

**What is UNIGIS?** UNIGIS is a network of universities co-operating to supply post-graduate Certificate, Diploma and Masters courses on GIS by distance learning as well as short workshops on current developments in GIS. It was founded in 1990 and currently includes sites in eleven countries on three continents. About 900 students have taken the UNIGIS Diploma Course world-wide. For more information: <http://www.unigis.net>.

This page is a product of the UNIGIS International Network and is authored by the UNIGIS Port Elizabeth, South Africa Office. Information: UNIGIS South Africa, Port Elizabeth, Tel: +27 41 504 3668, e-mail: [ann.olivier@nmmu.ac.za](mailto:ann.olivier@nmmu.ac.za) Internet: <http://tutor.nmmu.ac.za/unigis>

**Friends of UNIGIS** Organisations which work closely together with the UNIGIS International Network are ESRI and Intergraph. These Friends of UNIGIS make available their products for UNIGIS students for a low price and support students in MSc-projects. Currently UNIGIS is in negotiation with other potential 'Friends'. For more information on the Friends of UNIGIS Programme contact: Henk Scholten, [henk@geodan.nl](mailto:henk@geodan.nl).

# UNIGIS and Distance Learning

## Educating GIS Professionals World Wide

Do you want to embark on a lifelong learning experience in Geographical Systems and Science? You can now start a UNIGIS course from anywhere at anytime in the English Language.

By Ann Olivier



### Part-time Courses

The UNIGIS program was initiated in 1990 to fulfil a need to provide professional development and education in Geographical Information Systems and Science to those students that could not study full time at a university. As the distance learning courses are part-time they provide a unique opportunity for working professionals to develop their knowledge base and stay abreast of current issues. The program has since then become the largest and best established eLearning GIS program in the world enrolling more than 400 students worldwide annually. There are currently over 3,000 UNIGIS alumni in more than 40 countries.

The network has grown to seventeen sites in fourteen countries. These sites are committed to offering the highest quality

Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and Masters Courses in English, Czech, German, Hungarian, Portuguese and Spanish.

### 'InterGIS' Project

In order to retain market leadership this network has to maintain growth. An example of this is the Asia initiative. UNIGIS India culminated from the AsiaLink 'InterGIS' project after two years of intense development. The UNIGIS curriculum was modified for the explicit educational needs of Asia. Under the auspices of UNIGIS Salzburg the University of Goa is the latest institution to join the network. Through this collaboration staff have come to realise the differences in pedagogy between the universities and countries which culminated in an understanding of the expansion of the network into Asia.

### Passion and Enthusiasm

The 'InterGIS' program is a global virtual university for GI Science. Members of the network all have a passion and enthusiasm for the field of study and work together in research and curriculum development related to GIS education. This has led to the collaboration in the design of a very adaptive learning system.

All course material is applications related and provides an understanding of the conceptual, technical and organisational aspects of GIS. The course structure is modular with a variety of electives and specialization pathways to choose from and presented on advanced online platforms. Specialisation pathways/streams have been added to the course structure to encompass and cater for the diverse student backgrounds. Examples of some of the core streams are depicted in the table below. There are many different structures offered at the various institutions.

### Short Courses

Development of online learning platforms is an ongoing process. Summer and winter schools and other intensive short courses are held on an annual basis to facilitate face-to-face contact and the advancement of practical skills.

Due to the immense international student community UNIGIS has strong ties with institutional, business and industry partners.

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