

This information is for students who enrolled at AU for the first time for the fall 2014 semester, or were readmitted for fall 2014 or later.

### **The Individualized Major**

The university's Individualized major program allows students the opportunity to design their own discipline or interdisciplinary major. The program is offered for those students who have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5 and wish to study several subjects concurrently. This gives the student the flexibility to create a major which is specially adapted for the student to pursue a particular academic or career path. An individual major should only be considered after thorough research by the student in collaboration with his or her faculty advisor and only if the outcome of the student's research of American University's existing curriculum does not meet the student's needs.

An individualized major within one discipline or program requires oversight from at least two faculty members from that discipline or program. An individualized interdisciplinary major program requires faculty oversight from more than one academic unit or more than one department or program within an academic unit. The faculty advisor(s) must be from the disciplines required for the individualized interdisciplinary major

### **The Individualized Minor**

An individualized minor is similar to the individualized major as described above, but requires a smaller number of credit hours. As is the case for any minor, an individualized minor should complement the major(s) being pursued by the student.

### **Eligibility**

Students intending to pursue an individualized major must submit his or her proposal at least a year before their intended graduation date. A maximum of 18 credit hours completed prior to the semester in which the application is being submitted may be included in an individualized major. No such restriction applies to an individualized minor. Students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.5 in order to submit proposals for individualized majors and for individualized minors.

### **Faculty Sponsor and Advisors**

The student is responsible for securing the advice and approval of at least two faculty members: one faculty sponsor (who must be a full-time faculty member) and one or two faculty advisors. The faculty members should represent the core disciplines involved in the student's chosen field. The faculty sponsor will advise the student actively for the rest of the student's undergraduate career and assist the student in selecting courses appropriate to the program of study.

### **Primary Teaching Unit**

Some individualized major proposals may involve several teaching units or academic units, in which case they must identify a primary teaching or academic unit. The primary academic unit is responsible for confirming that the affected teaching or academic units will provide any courses or other support

needed for the student to successfully complete the portion of the program that pertains directly to the individualized major or minor.

### **Proposal Requirements**

A successful proposal will be structured in the same format as a custom specialized major, as outlined in the *American University Catalog*: with a narrative rationale and set of core courses. Faculty sponsors may approve substitutions from the courses if the course becomes unavailable.

The rationale must answer the following questions:

- What is the student's academic goal?
- If the goal is interdisciplinary, what disciplines contribute to achieving the student's goal?
- Why is it not possible to achieve the student's academic goal by completing one of American University's existing majors, together with a carefully chosen minor and electives?
- What reasons can be given why each course is needed in order to complete the individualized major?

Complete the individualized major proposal form or individualized minor proposal form, as appropriate, including a list of all required courses with their corresponding prerequisites and a tentative semester-by-semester schedule for their completion.

### **Submitting for Review**

After the student completes the proposal form and rationale, they must be submitted with a Cover and Signatures page to the faculty sponsor for his or her preliminary review. Once the faculty sponsor approves the proposal, the proposal will be submitted to the Office of the Dean of the home academic unit. That office will ensure that the proposal meets all academic requirements. If the student needs to register for courses in the proposed program, then the student must submit the proposed program to the Office of the Dean at least 60 days before registration begins for those courses.

When the proposal is completed and signed by the faculty sponsor, the faculty advisor(s) and the Office of the Dean of the home academic unit, the Office of the Dean of the home academic unit will email the proposal to [faculty senate@american.edu](mailto:faculty senate@american.edu). The Faculty Senate Undergraduate Curriculum Committee will make a recommendation for approval or non-approval to the Vice Provost. The Vice Provost will make the final decision.

If the Vice Provost approves the proposal, she or he will notify the the faculty sponsor, the home academic unit's Office of the Dean, and the Office of the University Registrar.

### **Major Requirements**

- **Individualized Major**

An individualized major requires 36 credit hours of course work and 6 credit hours of independent study. At least 18 of the 36 credit hours of course work must be earned in residence at American University. At least 18 credit hours of the 36 credit hours must be earned in upper-level courses in the major, and at least 15 of those credit hours must be earned in residence. A maximum of 18 credit hours of courses completed prior to the semester in which the application is being submitted may be included in the program. Unless the academic unit specifies a higher grade, a grade of C or better is required for each course chosen to satisfy the major.

- **Interdisciplinary Major**

An Interdisciplinary major requires 36 credit hours of course work and 6 credit hours of independent study selected to form an academically sound, unified, and well-defined program. At least 30 credit hours of the course work must be upper level as defined by the teaching units that offer them and at least 15 of these credit hours must be in residence. A maximum of 18 credit hours of courses completed prior to the semester in which the application is being submitted may be included in the program. Unless the academic unit specifies a higher grade, a grade of C or better is required for each course chosen to satisfy the major.

- **Individualized and Interdisciplinary Majors Independent Study**

As part of the 42 credit hours in the major, the student is required to take two independent study courses or senior seminars (totaling 6 credit hours) supervised by the faculty sponsor and focused on the program's central concept. If there is an available internship program appropriate to the interdisciplinary theme, it may be substituted for all or part of this requirement. Also, with prior approval, the student may substitute an appropriate advanced course (400 level) for one of the above courses.

- **Individualized or Interdisciplinary Minor Requirements**

An individualized minor requires a minimum of 18 credit hours, at least 9 of which must be earned in residence at American University. Academic units may have additional requirements including more credit hours. At least 9 credit hours of the minor must be earned in upper-level courses. At least 12 credit hours of the minor cannot include courses required for any major or other minor the student is pursuing. Unless the academic unit specifies a higher grade, a grade of C or better is required for each course chosen to satisfy the minor.