

## ***INDEPENDENT WORK MAJOR PROPOSALS*** ***Requirements and Guidelines***

Washington and Lee University expects every student, in pursuing a liberal education, to attain both a breadth of knowledge (General Education) and competency in a specialized discipline (the major). For some students the requirement to specialize in a major presents problems when their interests do not fit into an already-established major program. For those students, the independent work major has been created. The following requirements and guidelines should be used in preparing your proposal for such a major.

### Requirements:

- You must be in good standing, i.e. not on academic probation.
- Your independent work major must be your only major. Applications for independent work as one of multiple majors will not be accepted. (If you meet the requirements for an already-established major, your choice of electives can shape whatever secondary interest you have.)
- You must prepare a clear and coherent plan of study in consultation with at least two faculty members from different disciplines who are willing to support your proposal and to serve as your advisers.
- You should submit your proposal to the Committee on Courses and Degrees sometime prior to the end of your sophomore year. Your proposal must be submitted before October 15th of your junior year.
- Once your proposal is approved, any subsequent changes (e.g. course substitutions) must be approved by the Committee on Courses and Degrees.

### Guidelines for preparing the proposal:

Your proposal must be a clear and coherent statement demonstrating benefits not obtainable in an already-established major. Please include the following:

- ***Background research.*** How did you conceive this program? What other schools with similar majors have you consulted? What graduate programs have you contacted as to their expectations? What W&L faculty have you worked with?
- ***Reason for the major.*** What arguments can you present as to why this program of study will be more beneficial to you than an already-established major?
- ***Courses in the major.*** List every course you will include in the program and comment on how it will contribute to the overall major.
- ***Distribution of courses.*** Your major should have the same logic in its structure as other W&L programs. You should have a few 100-level courses but not many, and a majority of 200- and 300-level courses. You should include some sort of "capstone" activity such as a senior thesis or research paper, giving you an opportunity to synthesize approaches from the various disciplines.
- ***Projected schedule.*** Because some courses are not taught during faculty sabbaticals or for other reasons, we recommend you use the form on the reverse to get the approval of the appropriate department heads for each course being taught during the term you plan to take it. Remember, subsequent changes must be approved by the Committee on Courses and Degrees.
- ***Adviser approvals.*** You must include letters of support for your proposal from each of your sponsoring advisers.

A final note -- well-prepared examples of other independent major proposals are kept on file in the offices of the Dean of the College and the University Registrar. Feel free to consult these examples as models for your own proposal.

**PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF COURSE WORK FOR INDEPENDENT WORK MAJOR**

**Department, Course number, title**

**Department Head Signature**  
("To the best of my knowledge, these courses will be taught in this term.")

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