flexibility at a time when there were few existing graduate programs at SFU. The Senate document laid out the following:

- each student’s arrangement was to be independently approved by SGSC;
- “Special arrangements [...] do not constitute a new program or set a precedent for other graduate students with similar interests”;
- “If many students in the same area come before the [SGSC], it can require the department or departments to submit procedures for the establishment of a new program”;
- expenditures to be covered by existing department / faculty budgets; and
- co-supervision requirement.

In 1977, Senate approved of revisions to SAR that include the requirement that supervision and a student’s home department be established in advance of admission to SFU. In 2018, Senate approved a name change from SAR to “Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies” (INS).

The decision to suspend INS pathway admissions is not taken lightly by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Although the process to suspend admissions to the pathway mirror those of suspending admissions to existing graduate programs, it is important to note that INS is not a freestanding graduate program. It is a flexible pathway that was established before other options supporting interdisciplinarity were firmly established at SFU (e.g., co-supervision). Because it is not a program, students do not receive a degree in INS, and INS

is not included on transcripts or parchments. Students often reported difficulty in enrolling in appropriate coursework and in being incorporated into cohorts in their home academic units. Moreover, with the implementation of minimum funding for PhD students, it became difficult to ensure that a single home academic unit assumed responsibility for minimum funding guarantees.

FGS acknowledges the excellent interdisciplinary work being carried out across SFU and the fact that has INS played an important role for some scholars across campus a) whose work is inherently interdisciplinary (especially Indigenous colleagues and students); and b) whose academic units do not have PhD programs. FGS remains committed to supporting colleagues and students who wish to work interdisciplinarily through co-supervision and by exploring options for affiliation with academic units with recognized PhD programs. We will host a townhall in March 2026 to explore the future of interdisciplinarity across SFU.

Faculty of Graduate Studies

- 1) Suspension of Admission: Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies (INS)

To: Senate Graduate Studies Committee
From: El Chenier Associate Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Re: Proposal to Suspend Admissions
Date: December 16, 2025

This is a request to suspend admissions and add admission suspension language on the calendar for the Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies (INS) master's and PhD to be approved by SGSC, effective for Fall 2026 calendar. Please include them on the next SGSC agenda.

This language is to be added for the calendar entries for Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies (PhD, MAsc, MA, MSc): ***Admission to this pathway has been suspended effective Fall 2026. Students who wish to pursue interdisciplinary research may do so via a co-supervisory arrangement with academic supervisors from two academic units at SFU. Applicants who wish to pursue this option should reach out to potential academic supervisors before applying to a graduate program.***



El Chenier
Associate Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Proposal to Suspend Admissions

1. All impacted credentials, levels and categories of the degree, and specific discipline or field of study
Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies (INS) Masters and PhD
2. Location
SFU
3. Faculty(ies), Department(s), or School(s) offering the pathway
Faculty of Graduate Studies
4. Proposed date for suspension
Fall 2026
5. Reasons for suspension of admissions, such as:
 - Insufficient resources
6. Plan for suspension, including:
 - a) Steps taken to consult with students
 - b) Steps taken to consult with impacted instructors and staff
 - c) Steps taken to ensure students in the pathway have the opportunity to complete
 - d) Confirmation of consultation with other impacted departments and faculties
7. Draft Calendar entry detailing suspension of admissions to the pathway
Language to be added to calendar entries: *Admission to this pathway has been suspended effective Fall 2026. Students who wish to pursue interdisciplinary research may do so via a co-supervisory arrangement with academic supervisors from two academic units at SFU. Applicants who wish to pursue this option should reach out to potential academic supervisors before applying to a graduate program.*
8. Name, title, phone number and email address of the institutional contact person in case more information is required.
El Chenier, Associate Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

NOTE: Suspension of admissions does not necessarily result in the termination of a program.