



BACHELOR'S DEGREE WITH INDIVIDUAL CONCENTRATION

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Proposal Writing Guidelines

CONTENT: Be sure that the proposal contains all the required elements, listed below in the suggested order. All required forms can be picked up in the BDIC office and most are available on our website.

1. **Proposal cover sheet:** This form can be found on the BDIC website, and must be signed by your sponsor before the *final* draft can be submitted. [*final draft only*]
2. **Educational Goals:** This section should describe what you hope to accomplish through BDIC *before* graduation. Describe the overall idea of your concentration and what it consists of. Explain why existing majors fail to meet your goals and BDIC is the only way to attain your educational goals. Be sure to include which departments you will draw classes from and how they will contribute to your overall academic plan.
Recommended length: 1 paragraph.
3. **Continuing Aims:** In this section, explain what you hope to achieve after graduating from UMass with a degree in BDIC. If you intend to do graduate work, express what degree you hope to attain and what sort of program you are interested in. Describe the type of job that you envision BDIC will have prepared you for – either specific jobs or general information about your intended field. If you are not interested in making a career from your BDIC concentration, describe how you feel the knowledge you gain will help or affect your life.
Recommended length: 1 paragraph.
4. **Experiential Background:** Describe the *relevant* personal experiences that led you to choose the area of your concentration. Commonly mentioned experiences include, but are not limited to, the following items:
 - Academics (classes, independent studies, specific professors, etc.)
 - Work-related (jobs, internships, etc.)
 - Personal events (experiences which led to an interest in the concentration, e.g. in family life, with friends)
 - Longstanding personal interests (reading, computers, etc.)*Recommended length: 1 paragraph.*

5. **Methods and Procedures:** In this section, you will first name the departments that you will be drawing your classes from, as well as what you will glean from each department and how it is related to your overall theme. Discuss how concepts learned from classes selected will enhance your knowledge of the various aspects of your area of study.
Recommended length: 1 paragraph.

If you plan on using any of the types of credit listed below towards your curriculum, you will need to dedicate at least a paragraph to explain the following:

For retroactive classes, describe what you learned in this class and how this will be beneficial to your major – this should be a detailed description since you have already completed the course. *You can request up to 3 classes or 9 credits if they are no more than one semester prior to 396P, upper-level, and related to your concentration.*

For 200-level classes, you should explain why you feel that it should be counted as an upper-level course and is so integral to your area of study. *Be specific* and provide an alternate class in case it is not accepted.

Internships and independent studies should also provide full description of the type of position you are hoping to find or the nature of the independent project you will design. Also describe the connection between the experience/expertise which the internship or independent study provides and your career goals.

If you are planning to study abroad or go on domestic exchange, mention where and how many BDIC classes you intend to take while you are there, along with any other details you may already have. *Please note: The actual classes, with course names and numbers, will need to be approved on a “Changes to Concentration” form.*

6. **Curriculum Proposal:** This form is available on our website and is a neat, condensed way of representing your intended coursework. Make sure that there are classes from a minimum of three departments which blend together in a cohesive, interdisciplinary way. Break down the courses by semester, and label each course separately, making sure to include the course title, department name, and course number.

Proposal Writing (BDIC 396P) and Junior Year Writing (BDIC 496C or equivalent) should *not* be included on the Curriculum Proposal. Remember that you can only have a maximum of four SOM classes; additionally, you may have a maximum of nine internship credits and twelve independent study credits – but no more than fifteen credits combined. Be sure that you have at least four semesters, clearly labeled. You should have at least twelve classes listed, totaling 36 credits or more. Please type or print legibly.

7. **Sponsor Choice:** Who is your choice of faculty sponsor? Write at least two paragraphs describing your sponsor, his/her background and experience in the field as it relates to your own and the process through which you found your sponsor. Defend your sponsor selection in the same way you are defending the curriculum you have

chosen. (If you have not found a sponsor at the time the rough draft of the proposal is due, describe, instead, the sponsor search process and two possible candidates you are considering for sponsor).

8. **SOM Memo:** This form is available on our website. It must be included with your proposal if you have listed any SOM classes on your curriculum – even as an alternate. *[final draft only]*
9. **BDIC Academic Contract:** Available only in the BDIC office until further notice. *[final draft only]*
10. **Unofficial transcript:** This can be printed from *Spire*. You should include the unofficial transcript, not the degree audit. *[final draft only]*

WRITING STYLE. Style is more difficult to evaluate than content, but good writing almost always possesses the following qualities:

1. **CONCISION.** Make sure that the writing in each section is to the point. For example, the “Experiential Background” section should NOT be a long, rambling personal history, full of extraneous detail. It should be an account of just those events or experiences (i.e., jobs, volunteer work, courses taken, extracurricular activities, etc.) that shaped your decision to create a unique major through BDIC. Any material that is not absolutely relevant to the proposal should not be included.
2. **CLARITY.** Clarity is closely related to concision. A brief, tersely written statement is more likely to be understood than a loosely organized, impressionistic passage. An important factor in achieving clarity is syntax, or sentence structure. Overly long, complex sentences, full of subordinate clauses, make ready comprehension more difficult; the reader tends to get bogged down. Clarity is also achieved through appropriate word choice. Be on the look-out for jargon, i.e., “computerese,” “buzz words,” psycho-babble or any other terminology that is fashionable but not very meaningful.
3. **TONE.** Tone might be defined as the overall tenor or “voice” of a piece of writing; that is, the impression conveyed to the reader about the author’s attitude toward the subject matter. The tone of the BDIC proposal should be appropriate for proposals in general – serious without being pompous, lively and informative without being flippant. Tone should be consistent throughout.

STRUCTURE. The overall structure of the proposal need not follow an exact sequence, although many students choose to use the suggested order. The proposal’s major sections (see Content 2-8 above) can be arranged in any way, provided that the chosen arrangement contributes to the clarity of the presentation. The structure within each section should be coherent and the transition from one paragraph to the next should be smooth and logical.

MECHANICS. Grammar and spelling should be as close to perfect as possible. Proofread each draft of the proposal carefully before submitting it.