

Individualized Major Program

Student Handbook

2009/10



Find Your Way

Individualized and Interdisciplinary Studies Program
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1. INTRODUCTION

Why does the Individualized Major Program exist?

At the University of Connecticut, as in all higher education, research and teaching are organized by discipline and most students choose to major in one of these traditional disciplines. Some students however, have found that the issues and questions that interest them most are not adequately addressed by a single disciplinary approach but require methods and knowledge from a variety of disciplines. In some cases, the University of Connecticut has already established interdisciplinary programs addressing those interests, such as the Latin American Studies Program or the Human Development and Family Studies Department. But at other times, students have turned to the Individualized and Interdisciplinary Studies Program (IISP) to design their own major. The Individualized Major (IMJR) Program was first established in 1974 and since then more than 1700 students have graduated with a self-designed major. Students have chosen a wide range of topics for their majors, some unique, others more popular. International studies, health studies, and law, rights and justice themes are among the most popular. But there are many other themes, including individualized majors focused on religion, human sexuality, genetic counseling, environmental policy, neuroscience, and film studies.

What is an individualized major?

The individualized major is a structured plan of study that incorporates at least 36 credits of courses at the 2000-level or higher, is thematically focused, and draws from at least two departments (typically three or four) in the University. Students work with three faculty advisors and an advisor from IISP to develop a plan of study that is academically sound and rigorous. This plan of study will often include an internship, fieldwork, or service learning and may, where appropriate, involve a period of study abroad. It concludes with a final integrative project which may be a thesis or enrollment in the IMJR capstone course. Students in the individualized major receive their degrees from either the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) or the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR). They may enroll in courses in either of these colleges as well as select courses in other schools and colleges such as the business administration series in the School of Business.

2. BECOMING AN INDIVIDUALIZED MAJOR

Exploring the possibility of becoming an individualized major

If you are considering an individualized major, we encourage you to meet with staff from the program to discuss your interests, to learn about what the program can offer, and to become familiar with the application process. Peer advisors in the Individualized Major Program are also available to answer questions and provide an inside perspective on the pleasures and challenges of designing your own major.

To contact the staff and peer advisors, please email iisp@uconn.edu or call (860) 486-3631.

Applying to the Individualized Major Program

The Individualized Major Program requires students to apply to become individualized majors. Students prepare a formal proposal consisting of:

- a 2-3 pp. statement of purpose;
- a plan of study;
- an unofficial transcript; and
- in the case of double major or additional degree students: double major/additional degree worksheet

This proposal must have the support of three faculty members with expertise in the areas addressed by the major who serve as the student's advisors. Students should provide faculty members a copy of all parts of the proposal. The faculty advisors must sign the plan of study form before the proposal is submitted.

Who makes admissions decisions?

The Individualized Major Committee approves admissions to the program. The committee is comprised of faculty from the two colleges that grant degrees to individualized majors: the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) and the College of Agricultural and Natural Resources (CANR). The Individualized Major Committee meets several times during the Fall and Spring semesters.

What are the criteria for admission?

In evaluating your application, the committee will consider two broad criteria:

- **Cumulative GPA:**
You must be in “good standing” at the university, and meet certain cumulative GPA standards at the time of application. For CLAS this is a GPA of 2.0 and for CANR a GPA of 2.5. To graduate with an individualized major (in both CLAS and CANR), you must achieve a major GPA of 2.5 in the 36 credits of courses at the 2000-level or higher that comprise the formal major plan of study. Therefore, the committee will consider not only whether you meet the minimum GPA standard, but also whether you will be likely to meet the GPA requirements for graduation.

- Coherence and feasibility of the proposed major:
The committee will evaluate whether your major theme (as presented in your statement of purpose) and your plan of study together form a cohesive and conceptually-sound degree. Your proposed major must be academically rigorous and on par with other majors in the university. The committee will also consider whether you will be able to take the courses and complete the related experiences (e.g. internship, study abroad) as planned.

When should I apply for admission to the IMJR program?

Students are encouraged to develop proposals in their first years. Students may submit proposals if they are either in their 3rd semester or if they have completed 30 credits toward graduation. Normally a student will apply to become an individualized major in his/her sophomore or junior year. At the time of application, a student should have at least two semesters of undergraduate study left in which they can register for courses in their major.

Please note that students who have already registered for 90 or more credits toward graduation will be considered for admission to the Individualized Major Program only at the discretion of the director. Such discretion is likely to be exercised only in the following circumstances:

- A proposal was discussed with, approved by, and submitted to the Individualized Major Program director prior to the commencement of the final 30 credits of UConn courses.
- The applicant proposes an individualized major as a double major and the proposal is made before the applicant registers for his or her final 15 credits.
- The applicant is a transfer student who can demonstrate that the substantive requirements of the Individualized Major Program can be satisfied.

A Proposed Application Timeline

The following typical timeline may be helpful to you as you plan your application to the program.

Step 1:

- Set up a meeting with a peer advisor.
- Talk about your major idea and the admissions process.

Step 2:

- Set up a meeting with an IMJR academic advisor.
- Explain your major idea and explore ways in which you could pursue it: classes, internships, study abroad.

Step 3:

- Draft a statement of purpose.
- Draft a plan of study.
- Draft a double major worksheet (if your IMJR will be done to complement another major).

- Set up a meeting to discuss these documents with an IMJR academic advisor.
- Step 4:
- Identify your faculty advisors, meet with them and see what they think about your ideas. Ask for feedback on your plan of study and statement of purpose.
- Step 5:
- Revise your statement of purpose and plan of study in response to the feedback from your advisors.
 - Get advisor signatures on your plan of study and on any other required forms (e.g. CLAS double major declaration or Additional degree petition).
- Step 6:
- Check submission deadlines.
 - Submit the following to the IMJR office:
 - Statement of purpose
 - Plan of study
 - Unofficial transcript printed from PeopleSoft
 - Other documentation, when relevant, such as double major worksheet, double major declaration form, honors scholar preliminary plan of study.
- Step 7:
- Attend IMJR Committee admissions meeting.
 - Prepare a two-minute explanation of your major.
 - Be prepared to answer questions about your major and future plans.

Guidelines for preparing the application

The principal elements of your application to become an individualized major are the statement of purpose, the plan of study, and the unofficial transcript. (For supplementary materials that you may need to submit, see below.) The statement of purpose provides you an opportunity to explain the focus of your individualized major. The plan of study details the courses that will make up that major and the faculty advisors with whom you will be working. The transcript provides an overview of your coursework to date. The Individualized Major Committee will carefully consider these three documents when it makes its admissions decisions.

1. The statement of purpose

The statement of purpose is a central element of your application and you should put considerable effort into preparing it. Your statement of purpose is your explanation of **what** you want to do as your individualized major; **why** you want to do it; **why** it has academic merit; and **how** you propose to follow the major at UConn.

Your statement of purpose should be 2-3 pages long, double-spaced, and typed in 12 font type size. It should be well-organized and clearly written. It should be free of misspelled words, grammatical mistakes, and typographical errors.

Your statement of purpose should address the following four questions:

What is the academic focus of your proposed major?

What themes, issues, questions or problems does your major focus on?

Be sure your title accurately describes the academic focus of your major. You should avoid the inclusion of names of traditional majors within the title of your major, where possible. For example “Communication Sciences and Sport” would not be an acceptable title because it risks confusion with the existing “Communication Sciences” major. “Sport Promotion” or “Sport, Communication, and Society” might be acceptable IMJR titles. Likewise “History and Economics” would not be acceptable but “Historical and Economic Studies of South Asia” would be.

What departments and courses will be included and how will they allow you to develop an understanding of the key themes of your major?

You should carefully examine the courses you intend to take. What themes emerge from your list? Anchor your discussion around these themes and show how the courses will allow you to learn about these themes. Explain how an internship, a field experience, or a period of study abroad will enhance your major.

Remember, you need to make a case for the coherence and academic merit of your major. You also need to show why the IMJR Program permits you to pursue this focus better than other, existing majors.

Why have you chosen this academic focus?

How have past experiences (courses, jobs, internships etc.) shaped your decision to design this individualized major?

How does this major fit into your academic and career goals?

Are you planning a double major or a minor? How do these relate to your individualized major?

Are you an Honors Program student? Do you plan to apply to the Honors Program? What area of research do you think you might wish to pursue for your thesis project?

How might work in your individualized major enhance your chances of admission to a competitive study abroad program or help you to secure a highly desirable internship?

How might an individualized major help you develop an application to become a university scholar or seek a graduate scholarship?

Do you plan to go to graduate school in a particular field? Do you have a particular type of career in mind?

Explain why your individualized major is an especially good way to prepare for these goals. You may need to do some research on your chosen graduate school/career to present a convincing argument in this regard. Don't worry if you have not yet decided exactly what you plan to do after completing your degree. Regard this as an opportunity to detail some of the options you are considering.

*You do not need to consider these questions in any particular order, nor do you need to consider every sub-question, **but be sure that your statement of purpose considers the four questions in bold.***

Helpful Hints and Resources:

- If your individualized major is a traditional major at another institution, look at its website to get a feel for the presentation of its program.
- Read the sample statements of purpose available at the IMJR website under the “Admissions” heading to get a sense of how other students have presented their majors.
- Seek feedback on your statement of purpose – from friends, from IMJR peer advisors and IMJR staff, and from your faculty advisors – and revise it several times.
- Go to the writing center for help and direction concerning grammar and writing style. See www.writingcenter.uconn.edu for locations and hours.
- Remember that the Individualized Major Committee is your audience. They make the final admission decisions, so make your statement of purpose well-organized, clear and persuasive.

2. The plan of study

You will need to submit a proposed plan of study. This will include a list of preferred courses (Part A) and a list of alternative courses (Part B), should courses on your “A” list be unavailable.

Your list of preferred courses (Part A) in your plan of study must:

- consist of at least 36 credits at the 2000-level or higher. Of these, 18 credits must be from the college granting your individualized major (CLAS or CANR).
- include a research methods course. A research methods course will introduce you to how knowledge is produced and evaluated in a particular discipline. See the IMJR website (Click on “Admissions” and then on Plan of Study) for suggestions of courses that could meet this requirement.
- include a capstone. The capstone provides students with the opportunity to consolidate their understanding of their major subjects through a project that is relevant to and integrates their individualized major. This requirement can be fulfilled in one of three ways:
 - by taking the program’s capstone course (INTD 4600W, 3 credits)
Most students in the program fulfill the capstone requirement by taking the capstone course.
 - by completing a thesis project (6 credits: typically an independent study in the Fall and INTD 4697W in the Spring, all under the supervision of the thesis supervisor)

Students in the Honors Program who plan to fulfill their Honors Scholar requirements in their individualized major must fulfill the capstone requirement by completing a thesis. Other students outside of Honors who are motivated to complete a substantial, independent capstone project are also encouraged to complete a thesis.

- by completing an approved alternative capstone
Occasionally a student may identify a departmental senior seminar or other advanced course that provides him/her with the opportunity to integrate the themes of his/her individualized major. Such alternatives must be approved in advance by the director and the student's primary advisor.

- include another writing-intensive course in your major, beside the capstone. This will normally be a course that is designated "W" in the course catalog.

You are *strongly encouraged* to include an internship and/or study abroad in your plan of study. For more information, see the section on internships and study abroad below.

Students intending to complete a Bachelor of Science IMJR in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences must include 24 credits of science in their individualized major plan of study and fulfill the CLAS general education requirements for the Bachelor of Science degree.

3. The unofficial transcript

You will need to include a copy of your unofficial PeopleSoft transcript so that committee members can familiarize themselves with your academic strengths and your course of study to date.

4. Other documentation that may be required

You may be expected to submit additional documentation with your application if

- you are planning a double major
 - CLAS or CANR double major declaration form
 - Double major worksheet (for both CLAS and CANR double majors with an individualized major; see instructions below)
- you are planning an additional degree from CLAS or from CANR
 - CLAS or CANR additional degree petition (for existing CLAS or CANR students seeking an additional degree)
 - An additional degree worksheet (may be required; ask IISP advising staff)

The relevant forms can be found:

for CLAS at: http://www.services.clas.uconn.edu/index_files/forms.htm

for CANR at: http://www.myagnr.uconn.edu/current_forms.html

Double major worksheet

IMJR students in both CANR and CLAS may choose to double major and a significant number, especially in CLAS, choose to do so. If you are one of those, you will need to prepare a double

major worksheet as part of your application. Because CLAS double-majors are by far the most common, this Handbook reviews the CLAS regulations.

CLAS regulations state that the two fields of concentration must include a minimum of 48 credits without overlap. If both majors consist of 36 credits, this means that 12 credits may overlap. These credits may fall within the traditional CLAS major or its related-field courses, or they may be partly in the traditional CLAS major and partly in its related field courses. Please note that the advisor in your traditional major will need to agree that courses from your individualized major may count toward your related field requirements.

Remember that overlap between the majors is optional. You may wish to have no overlap at all. Or your major rules or your advisors may require you to take a particular menu of courses in each major that has no overlap or less than the maximum permitted overlap.

The following two examples present two different possibilities. The courses in bold are the overlapping ones.

Example 1 CLAS Political Science field of concentration with IMJR in International Relations with a focus on Economic Development

POLS			IMJR	
1	POLS 3402	=	1	POLS 3402
2	POLS 3410	=	2	POLS 3410
3	POLS 3002		3	POLS 3418
4	POLS 3012		4	POLS 3462
5	POLS 3232		5	ARE 3255
6	POLS 2607		6	GEOG 2100
7	POLS 3817		7	ECON 2440
8	POL2 3802		8	INTD 4600W
9	ECON 3421	=	9	ECON 3421
10	ECON 3473	=	10	ECON 3473
11	<i>ECON 2102</i>		11	Study Abroad
12	<i>GEOG 3200</i>		12	Study Abroad

Example 2 CLAS Communication Sciences field of concentration with IMJR in Consumer Studies

COMM			IMJR	
1	COMM 3000Q	=	1	COMM 3000Q
2	COMM 3100	=	2	COMM 3100
3	COMM 3300	=	3	COMM 3300
4	COMM 3600	=	4	COMM 3600
5	COMM 3200		5	COMM 4320
6	COMM 4089		6	COMM 4330
7	COMM 3450		7	SOCI 3990/3991
8	COMM 3103		8	INTD 4600W
9	<i>PSYC 3502</i>		9	COMM 4800
10	<i>PSYC 2500</i>		10	BADM 3750
11	<i>PSYC 2400</i>		11	PSYC 2700
12	<i>WS 3260</i>		12	SOCI 3271

Additional Degree in CANR and CLAS

Students who wish to double-major in two different colleges must opt for an additional degree. The student must meet all requirements for each degree. The two degrees require at least 30 degree credits more than the degree with the higher minimum-credit requirement and these must be 2000-level courses or higher in the additional degree major or closely related fields. Students interested in pursuing this option should meet with an academic advisor.

Working with Faculty Advisors

Because you are designing an interdisciplinary major, you will need to ask faculty members from two or three different departments to serve as advisors for your individualized major. One of these faculty advisors will be your primary advisor. S/he must be in the college from which you plan to graduate.

Who are appropriate faculty advisors?

You will want to choose faculty members who teach or do research in the academic areas that interest you. Consider teachers of courses you have taken or are planning to take in the future. Consider faculty members with whom you have had good conversations. Faculty advisors are usually tenure-track or tenured faculty, but you may include an adjunct instructor if s/he plans to be at UConn as long as you.

How to make the most of the advisor-student relationship

Do your homework. It may be best to meet with your prospective advisors once you have a draft statement of purpose and a draft plan of study. Provide them with this material and an unofficial copy of your transcript. This will show the faculty advisor how you envision your major, what your academic strengths are, and what relevant courses you have already taken. The more information you provide, the more fruitful your exchange will be. The more clearly you can articulate your aims, the more easily you will evoke interest from a faculty member. Don't feel you need to have *everything* figured out; the advisor is there, after all, to assist you.

Come prepared with questions. Examples of questions you may want to ask are:

- Does my plan of study include the courses that are most relevant to the theme of my major? Should I include additional courses? Remove some courses?
- Does my statement of purpose effectively convey my plans for my major? Do you have suggestions for revisions?
- Will this plan of study prepare me adequately for my desired career and/or graduate training?

Be open to new ideas and insights your advisors may have to offer. Follow up on any advice or suggestions that you receive.

Communicate effectively. A clearly written e-mail message is more likely to get a quick response than one which is difficult to decipher. Your e-mail messages should resemble a standard letter rather than the text messages you might send to a friend. Respond promptly to e-mail messages and phone calls.

Use office hours. You may find that you cover more ground and achieve better results if you approach your prospective advisor in person and at a time that s/he has set aside for student consultations.

Keep your appointments. Be on time. Follow up on any agreements.

Plan ahead and leave yourself plenty of time. Once you have finalized your statement of purpose and completed your proposed plan of study, you will need to meet with each of your faculty advisors again. Each of them will need to sign your application.

Your relationship with your advisors does not end there! Keep your advisors apprised of your progress and changes in your plans. They will continue to be good sources of advice and information as you pursue your studies, choose internships and study abroad programs, and make plans for employment or graduate school.

Honors

A significant number of individualized majors are in the Honors Program. The Honors Program offers students a learning community of similarly highly-motivated and intellectually-engaged students. It provides students with smaller classes, closer relationships with faculty members, and research opportunities that will prepare them well for graduate school and career opportunities. Students who have not entered the university as Honors Scholars may apply to the Honors Program as sophomores or juniors. Further details are available at the program's website: <http://www.honors.uconn.edu/>.

Honors students and prospective honors students applying to the Individualized Major Program should be aware of the following:

- In order to graduate as an Honors Scholar, you must complete 12 honors credits in your major and of these, 6 must constitute a thesis project. The thesis project is typically completed in the senior year and consists of 3 credits of independent study in the Fall semester and 3 credits of INTD 4697W in the Spring, both under the supervision of the thesis supervisor.
- If you are double-majoring, you must indicate in which major you will fulfill your honors requirements.
- If you are planning to fulfill honors requirements in your other major, please indicate on your double-major worksheet which courses will be honors courses.

- If you are planning to fulfill honors requirements in your individualized major, you will need to show how you will do so. You should submit a copy of the Honors Scholar preliminary plan of study form with your IMJR plan of study or indicate on your proposed plan of study which courses will fulfill Honors requirements. As you consider which honors courses and honors conversions to include, you will find it helpful to consult with your IMJR faculty advisors and the Honors Directors of the departments most relevant to your individualized major. It is not too early to discuss ideas you may have for a thesis.
- If you are completing your honors requirements in the Individualized Major Program, the IISP academic advisor will normally serve as your honors advisor and IISP will be listed as your department.

3. NOW THAT YOU ARE AN INDIVIDUALIZED MAJOR

Registering for courses

As an individualized major you will be registering for courses in a variety of departments and schools or colleges within the university. It is important that you understand the registration policies of the schools/colleges and departments in which you wish to take courses. Some schools/colleges may restrict access to certain courses for students from other programs. For example, at the School of Business, only the Business Administration program (BADM) automatically opens the seats in its courses to undergraduates from other schools and colleges. Students wishing to take other School of Business courses must seek permission from the instructor; only some School of Business instructors and departments are likely to offer seats to qualified individualized majors. In other cases, programs may impose a GPA prerequisite. For example, students wishing to take courses in the Kinesiology department at the Neag School of Education must have a GPA of 2.7. In addition, most departments give first priority to their own majors at course registration time.

Don't let these rules and regulations discourage you! If you are well-informed, organized, and persistent, you will be able to register successfully for the courses you wish to take. The IISP office can provide you with general information about registration procedures for the departments and programs most relevant to your IMJR. But you will have to do some *footwork!* *For detailed advice regarding registering, consult the "Course Registration" page at our website, which we update every semester.*

Helpful hints

- Know whether the course you want to take has prerequisites, requires permission, and/or is popular with majors.
- If the course has prerequisites, be sure you have taken them. (It is *rare* to have prerequisites waived; waivers are generally granted only when you have taken a course at another institution that corresponds to the specified prerequisite.)
- If the course requires permission, be sure to follow the appropriate procedure. Sometimes permission numbers are distributed in person by the instructor or the department administrator. Sometimes permission numbers are obtained online.
- If the course you want to take appears to be full, you should contact the professor teaching the course and explain to him/her why you would like to take the course. A polite, detailed e-mail with information about yourself (name, year, title of your major) and why you want to take the course (explain how it fits into your individualized major) is a good place to start. But face-to-face contact is likely to be necessary as well and may, in fact, be more effective. Go to the professor's office hours. Go to the first class. Many faculty are willing to make room for an enthusiastic and motivated student.

Changing your plan of study

Most students will need to make some modifications to their plan of study. You must discuss these changes with the IISP director. If the changes are relatively small (one or two courses) and perfectly consistent with your plan of study, the IISP director will provide pre-registration approval. If the changes are more substantial, the IISP director will ask you to seek pre-registration approval from your primary faculty advisor, as well. In both cases, your primary advisor must approve your revised course plan, in writing, before your final plan of study is filed.

Preparing to graduate: submitting your final plan of study

All CLAS and CANR students are required to submit a final plan of study in order to graduate. As an individualized major, the procedure and deadline for filing is slightly different from that of students with a traditional major.

Whereas many traditional majors file their plans of study directly with the Registrar, you must file a final plan of study, signed by your IMJR primary advisor, with the IMJR Program director. This must be done by the end of the second week of the semester in which you expect to graduate. The IMJR Program office will then file a final plan of study on your behalf with the Registrar by the end of the fourth week of the semester in which you expect to graduate.

Detailed instructions can be found at our website under “Graduation.”

Please note: If you plan to finish your degree in August, you must file your final plan of study in the spring semester.

4. ENRICHMENT EXPERIENCES

Internships

Internships are a great opportunity for you to gain valuable experience related to your major or career interest and to help you begin networking in the professional arena. Internships may be completed for credit, but need not be. We strongly encourage you to include an internship *for credit* in your plan of study. When completing an internship for credit, you will need to identify a faculty supervisor and enroll in an internship course in the faculty supervisor's department. Your faculty supervisor will typically expect you to do relevant reading and writing, allowing you to reflect on your internship experiences and make connections between your internship and your academic work.

1. Finding an internship

If you know you want to do an internship, but are not sure where to start, visit Career Services, located in CUE 217 and on the web at www.career.uconn.edu. On the Career Services website you will find a section focused exclusively on internships: www.internships.uconn.edu. This section includes an extensive listing of recurring internships and one-time opportunities. It can be searched by state, key words, major, and skills sought. Career Services' *Internship Guidebook* offers detailed, step-by-step advice on finding an internship. You can get this guidebook at the Career Services office, or online at www.career.uconn.edu. You can also schedule an appointment with a career consultant who will be able to address your specific needs as an IMJR, and send you in the right direction.

If you already have a specific internship in mind, you will need to begin by contacting the site to see if a placement will be feasible. The *Internship Guidebook* can also assist you in how to properly contact an internship site.

2. Identifying a faculty supervisor

If you wish to complete an internship for credit, you will need to contact a faculty member to supervise your internship. This supervisor needs to be a UConn faculty or staff member approved by the dean of the school or college of the department offering the internship. Your faculty supervisor will be responsible for assigning your grade. The following are various departments that offer courses that you may use for an internship and faculty/staff contacts for those courses. Keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list. There may be other courses within the university that offer internship opportunities. *Please note that all the departments listed below require students to have taken one or more 1000-level and/or one or more 2000-level or higher courses in the department before enrolling in their internship course.* Please consult the catalog for details regarding prerequisites.

COMM 4991 – Fall 09 Melissa Tafoya
(6-3687) Spring 10-TBA
HDFS 3080 – Kate Brown (6-8740)
JOUR 4091 – Maureen Croteau (6-4221)
POLS 3991 – Justine Hill (6-2440)

PSYC 3880 – Linda Ferrell (6-4301)
ENGL 3091 – Ruth Fairbanks (6-9017)
SOC 3990 – Kathy Covey (6-4423)
WS 3891 – Marita McComiskey (6-1133)

To receive credit for an internship, you must register prior to undertaking the work. Normally, registration for an internship involves getting a permission number from your faculty supervisor. ***AGAIN, this needs to be done in advance of starting the internship! You CANNOT receive retroactive credit for internship work you have already completed!***

3. Creating a learning contract

You will also need to create and implement a learning contract. This is a document created between the student, internship site supervisor, and faculty supervisor to assist you in identifying skills, knowledge, and experiences you hope to gain while on internship. This contract will need to be signed by you, your faculty supervisor, and your internship site supervisor. See the *Internship Guidebook* from Career Services for more information on preparing this document.

What should I be aware of?

- *Give yourself lots of time.* You should begin this process nine months to a year in advance. Many companies and organizations look for interns in the fall for the following summer or fall semester. Career Services has a month-by-month timeline you can use that will help you plan for your internship.
- If you complete your internship during fall or spring semester, your regular tuition will cover the cost of internship credits. If you plan to complete your internship during the summer, be aware that you will be charged additional fees based on the number of credits to be completed.
- Students on academic probation will not be allowed to register for more than six credits of internship course work. This is in accordance with the CLAS policy on internships which the IMJR Committee has adopted for all individualized majors. For more information on this policy see: <http://www.clasccc.uconn.edu/appoint.html>.
- A student may count no more than a specified number of internship credits towards an individualized major bachelor's degree: 12 credits for CLAS degrees and 6 credits for CANR. It is typical for individualized majors to include 3 credits in their plans of study.
- Each credit for internship work must entail at least 42 hours of work and the required number of work hours must be clearly stated in your internship contract.
- The IMJR Program does not forbid monetary payment for internship work, provided that such payment is incidental to the experiential learning to be gained from the work. However, individual departments may choose to forbid monetary payment for internships under the supervision of their faculty.
- Some internships allow students to participate in organizations and advocacy groups that perform or disseminate research, or engage in legislative lobbying, in order to affect the content of legislation or budgetary decisions. The program recommends that internship supervisors not assign student interns to activities supportive of legislation or budget

decisions directly affecting the University of Connecticut. It is especially in the best interests of the university that none of its interns be engaged in face-to-face legislative lobbying for the university.

- The type of grading (S/U or Letter Grades) for an internship depends in part on the department that is supervising your internship. Your faculty advisor will be able to let you know what type of grading applies to your internship.

An internship is an invaluable experience. It offers you insight into a particular career path. It gives you practical work experience. It provides an opportunity to network with other people who share your interests. The knowledge, skills, and connections that you acquire through an internship will be a key asset as you seek employment or apply to graduate or professional schools.

Study Abroad

Study abroad is an important part of many individualized majors' plans of study. Study abroad can help you build academic and personal strength, and test your mettle in a new environment. If the core of a university education is to help you build new knowledge, acquire new skills, and see the world from new and varied perspectives, then study abroad is an incomparable part of university education.

UConn Study Abroad Programs (<https://secure.sa.uconn.edu/sap/studioabroad/>) give you the opportunity to take courses in a foreign institution of higher education. The Study Abroad Office works very hard to ensure that you are given study abroad options in high quality foreign institutions, but you have to make good use of the myriad of course choices available to you. In particular, you should take care that your particular course choices will meet the academic standards that UConn expects for its programs of study. Therefore, know why you want to take particular courses. You have more leeway to take an exciting elective (LEISURE 101 Surfing and the Leisure Industry of Australia) if all you want is the experience. However, if you really need course credits, especially in your major, think hard about the level and content of your courses. A few guidelines:

- If the course you are taking is described as “an introduction” or “core” and is the first course in a sequence of courses at the foreign university, then it will almost certainly gain you only 1000-level credit at UConn.
- Some introductions to specialist fields that come after the first year of a university degree course may be recognized as a 2000-level or higher course. Pay attention to the prerequisites for the course.

It is best to seek approval for your study abroad courses before you take them. But this is not always feasible. If you seek approval upon your return you will be asked to present not only the course description, but also the course syllabus, copies of the work you completed for the course, and a study abroad transcript or grade sheet.

The Study Abroad Office provides detailed guidelines on how to receive academic credit for the courses you take while you are abroad. (See the heading Academic Credit at <https://secure.sa.uconn.edu/sap/studioabroad/index.cfm?FuseAction=Abroad.Home>.)

If you would like one or more of the courses you are taking to count toward your individualized major, you will need to seek approval from your faculty advisors and the program director, either at the admission stage or as a proposed change of plan of study once you are in the program.

Community/Networking

One of the potential drawbacks of being an individualized major is that you may feel that there are no other students who share your particular set of intellectual interests. This is however unlikely. Among the individualized majors, there are clusters of interest and you will probably find others following plans of study similar to your own. Some of the thematic clusters are international relations, human rights and social justice, public policy, environmental studies, sports, film studies, and health sciences.

The Individualized Major Program seeks to facilitate contact among individualized majors in a number of ways. When you are accepted into the program you will be asked whether you are willing to share contact information (e-mail address, phone number) with other students working on similar themes. From time to time the peer advisors or program office will send you invitations to meetings, notices of campus events, or other information of interest.

The program also has peer advisors whose role it is to help interested students become familiar with the Individualized Major Program. They meet with students who are in the initial stages of considering an IMJR to help them define their focus. Peer advisors also help to facilitate connections among students with similar intellectual interests. To contact peer advisors, please email: iisp@uconn.edu.

5. CAPSTONE

All individualized majors are expected to fulfill a capstone requirement. The capstone requirement provides the individualized major with the opportunity to integrate the knowledge s/he has acquired in her/his major courses. This requirement can be fulfilled in one of three ways:

- **by taking the program's capstone course** (INTD 4600W, 3 credits)
Most students in the program fulfill the capstone requirement by taking the capstone course.
- **by completing a thesis project** (6 credits: typically an independent study in the Fall and INTD 4697W in the Spring, all under the supervision of the thesis supervisor)
Students in the Honors Program who plan to fulfill their Honors Scholar requirements in their individualized major must fulfill the capstone requirement by completing a thesis. Other students outside of Honors who are motivated to complete a substantial, independent capstone project are also encouraged to complete a thesis.
- **by completing an approved alternative capstone**
Occasionally a student may identify a departmental senior seminar or other advanced course that provides him/her with the opportunity to integrate the themes of his/her individualized major. Such alternatives must be approved in advance by the director and the student's primary advisor.

The capstone requirement is counted as part of the 36 credits for the major. Normally, the capstone course will not count as part of the 18 credits required from courses in the degree-granting college.

Note: Double majors or additional degree students may be able to satisfy the capstone requirement with a capstone course or thesis in their other major/degree if that capstone course or thesis allows them to explore the theme of their individualized major. Such substitutions must be approved at the admissions stage and at the final plan of study stage by the director and the student's primary advisor.

The Capstone Course (INTD 4600W)

The capstone course is one important place where we try to reinforce an IMJR's emphasis on interdisciplinary learning through student-centered projects of reflection and integration. The research and writing projects of the capstone course, as well as the oral presentations that students are required to make, are designed to give IMJR students opportunities to consolidate their understanding of their major subjects and clarify what they have achieved from their interdisciplinary course of study. Students must devise an individualized research project that is relevant to and integrates – at least to some extent – their individualized major fields of study and experiential learning. Some students use the exercise as an opportunity to research a problem or theme that they have not yet had a chance to research, while others use the exercise to research some aspects of an intended future profession. The capstone paper must be a minimum of 15 pages in length.

The Thesis (typically a 6-credit sequence including INTD 4697W)

The thesis offers IMJR honors students –as well as other interested IMJR students– the opportunity to pursue an in-depth project of their choosing. Thesis projects may take a variety of forms. Typical is the lengthy written study, the traditional thesis. Other forms are also possible: for example, photo essay, piece of fiction or collection of poetry. Substantial projects, such as a website or a film, would produce a permanent record, but a thesis project report would also capture a summary of the research, planning, and creative work undertaken. The unifying thread for all thesis projects is that they contribute to the development of knowledge or practice in new ways, involve significant background research, require sustained attention in the implementation of the project, and result in a piece of written work that documents the student’s learning process and outcomes.

Expectations:

Disciplines and individual faculty will differ in their expectations regarding methodology, theoretical approaches, and presentation of findings. Nonetheless, the Individualized Major Program has set out some broad expectations of learning outcomes for individualized major thesis writers.

First, the student’s research, analysis, and writing on the thesis project should be relevant to the student’s individualized major and represent an opportunity for the student to integrate and deepen at least several aspects of study in the major.

Second, a thesis should do more than summarize the existing literature on a particular topic. It must make an original contribution to the field of study. It must present new findings in the form of new data, or new, critical interpretations of existing material. It must reflect a good command of the research methodologies in the relevant discipline(s).

The following learning outcomes are expected:

- The student is able to define a research question and design a substantial research project.
- The student is able to identify appropriate primary and secondary sources relevant to his/her research project. The student is able to collect relevant and reliable data that addresses his/her research question.
- The student is able to analyze the strengths and limitations of different approaches scholars have taken to the research question. The student is able to recognize interpretative conflicts resulting from these different approaches.
- The student is able to select an approach or several approaches appropriate to addressing his/her research question.
- The student is able to develop an argument that is sustained by the available evidence and present that argument in a clear, well-organized manner consistent with disciplinary or interdisciplinary practices.

The question of length is perhaps an inevitable one. While we recognize disciplinary differences, we have noted that the best individualized major theses in the social sciences and humanities have been at least 45 pages and often 60-80 pages. Science theses have typically been somewhat shorter. (If the thesis has been written with publication in a scholarly journal as the objective, then the thesis may be more concise than the typical unpublished thesis. Once again, though, page length will depend on the discipline and the target journal.)

Coursework:

We expect most theses to consist of a six-credit sequence completed over the course of two-three semesters. *(NB: Students intending to complete Honors Scholar requirements in their individualized major must complete a six-credit thesis sequence.)*

In the social sciences and humanities, students will typically enroll in a research seminar, graduate course or independent study with their thesis supervisor during the fall semester. This fall semester course should provide the student with an opportunity to explore the existing scholarship on the theme of his/her thesis. Often the student will use the fall semester to write a research paper that reviews and evaluates that scholarship and begins to explore the specific topic of his/her thesis.

During the spring semester, the student will typically enroll in INTD 4697W Thesis. This course operates as a one-on-one research and writing course for which the thesis supervisor is the instructor. During this semester the student is typically engaged in a close investigation of his/her research question and the writing of the thesis. The student meets regularly with the thesis supervisor who provides feedback and advice on data collection and evidence gathering, analysis, and writing.

In the sciences, students may follow a somewhat different sequence with two or more semesters of data collection and laboratory work (when the student registers for a research course or independent study in his/her thesis supervisor's department) followed by the writing up of results (when the student registers for INTD 4697W Thesis).

Timeline:

Identifying a topic and a thesis supervisor:

A thesis is typically a year-long project completed during your senior year. But you will need to begin planning your thesis well in advance, no later than the second semester of your junior year. During the fall or spring semester of your junior year, you will need to decide on a research topic and identify a faculty member who can serve as your thesis supervisor. Choose someone whose research interests match your own. Discuss your interests with the faculty member and begin to define the contours of your project.

(If you are planning a thesis in the sciences you will need to begin the planning process even earlier: in the second semester of your sophomore year and no later than the first semester of your junior year.)

Submitting a proposal:

You will be expected to prepare a written proposal to be submitted to the Individualized Major Program office no later than the last day of classes of the semester *before* you begin your thesis sequence of courses, typically the spring semester of your junior year. You must discuss this proposal with your thesis supervisor. This proposal includes a paragraph that outlines the main questions and issues you plan to explore in your thesis as well as a preliminary bibliography. The form is available on the Individualized Major Program website, on the “Forms” page.

A proposal is just that: a proposal. It helps you define the scope of your research. You should expect to refine your topic as you do your research and discuss your ideas and progress with your thesis supervisor.

Establishing expectations with your thesis supervisor:

You and your thesis supervisor will need to establish what the specific expectations will be for your thesis. In order to do this, you might ask your thesis supervisor the following questions:

- What are the expectations for a thesis in your department?
Each discipline typically has expectations for a thesis. Your thesis supervisor should be familiar with the thesis expectations in his/her department and these may be an appropriate starting point for a discussion of expectations.
- Are these expectations also appropriate for a thesis in my individualized major?
Because your thesis will be for an interdisciplinary major, the expectations for your thesis (in terms of methodology, presentation, etc) may diverge from those of your thesis supervisor’s department. It is important to establish early on how they might diverge, so that both you and the faculty member are clear about the expectations for your thesis.
- Considering my prior course work and my interests, what kind of preparatory work would be most appropriate for me?
You may be able to benefit from participation in a departmental methods or thesis seminar during the fall semester. Some well-qualified students may be admitted to a relevant graduate seminar.
- How should I present my findings? What is the typical length of a thesis?
Different disciplines have different conventions regarding the presentation of research findings. Most combine a review of relevant scholarly literature with a presentation of research findings. Some expect an explicit, detailed discussion of research methodologies. In other fields research methods are implicit. In some fields the written element of the thesis may be relatively short, while in others it may constitute the bulk of the work. It will be rare for a thesis of good quality to be less than 45 pages in length. It is not unusual for theses to be 60-80 pages in length. You should regard it as a written project that is longer and more detailed than any project you will have done as a term paper.

- What arrangements for supervision should we make?
You may want to meet with your thesis supervisor on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. You may want to establish expectations regarding when and how you will report on the progress of your research and submit drafts of your writing.

We advise you to summarize the answers to these questions in the form of a learning agreement with your supervisor.

Human subjects research:

If your project involves human subjects research (for example: interviews or surveys), then your project will need to be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board *before* you begin. You should discuss this with your thesis supervisor and the Individualized Major Program office.

Thesis research and study abroad:

Study abroad has helped shape the theses of individualized major students in a number of ways. It has provided them with ideas for a thesis as well as the opportunity to conduct thesis research. Study abroad programs that include a substantial independent research project and/or an internship can serve as a key part of thesis research. We encourage students to take advantage of such opportunities.

If you plan to conduct thesis research while abroad, you may find it wise to have a UConn faculty supervisor for your thesis research, even if your study abroad program provides formal research opportunities and supervision. It may be difficult to define a feasible project before you arrive at your study abroad site. So you will need to remain in close contact with your UConn supervisor about your plans and the progress you are making to make sure that your research will meet the expectations of a thesis.

Sources and resources for research:

The earlier you begin to consider the sources you plan to use and the resources you will need for your thesis the better. This will allow you to seek the support you will need well in advance. You should consider whether your research will require support in the form of lab time, travel funds, or other such arrangements. The Office of Undergraduate Research (<http://ugradresearch.uconn.edu/>) awards grants for research projects conducted during the summer as well as the academic year. Students in the humanities can also turn to the Humanities Institute (<http://www.humanities.uconn.edu/index.html>) which administers two research awards for undergraduates: undergraduate fellowships and undergraduate student awards. Your thesis supervisor may also have suggestions for how you can obtain the resources you need.

Make use of the reference and other guides at the Babbidge Library. Among its many resources are:

- The Honors Thesis Tool Box: <http://classguides.lib.uconn.edu/honorsthesis>
- Tutorials on many topics including “Using Online Databases,” “Using Information Ethically” and “Citing Online and Print Sources:”
<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/instruction/tutorialsall.html>.
- Subject specialists (Babbidge reference librarians and their areas of expertise):
<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/services/liaison/>

The thesis year:

The thesis year is sure to be an intensive year. Researching and writing a thesis always take longer than expected. It is important to make a schedule for yourself, so that you do not fall behind. The exact sequence of research and writing and the amount of time dedicated to each will vary from discipline to discipline and from topic to topic. It is not unusual to focus first on reading the relevant literature, then on data collection or an examination of primary sources, and then on writing. You will probably find, like many researchers, that you will switch back and forth between these activities, though your focus will gradually shift. During the first semester, while you are concentrating on the relevant literature, your research methodology, and data collection, you will probably enroll in an independent study and/or thesis seminar in the department of your thesis supervisor. During the second semester, while you focus on writing the thesis, you will enroll in INTD 4697W. INTD 4697W operates as a one-on-one research and writing course with your thesis supervisor as the instructor.

You will be expected to present your findings in a public forum, either in the department of your thesis supervisor or within the Individualized Major Program. You might also consider presenting your research at the annual Frontiers in Undergraduate Research poster exhibition, usually held in April and sponsored by the Office of Undergraduate Research and the Honors Program (<http://ugradresearch.uconn.edu/frontiers.php>).

Thesis writers also have the opportunity to submit their work for inclusion in UConn's Digital Commons, an electronic repository for materials produced by UConn faculty and students. For further information see <http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/>.

A final note:

Writing a thesis is demanding. It requires creativity, persistence, and organization. It can be a rewarding experience and provide strong evidence of your abilities to think critically and work independently, skills highly valued by both employers and graduate schools.

6. RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE STUDY OR EMPLOYMENT

Planning for employment or graduate study is a long process. It begins when you design your individualized major and consider how your particular focus will prepare you for the kind of work you hope to do in the long run. It continues as you identify worthwhile internships, periods of study away, and research projects. These experiences as well as ongoing information-gathering and networking will help you to figure out what the best steps are for you once you graduate from UConn.

Information on graduate study and career opportunities is available from a variety of offices and programs at UConn. The Web is also a rich source of information and in this section we point you to some particularly useful websites.

Exploring Careers

If you are unsure about what kind of work you would like to do and are exploring a wide range of possibilities, you will find useful tools for thinking about these issues at the ACES website (<http://aces.uconn.edu/informationtools.htm>). The Department of Career Services website also includes a section focused on career exploration: <http://www.career.uconn.edu/>. The Career Services office in CUE 217 includes an extensive career library. The library's catalogue is available online at: <https://secure.sa.uconn.edu/dcs/library/>. Also helpful is the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook which provides overviews of hundreds of occupations (<http://stats.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>).

You may want to do more in-depth research into your chosen career or field of study than these general sources provide. Some suggested strategies are:

Research the website of the professional association of your chosen career. These associations typically are clearinghouses for information on training, employment, policy issues and other such questions affecting that profession. The web addresses of these professional associations are often listed in the Occupational Outlook Handbook

Talk to people doing the kind of work you would like to do. You can do this through informational interviewing or job shadowing. After you have done some research on your own, identify someone who does the kind of work you would like to do. Interview them about their work (informational interviewing) or follow them on their job for a few hours or a day (job shadowing). Tips on successful information interviewing strategies can be found at the UCLA Career Center website at: <http://career.ucla.edu/explore/info/> as well as the Florida State University Career Center website: <http://www.career.fsu.edu/experience/information-interviews-guide.html>. Tips on job shadowing can be found at UConn's Career Services website at: http://www.career.uconn.edu/job_shadowing.html.

Seek career-related job experiences. Go to Career Services (<http://www.career.uconn.edu/>) for advice and information on internships, cooperative education, and career-relevant summer employment. Career Services provides workshops on resume-writing and interviewing. It also sponsors a number of job fairs during the year.

Exploring Specific Careers and Graduate Programs

If you are considering graduate study, the Department of Career Services has put together a general document “Considering Graduate School.” In addition, the websites of UConn’s own graduate programs or those at other universities can serve as an example of what graduate training in a particular field encompasses and what kind of prior education or work experience might be expected for admission. More specific suggestions are listed below.

Law school

If you are interested in law school, a key resource is the UConn Pre-Law Advising office (<http://www.prelaw.uconn.edu/>). Rebecca Flanagan, the pre-law advisor may be contacted at rebecca.flanagan@uconn.edu. For general information on undergraduate training for law school you should examine the American Bar Association’s advice about preparing for law school: <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/prelaw/prep.html>. Also helpful is the Yale Pre-Law Guide (<http://www.yale.edu/career/students/gradprof/lawschool/media/Law%20Guide.pdf>) and Boston College’s Career Center webpage on Law School: <http://bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law.html>.

Health professions

Helpful for those interested in the health professions is the website of Explore Health Careers: <http://www.explorehealthcareers.org>. It offers detailed information on a wide variety of health careers including medicine, physical therapy, optometry, alternative medicine and others. Similar overviews of the health professions are available in UConn’s Career Services resources library.

If you are interested in post-graduate programs in **medicine or dentistry**, ophthalmology, optometry and other health-related professions go to the Pre-Medical and Pre-Dental Office at: <http://www.premed.uconn.edu/>. The office is located in the PharmBio Building, Room 633.

If you are interested in **nursing**, there are a few graduate programs that will accept students who do not have bachelor’s degree in nursing, including one at the UConn’s School of Nursing: the Master’s Entry into Nursing Program: <http://www.nursing.uconn.edu/index.php>

If you are interested in become a **physician assistant**, you will find useful information at the website of the American Academy of Physician Assistants: <http://www.aapa.org/>.

If you are interested in **public health**, you will find excellent information at the websites “What is Public Health?” <http://www.whatispublichealth.org> and “Pathways to Public Health” <http://pathwaystopublichealth.org/> both developed by the Association of Schools of Public Health. UConn’s Public Health program regularly holds open houses about its graduate programs. See <http://publichealth.uconn.edu/>.

For **physical therapy**, a good place to start is at the website of the Department of Physical Therapy at the Neag School of Education: <http://www.education.uconn.edu/departments/pt/>. The website of the American Physical Therapy Association is <http://www.apta.org/>

Social Justice -- Careers for the Common Good

UConn Career Services has an extensive guide to “Careers for the Common Good:”
http://www.career.uconn.edu/careers_common_good.html.

International Careers

Information on a wide range of international careers can be found at Syracuse University’s Maxwell School. Their career guide (<http://www1.maxwell.syr.edu/careerfieldguides/>) includes information on dozens of international careers in such areas as: foreign service, international development, conflict resolution, human rights, international business, and intelligence. Another useful site (directed at undergraduates) is the University of Texas, Liberal Arts Career Services site: http://www.utexas.edu/cola/lacs/international_jobs/. You may also want to examine UConn Career Services guide to “Careers for the Common Good:”
http://www.career.uconn.edu/careers_common_good.html.

Graduate school in the arts and sciences

If you want to pursue a graduate degree in the arts or sciences, you may want to begin by speaking with faculty in the discipline that interests you. The Boston College Career Center has excellent, detailed information on applying to graduate school:
<http://bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/arts.html>. A helpful article for those interested in pursuing a Ph.D. is Phil Agre’s “Advice for Undergraduates Considering Graduate School,”
<http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/pagre/grad-school.html>

K-12 Teaching

For those interested in K-12 teaching, the Neag School of Education has information on Masters in Education and teacher certification (<http://www.education.uconn.edu/>). If you are interested in learning more about the issues affecting K-12 teaching from the perspective of teachers go to the website of the National Education Association: <http://www.nea.org/index.html>. The Connecticut State Department of Education website includes a section on “Becoming an Educator” (<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/site/default.asp>). Career Services offers a workshop on alternate routes to teacher certification.

Business School

The UConn School of Business offers some programs available to all UConn students that can help students decide whether they are interested in the field of business. Every spring semester the School of Business offers a lecture series “Global Business Leadership Seminar Series.” Students can earn a Professional Certificate by attending 3 out of 4 seminars held during a single semester. Students can also join the wide variety of student organizations at the School of Business focused on business themes such as marketing and entrepreneurship. See the Student Organizations listing at <http://www.business.uconn.edu/cms/p482>.

The Boston College Career Center has an excellent page focused on applying to business school: <http://bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/business.html>. It includes, among other things, sections on undergraduate preparation, why you need work experience, and choosing a school.