

The College of Letters & Science

Individual Major

Student Handbook

**University of California, Davis
College of Letters & Science
200 Social Sciences & Humanities Building
Davis, CA 95616-8572
(530) 752-0392
www.ls.ucdavis.edu**

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
Program Overview.....	2
AB and BS Individual Major Requirements	2
Developing an Individual Major	3-4
The Final Proposal.....	4-5
The Review Process.....	5-6
General Education Requirement	6
Alterations in Approved Programs.....	6
Graduation with Honors.....	6-7
Conclusion.....	7

Individual Majors Program in the College of Letters and Science

Program Overview

The Individual Major program was created to allow students the opportunity to develop an interdisciplinary program of study specifically tailored to an area of intellectual interest not accommodated by any existing major on campus. The program offers the self-motivated student a unique opportunity to approach interdisciplinary study in various creative and challenging ways. Individual Majors are designed by the student in consultation with faculty advisers and are subject to final approval by the Faculty Committee on Individual Majors in the College.

AB and BS Major Requirements

Preparatory Subject Matter (variable units)

Lower division courses basic to the program or needed to satisfy prerequisites for upper division requirements

Depth Subject Matter 45-54 units Upper division units must include:

- a. courses that provide a unified pattern and focus
- b. at least 30 units from Letters and Science teaching departments or programs
- c. no more than 10 units in courses numbered 192, 194H, 198 and 199

AB degree: limit of 80 units total toward the major

BS degree: limit of 110 units total toward the major

ATTENTION: For consideration, you *must* submit your proposal *prior* to reaching 120 units. Prior to submission of proposal, student must meet the following criteria: minimum overall GPA or 3.0 as well as a minimum GPA of 3.0 in all preparatory courses for the selected major.

Developing an Individual Major

Keep in mind the nature of L&S majors:

When developing an individual major, it is important to consider the traditions, values and academic standards that guide all undergraduate majors within the College. A major is intended to enable you to achieve a level of intellectual depth in a selected area of study.

Majors in Letters and Science are specifically designed in a manner that insures a broad theoretical foundation for a liberal arts education rather than specialized or vocational training. Major requirements are designed to create academic coherence, to offer breadth as well as depth, and to stress theory and methods of inquiry. The College offers a rich variety of such majors, most of which offer considerable flexibility in course selection.

Given this, the Faculty Committee does not look favorably upon Individual Major proposals that are already encompassed by an established major, narrow in focus, or vocationally oriented.

Define your interests:

Take a broad range of lower division courses in areas of potential interest. It is usually best not to choose a major until you've had some experience in preparatory subjects.

Look through the catalog and carefully read the brief description which precedes each established major program on campus. Write down majors whose subject matter and goals appeal to you, even if they are not identical to your current interests. Scan all of the courses in the catalog for proximity to your interests. Be inclusive--don't rule anything out at this point.

Talk with faculty members whose interests seem to be similar to yours. Your careful examination of the catalog can help you find them. Look for the instructors of courses that are related to your proposed program.

Talk with pre-professional advisers and career advisers in Advising Services and the Internship and Career Center. Discuss the relationship between your academic interests and your professional/career goals. Remember that they do not need to be identical.

Examine previously approved individual major programs in both the Letters and Science and Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Dean's Offices. Although your major should reflect your specific goals and interests, others may already have put together programs in your area, and you may use their programs as a reference.

Examine the catalogs of other schools and universities to see if there are existing programs similar to your interests. Look for equivalent courses at Davis.

Develop your program:

Pick up and review the Individual Major Proposal packet at the L&S Dean's Office. Write down a list of courses you would like to include in your program. Group the courses by subject matter or by the area they cover in your program (i.e., you might group all History classes together or have a mixture of History and Economics [economic history classes]).

Consider the major theme(s) of your draft outline. Select a tentative title that reflects the courses you have selected and summarizes the focus of your program. The title should not reflect an "applied" major, such as "Business Administration", or specific preparation for advanced training such as "Clinical Psychology". If your undergraduate interests tend to be applied in nature and your proposed draft consists of a significant

number of courses offered by the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, it may be advisable to explore the option of an individual major through the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences.

Write a brief description of the unifying theme of your program, your educational goals and how they are met by this program.

Take your course lists and goal statement to at least two faculty advisers from departments whose courses are part of your major program. Ask if they are willing to help you develop an individual major.

Consider the faculty members who teach the courses that you consider to be most central to your theme. Ask them if they are willing to serve as major advisers for you. Designate one faculty adviser as “principal adviser” and one as “secondary adviser”. The principal adviser must be from an L&S teaching department. Both advisers must be members of the Academic Senate.

Discuss with your advisers whether the courses you have chosen are appropriate, given your expressed interests. Are there courses that should be added or deleted? Do your advisers agree that this program is the best way to accomplish your goals? Consult with them regarding the appropriateness of including an honors thesis, independent study courses, and internships. Please note that the topics for non-standard courses such as 192, 198, and 199 will not be listed in the transcript.

NOTE: You will need to obtain information from departments regarding courses that are closed to non-majors and are crucial to your proposal. You must inquire, in advance, as to which courses will be offered during specific quarters. You must plan to take alternate/related courses in the event that courses crucial to your major proposal are cancelled.

Make an appointment to meet with a counselor in the Letters and Science Dean’s Office and bring the materials you have developed to that appointment. The counselor will review your program for “technical correctness” and may suggest further changes or refer you to additional faculty consultants.

The Final Proposal

1. After your faculty advisers have indicated their approval of your tentative proposal, prepare a final typed version on the forms provided in the Individual Major Proposal Packet. Include any revisions recommended by your faculty advisers and submit the revised version to them for final review and endorsement signatures.
2. Prepare a final typed personal statement to accompany your proposal. Discuss your educational purposes, and if appropriate, your personal and/or professional objectives. Describe the unification and integration inherent in the set of courses you have chosen. Be sure to justify any course that might appear to be questionable as part of the major. If there are established majors similar to the one you are proposing, discuss why your objectives cannot be satisfied within these majors. Your personal statement should be appropriately formatted and proofread. If you need assistance writing your statement, please utilize SASC resources.
3. If your proposal includes courses that are known to be over-enrolled or limited to majors (e.g. Psychology, Design, Engineering, Computer Science) you should consult with pertinent departments to make sure you will have access to those courses. Keep in mind that having an individual major approved by the Faculty Committee does not guarantee your entrance into these classes.

4. If you are applying for an individual major as part of a double major, get a double major petition at the Dean's Office. If you qualify for a double major at the time you submit your proposal, attach this petition along with your individual major proposal.
5. Secure the necessary faculty signatures on your:
 - a. proposal forms
 - b. faculty adviser's evaluation forms
 - c. "Petition for Declaration or Change of Major"

Submit your **typed** proposal as a complete unit to the Dean's Office in the following order:

1. cover sheet
2. personal statement (limit to 2 pages)
3. final major proposal
4. faculty advisers evaluation forms
5. side-by-side evaluation of similar programs at 2 or 3 other reputable 4-year universities
6. change of major and/or college petition – to be submitted online via OASIS
7. student check list

Please note that your name and student ID# must be included on the top of every page of your petition.

Deadline:

Individual Major Proposals must be submitted by the end of the fourth full week of instruction for consideration that quarter. (Proposals which are incomplete at that time will be considered the following quarter.) Proposals should be submitted by the fourth full week of the fifth quarter before graduation – the Committee will not accept as a *fait accompli* proposals submitted at a later date.

The Review Process

The Faculty Committee for Individual Majors makes the final decision to approve or deny individual major proposals. This Committee has five faculty members and one student representative.

This Committee includes at least one member from each of the following areas: Humanities, Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Biological Sciences. An Associate Dean of the College serves as an ex officio, non-voting member of the Committee. The current members of the Committee are listed in the General Catalog under "Individual Majors".

Recommendations for approval or denial are final when the decision is unanimous. Proposals not receiving a unanimous decision by the Committee may be forwarded to the Executive Committee of the College for final disposition. In some instances, the Committee on Individual Majors may approve a proposal if specific modifications are accepted by the student. In other instances, the Committee may request extensive revisions and recommend that the proposal be resubmitted at a later time.

Evaluation Criteria:

The Faculty Committee will evaluate your proposal by examining the following:

1. Does the proposed major represent a recognized discipline or area of study?
2. Can the proposed program be accommodated within an existing department or interdepartmental major? If so, what is the justification for the proposal?

3. Is the program academically sound? Is it academically rigorous and consistent with other majors in the College of Letters and Science? Is the program cohesive? Are the proposed courses complementary and interrelated to ensure a unified pattern and focus? Does it include program include appropriate theory and methods courses?
4. Does the plan appear to be too broad in scope, too narrow in focus, or too specialized?
5. Do the personal statement and course selections complement each other?
6. Is the proposed program well suited to fulfill the stated purpose of the program or would some other major be more appropriate?
7. Does the title appropriately describe the program? Is it consistent with those offered by the College of Letters and Science?
8. Is the program technically correct? For example, unit requirements and limitations.

General Education Requirement

If your proposal for an individual major is accepted, the Committee will determine the General Education category under which your major falls for the purpose of fulfilling the University's General Education requirement.

Alterations in Approved Programs

An individual major program approved by the Committee is considered to be a carefully structured and balanced entity. A student's acceptance of an approved program constitutes a firm commitment to complete the program as specified. Therefore, changes in approved programs are generally discouraged, except those necessitated by course cancellations or direct conflicts that cannot be avoided prior to graduation.

If a change in program becomes essential you may submit to the L&S Dean's Office a "Petition to Revise an Individual Major" requesting the change, along with written support for the change(s) by your faculty advisers. Be sure to explain the reasons for the change in your program. Appropriate substitutions are more favorably looked upon than simply course omissions. Your petition and faculty support statement will be forwarded to the Faculty Committee Chair for final approval.

Graduation with Honors

Toward the end of their junior year, students potentially eligible for high or highest honors at graduation (see Honors, College of Letters and Science section of the Davis General Catalog), may petition the Individual Majors Committee for tentative acceptance into an honors program.

This can be done by submitting a prospectus for a honors-level research project, research paper, senior thesis, or other project of a comparable nature as defined by the Committee, any of which shall require a minimum of 6 units of course work devoted to the project, distributed over at least two quarters.

To be eligible to participate in this program, you must have:

1. Completed at least 135 units;
2. Attained a grade point average of at least 3.5 in courses required for the major

Final admission to the honors program will depend upon the Committee's approval of a senior project that has been agreed upon by the student and faculty adviser. The final prospectus must be presented to the Committee during the first quarter of the senior year.

Graduation with highest honors will be conditional upon both the maintenance of the required grade-point average and the completion of the senior thesis project. If you anticipate doing a senior honors thesis, be sure to allow up to 3 units of independent study in your program during each of the last two quarters of your senior year. These units should be included in your proposal as course options.

Deadlines: Petitions for tentative acceptance into an honors program must be submitted by the end of the fourth full week of instruction of the last quarter of the junior year. The final prospectus must then be presented to the Committee by the end of the fourth full week of instruction of the first quarter of the senior year.

Conclusion

The process involved in considering an individual major will open up a world of discovery for you. It is a process that forces you to examine your educational objectives. It challenges you to think creatively about how best to meet your educational goals and forces you to study the many options already available to you as an undergraduate student at UC Davis. If in the process of investigation and discovery you find that existing programs meet your needs, then the process has been worthwhile. If, however, you find that the Individual Major Program is right for you, then, be persistent. Carrying out an individual major takes effort and initiative, and it may seem like a monumental undertaking at first. Perhaps the most difficult thing to do is simply to get started. If by designing your own major you create a more meaningful educational experience for yourself, then it is certainly worth the effort. Remember, the academic counselors at the Dean's Office and many faculty members will be happy to help you along the way.

After you have discussed your ideas with a counselor in the College of Letters and Science Dean's Office, complete the Individual Major Proposal Form and submit it along with your personal statement and any additional documents to the Letters and Science Dean's Office for committee review.
--