



## BACHELOR'S DEGREE WITH INDIVIDUAL CONCENTRATION

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### *The Program: General Info*

Bachelor's Degree with Individual Concentration (BDIC) is a unique program at the University of Massachusetts that offers highly motivated and self-directed students the opportunity to design their own majors. As an alternative to traditional majors, the BDIC Program allows students to pursue their educational goals in areas not available within an existing departmental curriculum on campus. Students, with the help of a faculty Sponsor, focus their major and select courses on the basis of a unifying issue, topic, theme, culture, period, or question called an area of concentration.

The area of study for a BDIC concentration must be interdisciplinary, drawing from at least three fields or disciplines, and it may not duplicate an existing major. Courses may be chosen from any of the departments within the University, and from the other campuses in the Five College Consortium. Internships and Independent Studies are strongly recommended for most majors. Students are also encouraged to participate in the Domestic and International Exchange programs when relevant.

Each student's program of study is developed with the advice and approval of both the student's chosen faculty Sponsor and a BDIC faculty Supervisor. Each student is assigned to one of five academic clusters in BDIC - **Arts and Cultural Studies; Business and Law; Communications; Education and Human Development; Natural Health, Computer Sciences and Engineering**. Each cluster has its own Supervisor.

### *Requirements for the Major*

Acceptance of a formal concentration proposal. The proposal must be approved by a Peer Advisor, Faculty Sponsor, and a BDIC Supervisor. The proposal is written during the student's enrollment in the program's one credit class, Proposal Writing (BDIC 396P).

Completion of at least twelve related upper-division courses (numbered 300 or above) in the chosen area of concentration, totaling a minimum of 36 credits over a period of four semesters. Each class must be completed with a minimum grade of C. Non-classroom experiences such as internships (up to a maximum of 6 credits) and independent studies (up to a maximum of 6 credits) may be accepted as part of the interrelated curriculum, with approval from the Sponsor and the Supervisor. However, a student's BDIC Program may not consist of more than a **total** of 9 internship and independent study credits combined. Courses must be drawn from two or more departments each semester and should be at least three credits each. The students should, ideally, be enrolled in three BDIC courses (a total of at least 9 credits) each semester except in the case of part-time students.

A grade of C or above in BDIC 496C for three (3) graded credits. This course satisfies the University's Junior Year Writing Requirement for BDIC majors. Students may also complete the Junior Year Writing Requirement in another major. Commonwealth College students may substitute

the Honors project (Honors 499P), the thesis (499T), Capstone, or one of the many other Honors courses that satisfy the writing requirement.

Completion of a six-page Senior Summary and one-page Abstract due early in the final semester in BDIC.

Completion of the foreign language requirement if the student's major concentration falls predominantly within the Colleges of Arts and Sciences (Colleges of Humanities and Fine arts, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and Social and Behavioral Sciences). For further guidelines, see the Arts and Sciences section of the Undergraduate Catalog.

**Note:** Students should keep copies of all documentation submitted to the Program: Proposal and Senior Summary and Abstract.

### ***Application Process***

A student must have 30 credits with a minimum GPA of 2.0 in order to apply to the Proposal Writing class. Admission is highly competitive and is decided by a faculty committee. A number of additional criteria besides grades are considered.

The first step in the application process is to meet with a Peer Advisor who will familiarize the student with BDIC and the Program's requirements, and discuss academic and career interests.

If the student decides to pursue BDIC at this time, he/she should apply for enrollment in the BDIC Proposal Writing class (BDIC 396P). Application deadlines for Fall and Spring are April 10 and November 15, respectively. Applications can be picked up at the BDIC office, or found online at [www.umass.edu/bdic](http://www.umass.edu/bdic).

Students who are accepted into the proposal class are assisted with all aspects of the proposal writing process, including finding a Faculty Sponsor.

After the proposal is approved by the Peer Advisor, the Sponsor, and the BDIC Supervisor, the student should meet with their BDIC Supervisor in order to officially sign into the BDIC major and to discuss important aspects of their concentration and academic plans.

### ***The Proposal***

The proposal for BDIC is initially prepared with the assistance of a Peer Advisor during the course of BDIC 396P, the BDIC Proposal Writing Class. The proposal must be approved first by a BDIC Peer advisor, a Faculty Sponsor and then submitted to the BDIC Supervisor. After the student's proposal is accepted, he/she is formally accepted into the BDIC major.

A student who is interested in pursuing an individualized major should expect that writing a proposal will take considerable effort and time as well as imagination. In general terms, the proposal is a rationale for the BDIC major and should address why the student's interests are not served by an existing major at the University. It should include a short description of a student's academic

background and goals, career interests, the courses he or she plans to take as a BDIC major and a rationale for the choice of courses. A student also identifies, in their proposal, the faculty member chosen to be their Sponsor.

All proposals are reviewed by several people, and usually go through many drafts. A Peer Advisor reads the proposal first and makes recommendations to the student for corrections, additions, or deletions. Once the Peer Advisor believes the proposal meets the minimal criteria, the student submits it to their Faculty Sponsor. After the Faculty Sponsor has approved the proposal, it is read by a BDIC Faculty Supervisor. The Supervisor may require further changes before giving it final approval.

Writing a proposal requires research. One of the best current sources for the proposal research is the World Wide Web. By surfing the web, especially the home pages of major universities, students will find information on the history of a particular field of study and current developments within it, career options, and appropriate courses. University home pages are an excellent source for literature related to the selection of courses for a BDIC concentration. Most of these home pages post the requirements for the undergraduate majors similar to potential BDIC concentrations. One should follow the guidelines for these pre-existing undergraduate majors when putting together a curriculum plan for a BDIC proposal.

Faculty are excellent resources on campus. Faculty members who are knowledgeable in certain areas can suggest courses, independent study projects, and internships that are appropriate to a particular concentration. Seeking advice from more than one faculty member can provide different perspectives about a particular field, as well as being a good way to find a Faculty Sponsor. In addition, current and former BDIC students can be excellent sources of information. Consult the list of BDIC students and their concentrations and/or read senior summaries of former students that are similar to the proposed concentration. Finally, it is important to seek the viewpoint of a professional in the chosen field. An interview with this individual may lay the groundwork for a possible internship late in the program.

## ***Sponsors***

Sponsors are an integral part of a student's BDIC Program. Their primary function is to serve as the student's chief advisor. The Sponsor should take an active interest in the student and also be available for the duration of the student's program. The Sponsor will assist the student in choosing courses; possibly supervise independent study or senior honors work; advise about graduate school and professional opportunities. In addition to these duties, the Sponsor will read and approve the student's BDIC Proposal, Senior Summary and possibly work with the student on Independent Studies and Practica.

All BDIC Sponsors must be faculty with the rank of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, or lecturer at the University of Massachusetts or one of the other Five Colleges.

## ***BDIC FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)***

I am a first or second-semester junior (and/or transfer student): Is it too late to get into BDIC?

Not necessarily, as long as the courses in which you are currently enrolled apply directly to the proposed concentration and meet certain criteria, or if you are willing to prolong your studies. In either case, you should come to the BDIC office as soon as possible and start the admission process.

I am a freshman and I definitely anticipate a BDIC Program. What steps should I take?

Come to the BDIC office to familiarize yourself with our requirements so you can start planning your future course work. Try to satisfy as many General Education requirements as well as prerequisites to future upper-level BDIC-related courses as possible before you start your BDIC Program as a first-semester sophomore.

Does BDIC have a foreign language requirement?

BDIC is a University-wide program, and is therefore not within the Colleges of Arts and Sciences. Accordingly, the foreign language requirement may not apply to every BDIC student. However, to be consistent with the intent of this requirement at the University, the foreign language requirement applies only to BDIC students whose area of concentration is composed of courses drawn primarily from the Colleges of Arts and Sciences.

Is BDIC a "real major"? What will it say on my diploma?

Yes, it is as widely recognized as any major and it is approved by the Faculty Senate. The diploma will read, "Bachelor of Arts (or Science) with Individual Concentration." (In order to receive the Bachelor of Science degree, the student must complete at least 60 credits in the sciences.) The final transcript will indicate the name of the student's concentration, as well as the type of degree.

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