

Committee on Educational Policy Guidelines for Declaration of Individual Majors

The Individual Major is an opportunity for students to work with a committee comprised of three faculty members to craft a coherent degree program in an area or a combination of areas not offered as an established major. Before embarking on creating such a major, be sure that there is no established major, combined major, major and minor, or a double major that would appropriately cover the area of investigation.

Because individual majors do not have the advising and support structures of established majors, students pursuing an individual major must be highly motivated. Students must have consistently maintained good academic standing and progress prior to the petition for an individual major, and may be required to transition to an established major if good academic standing or progress is not maintained.

The petition for an individual major should be submitted as early as possible in the student's career, so that, if it is denied, the student has time to reorient themselves. If the individual major is the first major being declared by a student, they must meet the relevant deadlines to declare a major (during the sixth quarter for students admitted as frosh; in the second quarter of attendance for junior transfer students).

If the individual major is the second major declared by a student, it is still highly recommended that students submit the proposal *before* they take the upper division courses for the individual major, and at least before the student's final year. Students should keep in mind that the Academic Senate may ask for changes to the proposal, e.g. the inclusion of other courses, and they should leave themselves with sufficient time to comply. In order to provide the Academic Senate with sufficient time to review such a proposal, CEP expects to receive such proposals at least three terms before the term in which the student intends to graduate. If the proposal is received by CEP while the student has senior standing, then the proposal must not extend the student's expected graduation date.

Individual majors must always include alternative courses in the event that courses originally planned are not offered.

In order to ensure that adequate progress in the individual major has occurred, the student and Chair of the committee must hold an interim advising meeting at least once a year (every third term), at which an Individual Major Advising Sheet is completed and forwarded to the student's college.

The comprehensive/senior exit requirement may be satisfied with a thesis, capstone project, completion of an appropriate Subject GRE test at the 50% level, a comprehensive written or oral examination on the area of the individual major, the offering of a student-directed seminar, or some other integrative experience consistent with the Committee on Educational Policy's 2004 Report on the Comprehensive/Senior Exit Requirement. When a student-directed seminar is proposed for this requirement, an alternative means of satisfying the capstone requirement must also be

specified in case the student is not approved by the sponsoring agency, college, or CEP to teach such a seminar.

On completion of the comprehensive/senior exit requirement, the committee will meet with the student to discuss and evaluate the exit requirement, and to award it a grade of honors (H), pass (P), or fail (F). A report on the completion of the major requirements (including the thesis, capstone project report, GRE scores, written or oral examination report, or other such documentation) is submitted to the college for final degree verification. The committee may recommend Honors or Highest Honors in the major.

Preparing the Individual Major Proposal

The student should first assemble a committee of 3 faculty members, the chair must be a Senate member and all other members must be Senate members or continuing lecturers. All the members of the faculty committee must have expertise in the discipline. The committee and student then develop a coherent plan and rationale for the major, and decide upon the comprehensive/senior exit requirement.

The proposal for the individual major should address the following questions:

1. What is the intellectual merit of the major?
2. What presently offered majors and minors are most similar to the proposed Individual Major? What advantage does the Individual Major have over some combination of these majors and minors?

CEP will not approve an Individual Major that has substantial intellectual overlap with an existing major. It will not approve an Individual Major as part of a double major if the two majors have substantial intellectual overlap, even if the upper-division courses have been partitioned to label 40 credits for each major, and may condition approval of an Individual Major on some existing major not being added later as a second major.

3. Are there comparable majors at other UC campuses or other universities against which the proposed Individual Major can be compared for rigor and completeness? It is recommended that the petition should include references to at least one similar degree program at a university at a level comparable to UC Santa Cruz.
4. What is the comprehensive/senior exit requirement?
5. What upper-division courses are required? How do the upper-division courses form a coherent body of work in support of the major and the comprehensive/senior exit requirement? [A minimum of 40 upper-division credits are required.] An assortment of upper division courses does not constitute an individual major.

6. What lower-division courses are required? How do the lower-division courses form a coherent body of work in support of the major, a comprehensive/senior exit requirement, and the upper-division courses? [A minimum of 10 courses including upper-division are required.]
7. Considering what makes the list of proposed upper-division courses unified and coherent, what courses (up to 5) will be alternates should the required upper-division courses not be available?
8. How will the Disciplinary Communication requirement be satisfied (1 or a combination of up to 3 upper-division courses, at least 5 credits) Students should select a course or courses that are appropriate to the individual major discipline and or interdisciplinary focus for the writing component. Please use the DC guidelines to explain how the course or courses you are proposing would satisfy writing in the discipline. **If courses have been approved as satisfying the DC requirement for a closely related major, they should be used.** Here is the [link](#) to guidelines for the DC requirement:
9. Provide a proposed schedule for completion of the degree requirements. Indicate all courses that have been already completed. If other majors or minors have already been declared, the schedule should show completion of the degree requirements for all the academic programs.
10. Provide a copy of your current unofficial transcript.

The Committee Chair must write a letter of support that briefly discusses the need for the individual major (rather than an established major), the academic accomplishments of the student, and the process of developing the individual major.

The proposal is submitted to the College office, which will verify compliance with this policy. The proposal is then forwarded to CEP for final approval. CEP will consult with appropriate program chairs as necessary.

Revised by Committee on Educational Policy on April 2009, Winter 2012, May 22, 2019, October 9, 2019, February 5, 2020 and July 27, 2020.

Santa Cruz Divisional bylaw for CEP (2004 version):

13.17.4

The Committee approves the content and periodically reviews the content and administration of all requirements of colleges and departments and committees of studies (and equivalent agencies as defined in Divisional Regulations) for the Bachelor's degree.

Santa Cruz Divisional Regulation (2004 version)

10.4.5 Individual major.

Students may undertake an individual major by presenting a proposal¹ and a petition for declaration of individual major to the appropriate agency of their college. The proposal must be supported and the petition signed by the student's adviser and all members of a three-person faculty committee that will supervise the individual major. The committee must have at least one member with special competence relevant to the major who will serve as chair of the committee. All of the committee members must be continuing² faculty members in fields related to the proposed major. This committee shall supervise the major program and administer the appropriate comprehensive examination or senior thesis. An individual major may not serve as part of a combined major. The name and content of the individual major must be distinct from those of any approved major program or of any possible double or combined major made up of approved major programs. The Registrar shall periodically report to the Committee on Educational Policy on the nature of the individual majors program.

¹ A proposal must consist of: a) title and general description of the major; b) list of courses required for the major; c) description of the proposed senior thesis or comprehensive examination.

² A continuing faculty member is a person with an academic appointment of a duration that could be reasonably expected to equal at least the proposed term of the major.