



BACHELOR'S DEGREE WITH INDIVIDUAL CONCENTRATION

608 Goodell • 140 Hicks Way • University of Massachusetts at Amherst 01003-3232 •

Proposal Writing Guidelines

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

Proposal Pieces

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: At least 2 significant, well thought-out paragraphs.

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.

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.

Exceptions: 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. You may request a maximum of two upper-level 200-level classes in your curriculum. Note: *Approval of 200-level courses is at the complete discretion of the supervisor, and is neither guaranteed nor negotiable.*

- Internships and independent studies should provide a full description of the type of position you have found 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 not certain about what you will do in an internship/independent study, you should wait and add it later to your curriculum. Note: *Only 6 independent study **or** 6 internship credits, (not to exceed 9 credits combined), may be included in the 36 credit curriculum.*
- 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.*

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. You should plan for at least four (4) semesters but additional semesters are encouraged.

Special Notes: Proposal Writing (BDIC 396P), Junior Year Writing (BDIC 496C or equivalent), and foreign language at or below the 240-level should *not* be included on the Curriculum Proposal. Remember that you can only have a maximum of **four** ISOM classes; additionally, you may have a maximum of six internship credits and six independent study credits – but no more than nine 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.

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). **YOU MUST HAVE A SPONSOR CHOSEN BY THE TIME THE FINAL DRAFT IS DUE AND ONLY INCLUDE PARAGRAPHS ABOUT YOUR CHOSEN SPONSOR.**

Additional Attachments [To final draft only]

Proposal cover sheet: This form can be found on the BDIC website or in our office, and must be signed by your sponsor before the *final* draft can be submitted.

Academic Contract/SOM Memo: This two sided form must be included with your proposal. On one side is your academic contract acknowledging you have read and understand the

requirements of the BDIC program. The opposite side is an Isenberg School of Management memo acknowledging the policy with that department. This must be signed whether or not you have ISOM courses included on your curriculum.

Unofficial transcript: This can be printed from *Spire*.

Helpful Hints for a Great Proposal

MECHANICS. Grammar and spelling should be as close to perfect as possible. Proofread each draft of the proposal carefully before submitting it. Utilize the suggestions of peer advisors and faculty when revising.

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

- ✓ **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.
- ✓ **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 reading 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.
- ✓ **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.