

INDIVIDUAL MAJOR APPLICATION

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS (REVISED, Fall 2016)

To the Student

The Individual Major option is intended for students whose interests and goals make it advisable for them to set up an individualized program of study, which differs from programs with standard requirements. A student may develop a major program from existing interdisciplinary concentrations or design a major program drawn from the offerings of several academic areas in the University. The curriculum for an Individual Major in the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Science and Mathematics (CLA/CSM) needs to be equivalent in coherence, depth, and breadth to the Major programs offered by Departments in CLA/CSM.

The application consists of:

- cover sheet
- a statement about your reasons for choosing an Individual Major (proposal essay)
- the list of courses you have selected for the major
- a letter of support from a CLA/CSM faculty member who has agreed to serve as your advisor
- an unofficial transcript
- the distribution worksheet
- a degree audit

Requirements:

1. The curriculum must consist of least ten courses for the B.A. and at least thirteen for the B.S. degree. At least six courses must be at the 300 level or above and no more than three courses may be at the 100 level. One of the upper-level courses must be designated as a "Methods of Inquiry" course (see Procedures for a description of "Methods of Inquiry").
2. At least five of the required courses, plus the Methods of Inquiry course, must be taught by CLA/CSM faculty, and the advisor must also be a CLA/CSM faculty member.
3. Only two of the courses can be "Independent Study" courses. One of these Independent Study courses may be an Internship, but only if it includes an academic component (**e.g. supervision by a faculty member and some academic writing required as part of the internship**).
4. Only one of the required courses can be taken on a Pass/Fail basis. **The Methods of Inquiry course cannot be taken on a Pass/Fail basis.**
5. Students must designate a course as a capstone and provide a justification for this choice.
6. Students must have a minimum **GPA of 3.3** at the time of application.
7. Students must apply before they have accumulated 60 credits toward graduation. Transfer students must apply before they have accumulated 90 credits.

Additional requirements for the B.S. Degree:

1. At least half of all courses, and four of the upper level courses, must be approved major courses in the Natural Science. Natural Science courses are courses in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, or Mathematics, or those Psychology and School for the Environment courses which are designated as Natural Science courses counting toward a B.S. degree.
2. Four of the Natural Science courses must be approved major courses and lie outside of the field focused on in the Individual Major.
3. At least one course must be a laboratory or field research course that provides experience with investigative methods. This course may serve as the "Methods of Inquiry" course.

Deadlines:

Applications submitted before November 1 will be considered for approval for the Spring. Applications submitted before April 1 will be considered for approval for the Fall.

Procedures for applying:

- Find a faculty advisor from the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) or College of Science & Mathematics (CSM) who will act as your advisor for planning and implementing the curriculum for this major in accordance with guidelines laid out in the handout "Expectations for Faculty Advisors."
- Meet with this advisor and develop your plan with her/his advice.
- Have your advisor write a letter of support.
- Write an essay of 500 -1000 words explaining in detail how each of the proposed courses fits into a coherent academic plan of study, providing you with a broad and deep knowledge of some field of study. This essay should also describe how the "Methods of Inquiry" course provides an opportunity to analyze the methods, assumptions, and approaches characteristic of one or more of the academic fields of study represented in the Individual Major, and helps you reflect on how knowledge is discovered and organized in the relevant academic discipline(s) and should justify the choice of a capstone course.
- Give a title to the proposed Individual Major that you want to appear on your transcript, and make it clear in your essay that this title appropriately describes the plan of study actually proposed.
- You may add other supportive reasons, such as the reason for your interest in this field, descriptions of how this Major will prepare you for some future career, etc.
- Fill out the enclosed forms, indicating your progress in fulfilling GenEd and WPR requirements, and listing the courses involved in this Individual Major (and other Majors if applicable).
- Obtain an unofficial transcript from the Registrar's Office and include it with your application.

If the proposed Individual Major is not your only major, the proposal should include a list of courses pertaining to each major, and indicate which courses will be counted for more than one

major. (See university limits on the number of courses that can be double-counted.) Course lists for other majors should be signed by the Chair of the appropriate Departments. Submit your application to the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies, before the Fall or Spring deadlines. If (s)he finds everything in order, the Assistant Director will forward the proposal to the committee for final review, which only meets when classes are in session during the Fall and Spring semesters.

Exceptions:

Students whose proposal shows special academic strengths, and whose past record gives evidence of competence in carrying out their planned curriculum, may apply for a waiver of requirements concerning application-deadlines or of the rule requiring submission before 60 or 90 credits. In addition to explaining the reason for requesting this waiver, your proposal must present an especially clear, strong, and detailed case that the proposed curriculum for this Major is actually equivalent in coherence, depth, and breadth to the Major programs offered by CLA/CSM departments. Other non-academic factors - such as problems in personal life, changes in career plans, or lack of previous awareness of the Individual Major option - will be considered only in the case of proposals demonstrating exceptional academic merit. By themselves they do not constitute sufficient reason for a waiver.

Students applying late in their undergraduate career, asking for a waiver from the 60 or 90 credit rule, must present an especially persuasive case that the courses involved come together in the student's mind to form a united and coherent whole equivalent to a department Major. Waivers from this rule will generally not be granted to students who already have a Major. Students requesting a waiver from this rule may be required to extend their stay at UMass Boston for an extra semester or two if this seems necessary in order to complete a suitable course of study.

Policies for Individual Majors

- If it is necessary to make **changes to the Individual Major** (i.e. a change of advisor or a change of course), the student must receive written approval from their advisor and present this to the Majors, Honors, and Special Programs Committee [MHSP] along with the request for the changes. MHSP must approve all changes.
- **Continuing students with an individual major** and their advisor will be contacted by MHSP annually to check on progress.
- **Students with an individual major who leave the university for at least one semester for any reason** are subject to a review of their individual major by MHSP upon readmission to the university.

**A Checklist of CLA/CSM Requirements
(for students matriculating in or after Fall 2002)**

Freshman Writing

(Not required of students entering with 90 or more transfer credits.)

- English 101
- English 102

**First-Year Seminar
(G100-level course)**

(Not required of students entering with 30 or more transfer credits.)

- _____

**Intermediate Seminar
(G200-level course)**

(Not required of students entering with 90 or more transfer credits.)

- _____

Writing Proficiency

- Exam or portfolio passed

Quantitative Reasoning

- _____

Diversity

(Students entering with 0-59 transfer credits take two courses; others take one.)

U.S. focus course

- _____

International focus course

- _____

Upper-Level Studies

See *Undergraduate Catalog* and departmental materials for specific requirements.

- Major
- Minor (if any)
- Program (if any)

Distribution Courses

BA Candidates	BS Candidates
<input type="checkbox"/> AR _____ <input type="checkbox"/> HU _____ <input type="checkbox"/> AR or HU _____	<input type="checkbox"/> AR _____ <input type="checkbox"/> HU _____
<input type="checkbox"/> NS _____ <input type="checkbox"/> MT* or NS _____ <input type="checkbox"/> MT* or NS _____	<input type="checkbox"/> NS _____ <input type="checkbox"/> MT* or NS _____ <input type="checkbox"/> MT* or NS _____ <input type="checkbox"/> MT* or NS _____
<input type="checkbox"/> SB _____ <input type="checkbox"/> SB _____ <input type="checkbox"/> SB _____	<input type="checkbox"/> SB _____ <input type="checkbox"/> SB _____
<input type="checkbox"/> WC or WL _____ <input type="checkbox"/> WC or WL _____	<input type="checkbox"/> WC or WL** _____
* Any math course must be Math 125 or higher (and identified as an "MT" course).	* Any math course must be Math 141 or higher (and identified as an "MT" course). ** If WL, must be 102-level or higher.

Foreign Language (BA Candidates Only)

- Elementary proficiency in a language other than English.

Please Note!

Courses may fulfill more than one requirement. For example, a single course may simultaneously fulfill a distribution, diversity, and major requirement.

PROPOSAL ESSAY

In a statement of about one typewritten page, outline your intellectual and career goals, and describe how the Individual Major Plan you have designed will help you to accomplish them. Please explain why you have included each course, and describe how they fit together to form a coherent program.

INDIVIDUAL MAJOR PLAN

Fill in the outline below with the courses you have chosen to complete your Individual Major Plan. (Place an asterisk beside the "method of inquiry" course.)

Courses already taken, which you would like included:

Dept.	Number	Title	Semester Taken	Grade Rec'd

Courses you are taking at present, which you would like to include:

Dept.	Number	Title	Semester Taken	Grade Rec'd

Major courses to be taken in the future:

Department Number Title

Semester 1

Alternates:

Semester 2

Alternates:

Semester 3

Alternates:

Semester 4

Alternates:

For the Faculty Advisor for Individual Majors

The faculty advisor for an Individual Major (IM) assumes responsibility both for helping a student develop an IM proposal, and for meeting with the student at least once each semester to oversee the student's progress in fulfilling the curriculum outlined in the proposal.

After helping the student develop a proposal, the faculty advisor should write a supporting letter and give it to the student to present to the Majors, Honors and Special Programs Committee (MHSP). If any changes in the Major become necessary later on, the student should get the advisor's written approval to present to the MHSP along with the request for the changes. *MHSP will contact the advisor and student annually for a report on the student's progress.* In a student's final semester before graduation, the advisor will receive a transcript or degree audit to verify completion of the IM.

Before beginning discussions with a student, please familiarize yourself with the requirements for an IM as described in the basic handout for students.

In assisting the student, and in writing your support letter, keep in mind especially the following points, which describe some of the major standard criteria the MHSP uses in deciding whether to approve or reject a proposal:

- Discuss with the student the coherence of the proposal curriculum, so that (s)he will be able to write an essay describing how each of the courses fits into an overall unified plan. The MHSP wants to know that the student her/himself has thought this matter through. Help the student in this thinking, but insist that (s)he explains this in her/his own words.
- In helping the student decide on a suitable curriculum, keep in mind that the rule of thumb used by the MHSP is that it be roughly equivalent in coherence, depth and breadth to any major program offered by the departments in CLA/CSM. You will help the MHSP greatly if your supporting letter explains why you judge that the proposed Individual Major curriculum is so equivalent.
- Pay special attention to the character of the "Method of Inquiry" course. This course must involve analyzing the methods, assumptions, and approaches characteristic of one or more of the fields of study represented in the Individual Major. The course should ideally help the student reflect on how knowledge is discovered and organized in the field(s) in question. The student's proposal should explain this, but it will be helpful to the MHSP if you also explain in your supporting letter your own views on this matter.
- Help the student check on the probable availability of all the courses listed in the proposed IM curriculum. This sometimes proves difficult in the case of the six required courses at the 300 level or above. In doubtful cases, help the student pick alternate courses.
- The MHSP would like to hear your estimation of the likelihood that the student has enough enthusiasm, intelligence, and self-discipline to carry through on the planned curriculum.

If you have any questions please contact the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies (CC 1 1300, ext. 7-6330).