

**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 with minimal input from the student, an IDM places the primary responsibility on the learner to identify the goals, explicitly define periodic assessment benchmarks and construct a longer-term plan of study. Faculty members and the established programs and departments within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (henceforth, LAS), serve as collaborative resources for the highly motivated and independent learner to pursue a unique course of study, especially if the established majors are deemed not to provide a pathway to the goals that the learner articulates early in the process of planning her or his College career.

***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. You will need to consult with chairs in relevant departments to assure that needed courses will be offered and to check scheduling; secure at least two faculty mentors who are full-time faculty; consult with the Office of International Studies, if necessary; and with the Office of Undergraduate Studies if an internship component is planned.

You should approach faculty as early in the process as possible to explain your intentions and solicit their advice for the proposal. Your mentors must review this proposal and application before it is submitted to the review committee.

All proposals will be reviewed and approved by the curriculum committee in the Council of Area and Interdisciplinary Studies Directors. This review committee will be alert to excessive instances of 'double dipping'. 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 their proposals. We expect that most proposals will need at least one revision.

***DEADLINE:***

This 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 Interdisciplinary Studies and Global Initiatives". The review committee's approval and recommendations will be forwarded to you via the Associate Dean.

***BASIC REQUIREMENTS:***

Students must fulfill all requirements in the LAS degree program per the *Enchiridion* rules as well as any pre-requisites for courses included as part of the IDM. An appropriate research seminar must also be included per the College Core Curriculum requirements. Be sure to familiarize yourself with all requirements before planning your IDM.

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 intentional 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 Interdisciplinary Studies and Global Initiatives for signature as the chair.

***REVISIONS TO YOUR PLAN:***

The review committee understands the need for some flexibility and that changes will often need to be made midstream for a variety of valid reasons. Minor changes may be discussed with your faculty mentors. You need not submit a revision for these, though 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 of the Interdisciplinary and Area Studies Directors Council 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.

**PROPOSAL AND APPLICATION  
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 \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Mentor 3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions on separate sheets of paper.

- a) Identify a title for your major.
- b) Identify a comprehensive set of learning goals and a rationale for the IDM.

The rationale 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 or minor will not fulfill your stated goals.
- c) 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 pursue study abroad or an internship. In the event that you do, list the proposed courses or internship description, and their connection to your learning goals.
- d) Explain whether and how the IDM complements a primary major and other majors, minors or concentrations if you have already declared one or more of them.
- e) 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. Examples of assessment instruments are a learning benchmark journal; periodic interviews by the faculty mentors; or 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 Interdisciplinary Studies and Global Initiatives only at the end of each semester.
- f) 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?

## APPROVALS

Area and Interdisciplinary Council Curriculum Committee:

1. Name and Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name and Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name and Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

4. 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 Office of the Dean. Regular assessments will be added to this file. The applicant and faculty mentors will each receive a copy of the proposal and approval form.