

GUIDELINES FOR SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR PROGRAMS

I. GUIDELINES FOR THE STUDENT

Each Centre College student has the opportunity to self-design a major around particular interests and academic goals, so long as the final product meets basic educational standards of the college and fits appropriately into its liberal arts curriculum. Of course, the curricular, instructional, and administrative framework for the pursuit of a given self-designed major is not, by contrast with that of standard major programs, already in place. Members of the faculty and administration of the College stand ready to help you at many points along the way, but the initiative for the development of a self-designed major lies with you. Consequently, a higher degree of self-motivation may be demanded of a person desiring a self-designed major than of those traveling the more established routes to graduation. Of course any self-designed major must rely, substantially, on the strengths and expertise of our faculty and our existing course offerings. The following “itinerary,” listing the application process as a step-by-step procedure, should prove to be helpful to you when fashioning such a program:

Step 1: Once you have an idea for a self-designed major, make an appointment to see the Assistant Dean for Advising, who will want to discuss the idea with you and help guide you through the construction in a step-by-step fashion. The Assistant Dean will give you a form that directs you through the first step, where you will answer some initial, straightforward questions about your proposal, and will invite you to a follow-up conversation about your answers.

Step 2: This follow-up conversation will lead to the second step, where a more advanced question about your proposal will need to be answered.

Step 3: You will now be ready to meet with a member of the faculty you wish to serve as the chair of your self-designed major program committee. Once this faculty member agrees to serve as chair, you will want to work together to determine other program committee members and formulate a selection of courses (as well as a schedule of when those courses will be taken) that will serve as major program requirements. You will also want to select and schedule lower division course preparation that supports your proposed program.

Step 4: Meet again with the Assistant Dean, together reviewing the results of Step 3 and working through any difficulties that might have arisen. Then complete a summary statement, obtained from the Assistant Dean, which informs a reviewer about your proposed program and describes how your major fits properly into a curriculum centered wholly on the liberal arts and sciences.

Step 5: Use the results of Steps 1-4 to complete the form for a “Request for a Self-Designed Major Program” (called the “Request” form elsewhere in these guidelines). If you need additional help, meet with your program chair. Then obtain the required signatures on the form (those from the major program committee members) and deliver the form to the Associate Dean’s office. The Assistant Dean will present the form to the Academic Standards Committee for their review and consideration for approval.

A special advisory note is in order: Whenever students pursuing a self-designed major are given the freedom in the junior-senior courses to choose their own topics for an oral presentation,

term paper, project, etc., they should seek ways such assignments may be used to relate the content and/or methods of the course to the goals of their major.

II. GUIDELINES FOR THE SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR COMMITTEE

A major program committee for a self-designed major must consist of no fewer than three members of the faculty.

The members of the committee should be selected from those disciplines most frequently represented by the courses comprising the junior-senior requirements.

The committee will meet as a body by the time of its final approval (when committee members sign the proposal) – in Step 5 of the procedures outlined above. In a normal timetable, this meeting will occur in April of the student's sophomore year.

In deciding whether or not to approve the proposed self-designed major, the members of the committee should pay special attention to the courses selected as junior-senior requirements and to the rationale given under item 6 of the "Request" form to determine if the major is a coherent whole with an integrity of its own and is academically sound. The committee's approval should depend on a positive conclusion to that determination.

The committee, in consultation with the student and within the bounds of faculty legislation, should specify the way in which the student may satisfy a senior requirement. An indication of how this requirement will be met should be made on the "Request" form under item 5 (see part IV of this report).

The major committee should complete its work so that the Academic Standards Committee will normally receive the "Request" form by April 25th of the student's sophomore year.

Once the Academic Standards Committee has approved the self-designed major, the chair of the major program committee will become the student's advisor until graduation. Meetings of the major program committee will be necessary only to consider changes in the junior-senior requirements (including the senior requirement).

III. RECOMMENDED TIMETABLE FOR CONSTRUCTING A SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR

Normally, you should complete each of the following steps on or before the date indicated in your sophomore year:

- February 15 – Get a good idea for a self-designed major.
- March 1 – Make an appointment with the Assistant Dean for the purpose of discussing the conception and beginning the process of following the step-by-step procedure outlined above.
- March 15 – Select a major program chair and committee.
- April 10 – Submit a draft version of the "Request" form to the chair of the major program committee

- April 15 – Submit a revised proposal, if necessary to the chair of the major program committee.
- April 20 – Hold a meeting of the major program committee to consider the approval of the proposed major.
- April 25 – Obtain the approval of Assistant Dean and send the proposal to the Academic Standards Committee.
- May 15 – The committee should determine final approval of the proposed major and notify the student of the decision.

IV. GUIDELINES TO FULFILL A SENIOR REQUIREMENT

Each self-designed major must include within its program a senior requirement. In consultation and with the approval of the self-designed major committee the student may propose to meet this requirement in one of three ways:

Senior Seminar: You may decide to take a senior seminar in one of the disciplines that constitutes a major emphasis in your course of studies. The senior seminar director should know that you have declared a self-designed major and will, if possible, arrange for a senior project to fit the self-designed study.

Independent Study: You may decide to fulfill the senior requirement by arranging for an Independent Study. In this case, you should indicate your intentions on the “Request for Self-Designed Major Program” form.

Existing Upper-level Course: You may fulfill the senior requirement by taking an existing upper-level course in an area closely related to your major, provided you complete an appropriate additional paper or project. This additional work must be approved by the course instructor AND your major program committee.

V. A NOTE ABOUT SECOND MAJORS AND MINORS

If you intend to declare a second major and/or minors, you must declare those on your application for a self-designed major. Please note that no more than two junior-senior requirements of the self-designed major may be applied toward junior-senior requirements of a second major or of a minor. Also, the senior requirement of the self-designed major can't fulfill a senior requirement of a second major.

Revised 12/11

REQUEST FOR SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR PROGRAM

Name: _____

1. Title of Proposed Major Program _____

2. Major Program Committee

We, the undersigned faculty members, have worked with this student in preparing this request. We believe that this program is academically sound, and that it constitutes a coherent whole with its own integrity. By signing this request, we agree to serve as the committee for this student's major program.

Signatures: _____ (will act as advisor)

Date of committee meeting: _____

3. Junior-Senior Requirements

4. Lower Division Preparation That Supports The Proposed Program

STEP 2: STATEMENT OF EDUCATIOAL GOALS AND LIBERAL ARTS NATURE OF THE MAJOR

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title of Proposed Major Program: _____

Now that you've moved beyond the initial ideas for your self-designed major, please describe the primary educational objectives that you have for it and how it will fit into the broad goals of a liberal arts education. When you have finished, please return to the Assistant Dean's office with this completed form.

STEP 3: COURSE LISTINGS FOR THE SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR

Name: _____ Date: _____

Meet with the faculty member whom you have chosen as the chair of your self-designed major program. Together, fill out this form. Your chair may wish to include the other members of the program in this planning step.

Once your major is approved, you are bound to complete all the courses listed under "Junior-Senior Requirements," "Lower Division Preparation That Supports the Proposed Program," and "Senior Requirement." Any changes must be approved by your program committee **and** the Academic Standards Committee. Consequently, you should work closely with your program committee and list courses that are **likely** to be offered. If there is some uncertainty, give yourself some flexibility. For example, you might list something like "two of the following three government courses," or "three of the following six courses that deal with the theme of..." Also, do not list all the courses you plan to take as requirements; leave room for electives. Most majors have 6-10 junior-senior requirements, so you should follow that model.

1. Title of Proposed Major Program: _____

2. Proposed Major Program Chair:

I have worked with this student in preparing this request. I believe that this program is academically sound, and that it constitutes a coherent whole with its own integrity.

Signature _____ (will act as advisor)

3. Likely Program Committee: _____ (to assist the student and advisor)

4. Junior – Senior Requirements: Normally, transfer credits may not be used to meet major course requirements. In addition, internship credit may not be used. It is strongly suggested that an independent study be created for each year that reflects the interdisciplinary goals of this proposed major.

5. Lower Division Preparation That Supports the Proposed Program:

6. Senior Requirement (please indicate which type of Senior Requirement, described in the “Guidelines for Self-Designed Major Programs,” you will choose).

7. In the space below, construct a proposed schedule of the courses you listed above as Junior-Senior requirements and Lower Division preparation:

Fall	JUNIOR YEAR CentreTerm	Spring
------	---------------------------	--------

Fall

SENIOR YEAR
CentreTerm

Spring

Step 4: SUMMARY STATEMENT FOR SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR PROGRAM

Use your answers from Step 1 and Step 2 to answer the summary statement below. You may wish to ask for help from the Assistant Dean or the members of your major program committee. When you are finished, you are ready to put your results from Steps 3 and 4 together on the “Request for a Self-designed Major” form (found on the Registrar’s Home Page), obtain required signatures, and submit it to the Associate Dean, who will take it to the Academic Standards Committee on your behalf.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title of Proposed Major Program: _____

Write a description of the proposed program, including relationships between or among the disciplines involved, reasons for proposing such a program, and a discussion as to why your goals can be better accomplished by this program than by one or more of the regular major programs offered by the College. Make sure this statement includes a description of how your proposed major fits appropriately into a liberal arts curriculum.