

Villanova University
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Individually Designed Major
Instructions and Application Form

An individually designed major (IDM) is motivated by the learner's own goals and guided by a roadmap that the student develops in close consultation with faculty. Unlike "independent study," where a faculty member takes the lead in preparing a set of readings and assignments, an IDM places the primary responsibility on the learner to identify the goals, explicitly define periodic assessment benchmarks, and construct a long-term plan of study.

Faculty members and the established programs and departments within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) serve as resources for the students. Students must be highly motivated and independent learners in order to pursue this course of study, which is only viable if existing majors and minors do not provide a pathway to the learner's goals. Lastly, and crucially, these goals must be articulated early in the student's college career by the end of the first semester of sophomore year.

PLANNING FOR YOUR IDM:

This proposal and application will take a considerable amount of time and thought to prepare. We suggest you begin preparing early in the fall of your sophomore year or even as early as your freshman year. Below is a checklist of actions that need to be taken before a proposal can be submitted.

- Meet with the Chair of Global Interdisciplinary Studies (GIS) to see if the course of study may be completed as a major within that department;
- research similar majors at other universities to understand the various learning goals, course offerings, and plans of study;
- meet with relevant faculty members to discuss the feasibility of this plan of study;
- secure two full-time faculty mentors who will serve as faculty directors;
- map out four to five learning goals that this major would fulfill;
- generate list of potential courses to fulfill the IDM major;
- consult with chairs in relevant departments to ascertain if and when essential courses will be offered;
- consult with the Office of Education Abroad about any study-abroad plans;
- if an internship component is planned, consult with the Director of Professional Development in the Office for Undergraduate Students (OUS);
- meet with the Associate Dean for International and Interdisciplinary Initiatives.

You should approach faculty as early in the process as possible to explain your intentions and solicit their advice for the proposal. These mentors must review this proposal and application before it is submitted to the review committee. Once you have secured potential directors for your major, schedule an appointment to meet with the Associate Dean for International and Interdisciplinary Studies in CLAS.

All proposals will be reviewed and approved by a committee of Associate and Assistant Deans with consultation with relevant faculty members. The review committee will be alert to instances of double majors using the same courses. If your proposal is not accepted in the first review, the committee will make specific suggestions and will give the applicant an opportunity to revise and resubmit the proposal. Most proposals will need at least one revision.

DEADLINES:

The proposal and application is due on the Monday prior to final examination week of fall semester, in the applicant's sophomore year. Submit all materials to the Associate Dean for International and Interdisciplinary Initiatives, who will forward the committee's recommendations.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS:

Students must fulfill all requirements in the CLAS degree program per the Student Handbook as well as any pre-requisites for courses included as part of the IDM. Be sure to familiarize yourself with all CLAS requirements before planning your IDM.

- An appropriate methodology course and a research or capstone seminar (e.g. the GIS capstone research and thesis sequence) must also be included per the College Core Curriculum requirements.
- An IDM will have a minimum of **33** credit hours. Some plans may require more credits to meet your learning goals.
- Under no circumstances can an IDM be fulfilled post-hoc. The proposal process must be considered in advance and deliberative.

ONCE YOUR IDM IS APPROVED:

You will need to fill out a standard "Declaration of Major" form and bring it to the Associate Dean for International and Interdisciplinary Initiatives for signature as the chair.

REVISIONS TO YOUR PLAN:

The review committee understands the need for some flexibility and that changes may need to be made mid-career for a variety of valid reasons. Minor changes may be discussed with your faculty mentors and the Associate Dean. You need not submit a revision for these, although these changes should be noted in your regular assessments. Minor changes constitute substituting one course for another; or changing the sequence of courses you plan to take. Extensive changes that lead to a title change, a change in rationale, or alteration of your senior capstone thesis plans will require submission of a revision plan and the input of your mentors.

GRADUATION:

During the final semester of your senior year, the curriculum committee will compare your periodic assessments, reports from your mentors, and your CAPP against your IDM proposal and will certify completion of the IDM up to the capstone thesis. The title of your IDM will be recorded on your official transcript.

College of Arts and Sciences
Villanova University

**PROPOSAL AND APPLICATION
FOR AN INDIVIDUALLY DESIGNED MAJOR (IDM)**

LAST NAME: _____

FIRST NAME: _____

BANNER ID: _____

EMAIL: _____

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

CAMPUS ADDRESS:

Will this IDM be your primary or secondary major? _____

If this is a secondary major, what is your primary major? _____

You must identify at least two full time faculty members who agree to serve as your mentors for the duration of your degree program, including the capstone thesis and any directed research. Please obtain their signatures for this cover sheet:

Faculty Mentor 1

Name: _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Faculty Mentor 2

Name: _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Please answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:

- a) Identify a concise title for your major.
- b) Identify a comprehensive set of learning goals and a rationale for the IDM.
- c) Provide a rationale that defines the academic field of the proposed major. This should be a carefully written essay, of no more than 750 words (around 3 pages) explaining the focus and purpose of the major, its viability and logic as a field of concentration; its importance to your personal goals for a liberal arts education; identifying the various disciplines it will draw upon and the interdisciplinary connections that you seek to build. Make a case for the feasibility of completing this major at Villanova, showing that there are adequate resources in terms of faculty expertise and coursework available. Most importantly, make a case for why an established major and/or minor will not fulfill your stated goals.
- d) Outline a semester-by-semester plan for completion and sequencing of courses. For each course, explain how it connects with one or more of the stated learning goals in item (b). Note whether any of the courses you list require prerequisites. Include whether or not you intend to study abroad or pursue an internship. In the event that you do, list the proposed courses or internship description and their connection to your IDM's learning goals.
- e) Explain whether and how the IDM complements a primary or other major, minors or concentrations if you have already declared one or more of them.
- f) What will be your assessment plan and schedule for evaluating benchmarks? Please note that these periodic assessments will need to be filed with the Office of the Dean. Microsoft OneNote is the recommended platform to post assignments, assessments and logs, but other online platforms may be used. Examples of assessment instruments are a learning benchmark journal; periodic interviews by the faculty mentors; and the assembly of a learning portfolio that includes a reflective essay at the end of each semester. While your schedule for undertaking an assessment depends on your projected needs, the assessment tool(s) must be submitted to the Associate Dean for International and Interdisciplinary Initiatives only at the end of each semester.
- g) How do you plan on fulfilling the senior capstone requirement? Will it be through independent study with your faculty mentors? Or will it be negotiated between you, your mentors and a specific department's senior capstone seminar?

**College of Arts and Sciences
Villanova University**

**APPROVALS PAGE
FOR AN INDIVIDUALLY DESIGNED MAJOR (IDM)**

Individually Designed Major Committee:

1. Name and Signature: _____

Date: _____

2. Name and Signature: _____

Date: _____

3. Name and Signature: _____

Date: _____

Associate Dean for Interdisciplinary Studies and Global Initiatives:

Date: _____

A copy of the proposal and approval form will be kept on file in the CLAS Office of the Dean.