San Diego State University – Master of Science in Homeland Security

San Diego State University offers a Master of Science in Homeland Security (HSEC). The program provides interdisciplinary graduate study leading to the Master of Science degree in homeland security, even though nearly all the students come from a non-science background. The HSEC Program offers a vibrant and challenging educational environment where scholarly, educational, and research endeavors are applied to real-world challenges generated by man-made and natural incidents on the local, national, and global levels. Program strengths are in Cybersecurity, disaster assistance and humanitarian response, data fusion, visualization, collaboration especially across the border with Mexican Law Enforcement and a host of agencies and businesses, Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources (CIKR), information decision systems, public health, combatting violent extremism, totalitarian and democratic rhetoric, transnational crime, border security and its linkage to trade, and interaction with wildfires, earthquakes, floods, and other disasters including with social media tools. Our faculty are nearly all accomplished professional Practitioners who teach what they do, so there is a deep practical and career focus in the program. Many dozens of Adjunct Faculty from different agencies and companies provide a rich expertise to help with theses, projects, and career entry.

The active participation of graduate students and faculty with community partners is a primary focus of the HSEC Program. Therefore, the program has established a number of collaborative relationships with public, private, and non-profit sector partners on the international, federal, state, and local levels as we require the students to do an Internship (HSEC 695, Practicum), which commonly is a steppingstone to a career. These relationships are evident in both the classroom and through the HSEC Program’s global and domestic research initiatives and they allow the homeland security student to engage in a number of service-learning opportunities that make a real-world difference to the safety and security of people and communities around the world.

The HSEC Program provides an intellectually and professionally rewarding educational environment that welcomes students from all backgrounds with a strong desire to engage in interdisciplinary study, critical thinking, and research. The graduate students have a strong sense of community and public service. Graduates have positions in almost every local, California, and Federal agency as well as hundreds of businesses, Non-Governmental Organizations, and government organizations seeking to be part of the solution in complex challenges to society.

The HSEC Program also emphasizes international and comparative approaches to the concept of security. Thus study abroad is required of all students in the program, with the time abroad equal to one three-unit class (about 45 hours), so is easily accomplished especially with our close partnership with nearby Mexico and its agencies. Numerous options for study abroad that balance the time and financial constraints of both full and part-time and working and non-working students are available. Of particular note is the fact that SDSU is a twenty-minute drive from the busiest border crossing in the world and that the HSEC Program is involved in a number of educational and research initiatives with partners in Mexico, so Study Abroad can be simply taking a class at one of our partner universities in Tijuana. Other programs based in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia truly give the HSEC Program a global reach and
makes study abroad in one’s area of interest a practical reality as well as normally one of the highlights of the program.

SDSU HSEC Program alumni are found in the public, private, and non-profit sectors in diverse career fields such as humanitarian assistance, the military, public health, public safety, science and technology, intelligence, emergency management and response, higher education, information decision systems, project management, journalism, public administration, education, research, and politics. Many continue to be an active part of the HSEC Program after graduation, providing networking and job opportunities for current students and fellow alumni.

Students must complete 30 units of coursework in an officially approved course of study as outlined in the five sections below. Students must earn a minimum grade point average of B (3.0) in the Master’s program and no less than a “C” in each course. Students may meet the culminating experience requirement through Plan A (thesis) by completing HSEC 799A or through Plan B (thesis project so not published in library) by completing HSEC 790 and presenting the results to generally one of the Program Co-Directors or other faculty.

Master of Science Degree in Homeland Security Curriculum:

1. Core Courses and Internship (15 units)
   - HSEC 601 - Seminar in Homeland Security (3)
   - HSEC 602 - Seminar in Science, Technology, and Homeland Security (3)
   - HSEC 603 - Seminar in Emergency Preparedness and Response (3)
   - HSEC 604 - Seminar in Law, Society, and Homeland Security (3)
   - HSEC 695 - Internship (Practicum) (3)

2. Electives: (9 units, six units from homeland security and three units from any other department or programs). Most students choose classes in departments and programs such as: Management Information Systems, Criminal Justice, Geography, Geology (Natural Disasters), Latin American Studies, Hospitality and Tourism Management, Public Administration, or Business. Any 500-level (senior-level) class is possible. Many students also transfer in classes (up to 9 units are possible by accreditation rules), including from military Command and Staff Colleges, with this external elective being the simplest to replace.

3. Study Abroad (3 units). All homeland security graduate students are required to complete a homeland security-related study abroad experience. To meet this requirement, students must complete one of the following with the preapproved and written consent of the program adviser:
   1. One of hundreds of formal Study Abroad programs via SDSU or other schools, many of these are short trips of a week or more to areas such as England, China, Israel, Mexico, or Canada. Nuance is that they need to be 500-level or above, as most school programs are focused on undergraduates.
   2. Attendance at an International conference, generally with added activities in the country before or after the conference.
   3. A CSU Study Abroad Program, as the CSU system has hundreds of them to nearly every part of the world, though most are for undergraduates, so need one that is 500-level (senior) or above.
4. An SDSU Exchange Program or other formal interaction with another university or organization, many of these are formal programs with competitive fellowships available.
5. An SDSU Travel Study Program, which is focused on travel through countries like China, Guatemala, or dozens of other countries led by SDSU faculty generally during breaks.
6. A homeland security practicum, special topics, special study, or research conducted abroad where the student really does the Study Abroad as an Independent Study often with a small group to maximize the enjoyment and fruitfulness of the trip.

See the program adviser to make arrangements to meet the study abroad requirement. This often is linked to thesis or project topics so that the Study Abroad is part of the steppingstone to the students chosen career like responding to disasters, visiting human trafficking organizations, or interacting in hundreds of potential settings to benefit the student and give them a career advantage.

**4. Plan A or Plan B (3 units).** Students who complete Plan A, thesis or project option must include HSEC 799A in their program of study. Students who complete Plan B, non-thesis option must include HSEC 790 in their program of study and pass a comprehensive examination.

San Diego State University is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), which is the normal one for universities in the western US.

Most students complete the program in four semesters, though a few do so in two semesters and more in three semesters. Some students take many years—everything is normally fine, just customized to your situation. Normally the time to completion is mostly dependent on the financial framework, such as veterans normally would take only 9 units a semester to maximize their living expenses, then take HSEC 799a (Thesis) the fourth semester as it is the only class (can take only once) that counts as full-time. In-State students often take more units, as 6.1 units and above are the same price, so students carefully plan their actual classes and research classes to be able to maximize the number of units and minimize the cost. Active-duty military almost always have to take 12 units per semester but are also assigned to the school for four semesters normally. Many students from other countries attending on government scholarships have similar constraints to be here four semesters. Students who study is interrupted by life, including being deployed to other parts of the world, have several ways that this can be accomplished, mostly by taking formal leave of absence for one or two semesters or doing research classes. The faculty are happy to work with students on the nuances and reality of people’s lives and situations.

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