

IIS Coordinator:

Dr. Virginia Tucker Steffen

Batten Arts & Letters 5034 (757) 683-4035 E-mail vmtucker@odu.edu

PROPOSAL DUE**DATES**

Fall Semester: 1st Wednesday in October

Revision Due Date: 1st Wednesday in November

Spring Semester: 1st Wednesday in February

Revision Due Date: 4th Wednesday in March

The proposal is made up of the essay (Personal Background, Field of Study, Justification and Overview of Courses, and Senior Project), cover sheet (contact coordinator for sample), and list of courses.

INTRODUCTION

If you have made the decision to design an individualized program of study, you are starting a challenging and rewarding process. Formulating an Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies (IIS) curriculum is a serious endeavor that will take planning, reflection, information, and time. This project cannot be adequately done over a weekend. It is a developmental process, which may take up to six months to complete. The key is to begin early and to fully utilize the resources that are available to you. Your goal is to articulate how the different disciplines which are part of your concentration can be integrated and synthesized to understand, solve problems and develop theories and knowledge in your field or academic career. Students may earn either a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or a Bachelor of Science (BS) through IIS:

1. If the primary components of your concentration are science courses or from the professional schools (e.g. Business, Education, Engineering), then a BS is appropriate. Students seeking a BS are required to meet the university general education Foreign Language requirements (proficiency to the 102 level).
2. The degree will be a BA when your concentration is made up primarily of courses from the humanities or the social sciences. Students seeking a BA are required to complete two years of a foreign language or demonstrate proficiency at the 202 level.

Resolve to submit your proposal early.

It is recommended that proposals be submitted when you have completed between 50-65 semester credit hours.

Students are expected to submit IIS proposals in a timely manner. Do not make the mistake of putting off the submission of your proposal. *This advice cannot be over emphasized!* This is to be a "pre-planned" learning experience. The IIS Committee looks with strong disfavor upon a concentration of study which is over more than half completed. When the proposal is reviewed by

the committee, they may decide to change your course plan. If you've already completed some of your proposed coursework without approval, then you may find yourself having to push back your expected graduation date. For this reason, plan to have your proposal submitted no later than your junior year.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

To complete an Individualized Interdisciplinary degree through IIS you must meet requirements of the IIS Department within the following areas:

General University Degree Requirements (a minimum of 48 hours).

This includes lower and upper-division University and Arts and Letters requirements (See University Catalog).

Concentration Area (a minimum of 42 credits).

This includes courses from three or more disciplines that the student integrates into a single program, subject to departmental approval. At least 30 credit hours must be upper-level (300-400 level). No more than two-thirds of the concentration major area may be from one discipline.

Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies Departmental Requirements (9 credits).

The following are required (these courses include the upper-level T and W courses): IDS

300W (3 hrs): Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies

IDS 307T (3 hrs): Digital Writing

IDS (3 hrs) Integration Project (which is comprised of one of the following):

- IDS 368: Interdisciplinary Studies Internship (Prerequisite: IDS 300W and senior status required)
- IDS 497: IDS Individualized Senior Project (Prerequisite: IDS 300W and senior status required)
- IDS 493: Electronic Portfolio (Prerequisite: IDS 300W and senior status required)

Electives:

Elective courses may be taken for the remainder of the minimum 120 credits required for an ODU degree.

PLANNING YOUR PROGRAM

What is the IIS Proposal?

- In order to be officially admitted to IIS, you must submit your planned program of study proposal for review.
- This plan is called the IIS Proposal.
- This program of study needs to be approved by your faculty sponsors.
- In addition, the Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies Advisory Committee will read your proposal. This committee may accept, reject, or require modification of your proposal.

- Your faculty sponsors will also read it.

You should therefore give your proposal careful thought and consideration.

The Two Main Parts of an IIS Proposal

Your proposal consists of two equally important parts. The first is an ESSAY explaining your reasons for seeking your proposed degree, and for choosing the courses, which you outline. The second is a LIST OF COURSES (see Sample below), which you have completed, are currently taking, or propose to take. Usually, it is easier to start the process by working on the course list. To design a good program of study, you need to clearly define your personal learning and/or career goals. This is not always easy, and often evolves as you become familiar with the courses that are available at ODU. Your task is to choose the best set of courses to lead you to your goals. You may need to revise some of your ideas; you are engaged in the serious activity of planning up to three years of your future.

How to Start Planning Your Proposal

- Examine curricula at other universities to find programs similar to the program you are designing. This can be done by doing an internet search with your favorite search engine (Yahoo, Google, etc.) and looking for degree programs in your area of interest. See which courses they require. See if those courses are offered at Old Dominion University and which you'll need to take elsewhere.
- Go through the University Catalog online and highlight all the courses which you think may help you or which you find interesting. If in doubt, circle the course. You can cut down the list later.
- Call agencies or companies that might employ you after you graduate, and ask about the type of person hired, the job market outlook, salary ranges, opportunities for promotion, etc.
- If you hope to go on to graduate or professional school, find out the criteria for admission. Talk to faculty or graduate program directors.
- Conduct an Information Interview with individuals in the field.
- Check the Occupational Handbook for information. The handbook is available in Career Management Services (Webb Center) and online.
- Read as much information as you can about the field(s) or intellectual issues you are interested in.
- Find faculty sponsors (or potential sponsors) in two departments and discuss your ideas with them. (See section below on working with Faculty Sponsors). Ask for advice on your career choice and which classes to take. The IIS office can help you find sponsors, but we encourage you to choose professors with whom you are comfortable. Good choices for faculty sponsors might be faculty who teach some of the courses which are part of your program or faculty who advise students in the disciplines involved with your concentration area. At least one sponsor should be an ODU professor.

- Identify the major issues in the field. Imagine two or three possible senior integrated projects. What would you need to know in order to complete them? Decide if you wish to complete an individualized research project (paper), IDS 497; an internship, IDS 368; or an electronic portfolio, IDS 493.
- Discuss your ideas with any or all of the following: parents, friends, spouse, IIS Director, someone in your field, faculty members, and clergy.

In designing your program, keep the following things in mind:

- There are three types of courses in most concentration areas: those you have already taken, those you know you will need, and some which round out your program. Allow yourself flexibility in the "rounding out" area by listing alternatives on your program sheet.
- There are sometimes good reasons for not deciding upon all the specific courses you want to take. You may be quite sure about a very broad area of interest --but not yet feel ready to choose all your courses. In some areas, new courses are likely to appear. In such cases, the final decision may be postponed by listing, for example, "9 hours of approved Communication (COMM) courses."
- There is no need to take courses which duplicate what you already know, even if you learned it outside of academia. Keep in mind, however, that you must clearly demonstrate you have this knowledge in your essay.
- Explore alternate options for earning credit, e.g. CLEP, DANTES, course challenge exams, or Prior Learning Assessment.
- Do not plan your entire program around your main goal. Use some of your electives to explore other interests.
- Check with the IIS Coordinator if you have questions about technical requirements.

HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR CURRICULUM

I. How to List Courses on IIS Program Proposal (contact the IIS Coordinator for a sample)

NOTE: This list should be a complete description of your proposed degree and should include all college courses you have taken, are currently taking, or plan to take at ODU, or at any of the consortia schools. It includes all courses accepted as transfer credit by ODU and all advanced placement credit. The curriculum list must include a minimum of 30 semester hours of proposed courses.

- All proposals must be typed.
- If you are using courses transferred from another institution, put the name of each institution with a 3 or 4-letter abbreviation.
- ODU courses should be listed by department abbreviation, course number, title, and number of semester hours.

Transfer courses, which have been evaluated as equivalent to specific ODU courses should be listed using the ODU department, number and title, the number of semester

hours actually awarded, and the abbreviation of the institution where the course was given.

- Transfer courses for which you have been awarded elective credit (e.g. ENGL 1**1) should be listed using the ODU department.
- If the elective is designated 100, 200, 300 or 400 level, put 100, 200, 300, or 400 respectively in the "number" column. If it has been designated "upper-level," put UP in the number column. For all other courses, put LO (for lower-level) in the number column.
- For course title use the actual title at the institution where the course was given and enclose the title in parentheses.
- Put the abbreviation of the institution, which gave the course in the "School" column.
- All courses: If the course has been completed, put the letter grade in the "Complete" column. If you received advanced placement or CLEP, put AP or CLEP respectively in the "Complete" column. If you are currently taking the course, put an X or check mark in the "Current" column. If you are proposing to take it, put an X or check mark in the "Proposed" column.

II. CONCENTRATION AREA NOTE: The concentration area should reflect your general objective. For the IIS student, the concentration area is the equivalent of a major. However, the IIS concentration must not duplicate in objective or content any major offered at ODU through traditional departments. Your concentration should have an easily discernable coherence. In other words, it cannot be a random mixture of various courses. The components (disciplines) within the concentration should relate to one another and form a cohesive whole.

- The concentration area consists of a minimum of 42 semester hours of course work from 3 or more disciplines. The goal is to develop an academically strong program.
- No more than 2/3 of the concentration area may be in one discipline. Some departments offer more than one discipline. If in doubt, contact the IIS office.
- At least 30 hours must be upper-level courses. Upper-level courses are numbered 300 or 400.
- Please list alternatives for a number of courses. If, for example, you wish to take either Psychology 304, Social Psychology, or Sociology 330, Society and the Individual, list PSYC 304 as a proposed course and place SOC 330 in the section headed "alternatives," followed by PSYCH 304. Make sure the alternatives are compatible with your program goals in content and in level to the courses for which they may be substituted.

III. INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES REQUIREMENTS NOTE: IIS students are required to fulfill 9 credits of IIS departmental requirements. This includes the following:

IDS 300W (3 hrs): Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies

IDS 307T (3 hrs): Digital Writing

IDS (3 hrs) Integration Project (which is comprised of one of the following):

IDS 368: Interdisciplinary Studies Internship (Prerequisite: IDS 300W and senior status required)

- IDS 497: IDS Individualized Senior Project (Prerequisite: IDS 300W and senior status required)
- IDS 493: Electronic Portfolio (Prerequisite: IDS 300W and senior status required) The area of concentration consists of course work (at least 42 credits) in the student's chosen disciplines. No more than two-thirds of these course hours may be from one discipline, and at least 30 credits must be taken at the 300/400 level. The program need not conform to any one department's degree requirements.

IV. GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

- Be sure to indicate under which catalog you intend to graduate. Students may choose to graduate under the Catalog in effect at the time of their first enrollment or any subsequent Catalog provided that the students graduate within six years from the date of the first enrollment. If students do not graduate within this six-year period, they may choose to graduate under any catalog in effect during the six-year period preceding the date of graduation.
- Use your catalog to determine your General Education Requirements (which vary slightly from catalog to catalog).
- No courses from a major discipline in your concentration may be used to fulfill lower level General Education Requirements. A major discipline is one, which contributes 14 or more hours to your concentration. Thus, if you have 15 hours of sociology in your concentration area, you may not use a sociology course to fulfill the social science requirement. Lower level General Education requirements must include English 111C or 231C.
- The upper-level General Education Requirements can be fulfilled by completing an approved minor, interdisciplinary minor or Option D: (Option A -MINOR--see list of minors in index to ODU Catalog) within your concentration, or for pre-1998 catalogs, by selecting courses listed under the subject headings in the University Catalog

Option B: Any University-approved interdisciplinary minor (specifically 12 hours, three of which may be in the major)

Option D: 2 or more upper-level classes that are not in the college of your major.

V. ELECTIVES

- Everything not used in any of the three areas discussed above counts as an elective. There is no minimum number of electives. Remember that all ODU students must have at least 120 total credit hours to graduate.
- No more than 8 hours of activity credits may be used unless they are clearly and directly applicable to your program.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING THE ESSAY

- The essay for the IIS proposal has several purposes.
- First, you must explain and justify your proposed area or field of study.

- Second, you must show that the courses you have chosen provide adequate understanding and/or preparation in the field.
- Finally, you must demonstrate that you can clearly articulate your goals and that you are able to develop a reasonable plan for achieving them. If the essay seems difficult to write, it may be because your program is hard to explain, or because you have not clearly thought through your program. In either case, the following information should assist you. This format should be used as an outline for your essay. Therefore, the first section of your essay should begin under the heading: PERSONAL BACKGROUND with FIELD OF STUDY next and so on.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Often it is helpful to provide some information about yourself. This should not be lengthy. This is not an autobiography. However, pertinent information that might lend insight to how you arrived at your career or educational goals is appropriate. You should include how your work history and educational experience thus far has led you to your choice of emphasis. This can include internships, seminars, community service, job-related experience, etc.

FIELD OF STUDY

The IIS Committee members will want to be sure you know your field. If your aim is academic, you should explain in detail what you want to study. If you are career-oriented, explain in detail what people in the field do. Do not simply name the field. A name means different things to different people. If there are other universities with established curricula similar to that which you propose you should include that information in this section. It is also helpful to include information on the market demand for your discipline. Finally, it is important to describe fully the skills, knowledge, or understanding an individual needs to be a professional in your field. While it is not required that you quote from sources in the literature, if you do, you should use a recognized citation format.

JUSTIFICATION AND OVERVIEW OF COURSES

****This is the most important component of your IIS Program Proposal.****

You have made a selection of courses from three or more disciplines in order to pursue a specific field. The IIS Committee wants to be sure you have chosen these courses wisely and that the courses you have selected will adequately prepare you for this field. You must identify which disciplines you are using, how they relate to your goals, and how they relate to each other. A paragraph on each of your disciplines is suggested. It is not necessary to discuss every course. You should, however, discuss those courses, which you feel are most important to your proposed degree. You must also clearly show why it is not appropriate for you to major in one of the disciplines within your concentration. If you have listed any courses someone would think exceptional for the field, explain why. If you are omitting courses someone would expect you to

take (for example, because you already have training or experience), explain why. There must be a direct link shown between your objectives and the courses you select. Fully explain your course selection and give specific examples of how the knowledge or skills you will gain can be used. Reviewing programs in your area that are offered at other universities is a good way to learn about this. Department policy requires that proposed programs include at least 30 hours of courses yet to be taken. If your proposal includes fewer than 30 hours of proposed courses, your essay must ask the committee to waive this requirement and explain why. Applications that include fewer than 30 hours of proposed course work and do not include a request for a waiver and an explanation will not be accepted. In no case will the applications proposing fewer than 21 hours be accepted.

NOTE: The 30 hours include all proposed courses, not just those in your concentration area.

SENIOR INTEGRATION PROJECT (Program Integration and Synthesis)

Finally, the Committee wants to be sure you can think concretely in your field of study about how the components of your concentration fit together. Therefore, your essay should include a description of a sample senior project, which you could develop. You should explain how you foresee the disciplines of your concentration area being utilized and integrated in your project. You should discuss what value the project has and what you expect to gain from it. It is important to include as many details as possible even if these change at a later date. These details should include:

- A Decision: Will you do an Internship (IDS368), an independent project (IDS497), or e-portfolio (IDS493)--(See IDS Internship Guidelines)
- Where: Where will it take place?
- When: Which semester, which year?
- Who: Who will evaluate your work? Faculty Sponsor? Internship director?
- What: What will you be doing? Give details
- How: How will you secure your internship or how will you organize your

paper/project? An important component of your senior project will be a discussion of how various courses/disciplines contribute to your understanding of the project experience.

NOTE: You will not be required to pursue the project you propose. Your senior project will be finalized in the IDS 497 or IDS 493, which you take after your proposal has been approved.

SELECTING A TITLE (For Your Concentration Area)

The title of the concentration area should be an accurate, meaningful phrase describing the career objective or academic field you are pursuing. The title cannot duplicate any existing major at ODU. A good title is one which accurately summarizes your goals and concretely portrays the concentration in terms that

(1) describe the integration of the disciplines in your concentration;

(2) describe the occupational activities represented in your goals or
(3) describe recognized areas of academic inquiry not currently available at ODU. Examples of effective program titles include:

1) Public Relations; 2) Environmental Studies; 3) Studies in Modern Culture; 4) Political Journalism;
5) Legal Studies Examples of poor, ineffective program titles include:

1) Geography, History, Art; 2) Communication and Legal Aspects of Personnel Management; 3) Dynamics of Ministry in Society; and, 4) International Affairs with a Minor in Political Science. Number 1 (above) is simply the name of three disciplines linked together. Number 2 is much too long and is unclear in how these areas are integrated. Number 3 is vague and meaningless; a phrase such as "Pastoral Counseling" would have been far more meaningful. Number 4 is incorrectly stated; while IIS students are able to include minors within the concentration, they should not be tacked onto a title. A Political Science minor is a justifiable component of an IIS proposal dealing with International Affairs. Do not get bogged down in developing a title. Your initial effort should be directed toward clarifying your educational or career goals and selecting the correct courses. As you work on this aspect of the process, ideas for titles will come to you. Jot them down. Read as much as you can about your field and discuss your ideas with your faculty sponsors.

WORKING WITH FACULTY SPONSORS

A key factor in developing a strong proposal is working closely with your faculty sponsors. Every IIS student must have at least two sponsors who represent disciplines within their concentration area. These individuals are to provide input and guidance in the selection of your courses and respond to drafts of your IIS proposal. Your Faculty Sponsors must be from two different disciplines and at least one must be employed full-time by the University. Ultimately, your faculty sponsors must endorse your curriculum (selection of courses and project), so you will quote or paraphrase their advice to support your arguments. Make sure you maintain "on-going" contact with them to seek advice. It is very important that you allow them sufficient time to review drafts of your proposal. This cannot be done if you wait until the last minute to begin working on the proposal. Remember they have many other responsibilities; they are not compensated for serving as IIS faculty sponsors and do so because they are committed to students. The signature of both faculty sponsors is required on the final proposal.

THE IDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The IIS Advisory Committee will review your IIS Proposal. This committee is composed of 13 to 15 faculty members from departments on campus. It is their job to ensure you have developed an academically sound program. Keep in mind that this is the audience for whom you are writing your essay. Do not make statements which they will find offensive. For example, it is totally inappropriate to suggest that the reason you are coming to IIS is that the curriculum in a particular department "wasn't any good." Remember this is a persuasive essay. Your task is to explain your program of study in such a way that traditional academic professionals will see its

worthiness and understand that you are not choosing IIS to circumvent requirements, but rather, to meet your legitimate needs.

Here are several factors, which will influence the Committee's decision:

- **Integration:** your essay should clearly describe your vision (at the time of the proposal) of how various components of your program of study fit together. You will be able to do a more thorough job of this in your senior project, but you should start to see connections in the proposal stage.
- **Legibility:** Your essay and course list should be typed in MS Word. Number the pages of the essay.
- **Grammar and Spelling:** Be as careful about these as you would if you were applying for an important job. The importance of this cannot be overstated! Proposals have been rejected because they were carelessly presented.
- **Clarity:** Your essay should be well organized with your ideas clearly expressed. Sometimes it is helpful to use subheadings or a partial outline. Remember, you will not be present during the review meeting to explain what you meant to say.

Use the Proposal Checklist to assess the final draft of your proposal. Most of the members of the committee will be somewhat unfamiliar with your field and totally unfamiliar with you. Be sure your essay reveals enough about yourself and your field for them to understand what you want to do and why. The committee will be making its decision on the basis of the quality of your essay, the clarity and validity of your goals, the relation between your goals and concentration area, and the appropriateness of your field for Interdisciplinary Studies.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Initially, the process of developing an IIS proposal may seem overwhelming. More than likely, this is because it is the first time you have attempted to do this. Remember, start early, utilize the many resources that are available to you, and be willing to commit the time it takes to develop a strong individualized curriculum of study. Most students find that as they follow the guidelines of this packet and work on each part of the proposal, it begins to take shape.