Guidelines for the Individually-Designed Interdisciplinary Majors

GENERAL INFORMATION:

The individually-designed interdisciplinary major is an option for students whose interests are truly interdisciplinary and who wish to pursue areas of inquiry not currently addressed by existing majors. Students desiring to design their own majors must submit a proposal to the Committee on Individual Programs for review and approval.

A completed proposal consists of the course plan, a list of proposed courses (totaling 48 hours); a written rationale for the major; and a signed copy of the "Declaration of Major" form. The students must have identified and met with the faculty adviser, who will offer advice and guidance for the individually-designed major, and obtain his or her signature before submitting the forms to the Office of Associate Deans (350 Buttrick Hall).

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

This plan permits students to contract for an individually-designed program of concentration consisting of at least 48 credit hours of approved work. The program is constructed around a coherent academic purpose and may draw together the academic resources of a number of departments and schools. The program's purpose may include topical, period, or areas studies, and must be consistent with the philosophy underlying a liberal arts education (see "What is Liberal Education?" on page 48 of the Undergraduate Catalog). The proposed major should not be designed with a focus on pre-professional training (e.g., pre-business, pre-law, or pre-medicine). The student may be required to achieve a standard of proficiency in appropriately related areas such as foreign languages or mathematics in addition to the 48 credit hours constituting the program of concentration.

Each student must identify an adviser in the College of Arts and Science to provide guidance for their major. The major adviser must be an Arts and Science professor or full-time senior lecturer.

The student's [course plan] for an individually-designed interdisciplinary major is a statement of required courses. Furthermore, because of the nature of interdisciplinary majors, all courses that have previously been included in the student's [course plan] are considered to be a part of the major discipline. The student must achieve at least a 2.000 grade point average in all courses that are (or have been) part of the contract.

PROCEDURE:

1. Study the course listings in the *Undergraduate Catalog*, pp. 136-211 (http://www.vanderbilt.edu/catalogs/documents/UGAD.pdf)

2. Prepare a tentative list of courses for inclusion in the major
3. Draft a preliminary version of your rationale
4. Meet with your faculty adviser to review courses and rationale (meeting with an associate dean before the Committee meeting is optional)
5. Obtain faculty adviser's signature on final version of major proposal
6. Submit proposal to the Office of Associate Deans (350 Buttrick Hall) no later than one week before a meeting of the Committee on Individual Programs. Please contact La Tisha Moore (latisha.moore@vanderbilt.edu or 615-343-3141) for a current schedule of the meetings.

Students whose proposals do not meet the standards for acceptable individually-designed majors may be required to meet with an associate dean before their proposal can be considered by the Committee.

Once the Committee has met, you will be notified of its decision (either approval, approval with changes, or resubmission with revisions) by email. If you are asked to resubmit, the Committee will require that you meet with an associate dean to discuss strategies for revising and strengthening your proposal.

WRITTEN RATIONALE:

The rationale should be at least two pages (double-spaced, typed) in length and include the following:

- A statement describing why existing majors do not meet your needs
- A description of the area you wish to pursue and why it is a valid/relevant subject for study within the context of the liberal arts and sciences
- An explanation of the relevance of particular courses
- A discussion of how the proposed courses cohere
- A discussion of how this major prepares you for your post-graduate study or long-term goals

COURSES:

Interdisciplinary majors consist of 16 courses (48 hours) and may include only three introductory (1000-level) courses. However, some departments and programs, like History, Managerial Studies, and Music Literature, for instance, offer a considerable number of – or only – 1000-level courses, so courses form these programs are not counted among the three introductory courses permitted.

Advances Placement or International Baccalaureate credit may not count towards the 48 hours required for the major. Independent Studies, Directed Readings or research courses may be included, but your proposal must contain a specific description of the subject matter of these courses.

If your proposed major is approved, you will be required to complete the courses listed in your course plan in order to fulfill the major requirements. If you find it necessary in the future to amend your course plan because of schedule conflicts or other reasons, you must submit the requested changes to the Office of the Associate Deans (350 Buttrick Hall) with your faculty adviser's written approval.

ADVISER:

Each student must identify a major adviser in the College of Arts & Science who will offer advice and guidance. The major adviser must be a professor or full-time senior lecturer in the College of Arts and Science. It is preferable to choose an instructor whom you have worked with in the past and one with expertise in one of the fields related to your interests. Faculty are not required to agree to advise students with individually-designed majors.

TITLE:

The title of the major must be short and illustrative of the true content of the major. Below are examples of titles from recent individually-designed interdisciplinary majors:

International Political Economy
Urban Economics and Policy
French and the Creative Arts
Human Biology and Public Health
Studies in Human Ecology
Middle Eastern Studies
Health and Literature

FORMS:

- Declaration of Major form: https://as.vanderbilt.edu/docs/declaration%20of%20major%20form.pdf
- Course Plan for individually-designed interdisciplinary major: https://as.vanderbilt.edu/docs/Contract%20for%20Interdisciplinary%20Major.pdf
- Request for change in Interdisciplinary Course Plan: https://as.vanderbilt.edu/docs/Request%20for%20Change%20in%20Contract%20for%20Interdisciplinary%20Major.pdf