

# Faculty Guide to the Individualized Major Program

The Individualized Major is offered by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Individualized Major (IMJR) Program was first established in 1974 and since then more than 1650 students have graduated with a self-designed major. Currently, 60-70 students graduate with an IMJR each year. About 30% of IMJRs pursue a double major or additional degree. About 20% are in the Honors Program. More than 35% study abroad and approximately 50% complete an internship for credit. IMJRs in the area of international studies (including International Relations and area studies) are the most common. We also have strong clusters of students designing majors with themes in health & society, human rights & social justice, and law & society. Other recurring themes include sports studies, film studies, public policy, environmental studies, and religion.

## Admissions criteria

### GPA criteria:

Students applying to the program must be in “good standing” and meet certain cumulative GPA requirements at the time of application.

- CLAS: GPA of 2.0 at application;
- CANR: GPA of 2.5 at application

Both CLAS and CANR require IMJRs to achieve a major GPA of 2.5 in order to graduate.

### Additional criteria:

The proposed individualized major must not duplicate an existing major at the University. It must be interdisciplinary, coherent, rigorous, and on par with other majors at the University. This must be reflected in the student’s statement of purpose and plan of study.

## Application materials

Applications consist of (1) a statement of purpose, (2) a plan of study, (3) an unofficial transcript, and (4) where relevant, a double major worksheet. The statement of purpose should discuss the theme of the major and make a case for its coherence and academic merit. Application guidelines and sample statements are available at our website ([www.imjr.uconn.edu](http://www.imjr.uconn.edu)).

Plans of study should:

- Include 36 credits at the 2000-level or higher. At least 18 credits must be from the College granting the degree (CLAS or CANR).
- Be interdisciplinary. Plans of study should include courses from at least two different departments.
- Include an information literacy / research methods course. Individualized majors fulfill their information literacy/research methods requirement by enrolling in a research methods course in a discipline represented in their plan of study. Additional training in information literacy and research practice is provided through the capstone requirement.
- Include a capstone. The capstone requirement can be fulfilled by taking INTD 4600W Capstone Course offered by the Individualized Major Program or by doing a thesis. An IMJR thesis is typically a year-long, six-credit research and writing sequence.
- Include another writing-intensive course. Beside the capstone, students must take another writing-intensive course in their major.

We also strongly encourage experiential learning such as study abroad, internship, research or other field experience.

The Individualized Major Committee reviews admissions applications at meetings held several times per semester. Application deadlines are available at our website.

## **Advising**

IMJR students are advised by both faculty and Individualized Major Program staff. This collaboration between faculty and Individualized Major staff can take many forms but typically follows the pattern detailed below.

### The role of faculty advisors

Faculty advisors are expert guides to the fields that individualized majors include in their plan of study. Faculty can help students choose the most appropriate courses and serve as mentors as students explore options for graduate school and their future professional lives. All students applying to the Individualized Major program must identify three faculty advisors with expertise in the fields represented in their plan of study. Primary advisors must be from the college (CLAS or CANR) from which the student plans to graduate and must be tenured or tenure-track faculty. Second and third advisors may be from other schools and colleges and may be adjunct faculty if they will be at UConn as long as the student. Students should consult with their faculty advisors as they prepare their applications. We expect students to request feedback from their advisors on their plan of study and statement of purpose with sufficient time to incorporate suggestions for change into the final version. Once the student's application has been reviewed by the Individualized Major Committee, we send a copy of the decision letter, the statement of purpose, and the plan of study to each of the faculty advisors.

We encourage students admitted to the Individualized Major Program to stay in touch with as many of their advisors as possible. As with any advising relationship, some IMJR students build stronger ties with their advisors than others. Most students will rely largely on their primary advisor. We expect students to seek their primary advisor's approval when they wish to make changes in their plan of study. Secondary advisors may be asked for their approval if the proposed changes in the plan of study are in their field. As is the practice in most departments, students must obtain the signature of their primary advisor on their final plan of study. (Final plans of study are reviewed by the Individualized Major Program staff before they are forwarded to degree audit.)

Every April, faculty advisors receive a list of all their current IMJR advisees. We invite faculty to our annual Senior Reception, held in April, where we showcase the work of graduating Individualized Major students. We also publish an occasional newsletter for faculty.

### The role of Individualized Major Program staff

Individualized Major Program staff guide students through the practicalities of admission to the program and assist students to follow their plans through to graduation. Program staff will explain program expectations, ensure that plans of study include all the required elements, help students identify faculty with expertise in their area of interest, and make specific suggestions for revisions to their statement of purpose. We also guide students as they select courses for their plans of studies. For popular themes such as International Relations, Health & Society or Criminal Studies we provide written guidelines. For themes where there is an existing minor such as Film Studies or Human Rights, we direct students to the website of that minor where relevant courses and affiliated faculty are listed.

Once admitted to the program, IMJR students will turn to Program staff for advice on many practical matters such as registration, internship, and study abroad. They will also consult with staff about any changes they wish to make in their plan of study.

**For further details on the program, consult the website at [www.imjr.uconn.edu](http://www.imjr.uconn.edu). Questions? Call Margaret Lamb, Ph.D., Director, at 486-5829 or Monica van Beusekom, Ph.D., Academic Advisor, at 486-0324. Our office is located in CUE 322.**