

Individual Plans of Study

In order to accommodate students' interest in new academic sub-disciplines, the College sponsors the *Individual Plans of Study* (IPS) program which allows students to create their own majors in consultation with a faculty advisor.

General Requirements:

- The proposed program shall be unique and interdisciplinary, such that the student is not able to accomplish the same goals by way of an established major or combination of majors and/or minors. Additionally, the proposed program must have a clear focus while providing the analytical, theoretical, historical, and critical background expected of a Liberal Arts and Sciences major.
- Students will identify an LAS faculty member (i.e., Professor, Associate Professor, or Assistant Professor) in a discipline closely related to the proposed IPS topic to serve as his/her faculty advisor. The faculty advisor will be responsible for advising the student on coursework and course planning for the proposed IPS and must submit a signed letter of support accompanying the student's proposal.
- Eligible students must be in good academic standing and have at least two semesters of study remaining at the time of proposal submission. Additionally, students must have a minimum 2.0 GPA in all completed courses on the IPS major course list.
- To graduate, students will be required to earn a minimum total of 120 credit hours (at least 21 hours of which must be 300-400 level coursework) and must fulfill all of the LAS General Education Requirements: <http://www.las.illinois.edu/students/requirements/gened/>. Students must earn a minimum GPA of 2.0 across all UIUC and IPS major courses. ***Please note: *Individual Plans of Study* will be reflected as the major on student transcripts. Diplomas will reflect either a B.A. or B.S. in Liberal Arts & Sciences, as is true for all students in LAS Sciences & Letters programs.**

Proposal Requirements:

1. Written statement, which includes the following sections:
 - a. **Rationale:** Describes what the student hopes to accomplish through an IPS in terms of both short-term and long-term goals.
 - b. **Program description:** Specifies how the courses included in the IPS major relate to the objective outlined in the rationale; explains how the courses from multiple disciplines complement one another and support the student's goals.
 - c. **Program uniqueness:** Provides a straightforward statement explaining why no existing UIUC major or combination of majors and/or minors provides the advantages of the proposed plan of study. Students may choose to reference established programs at peer institutions which are closely related to the proposed plan of study, if applicable.
2. IPS major course list:
 - a. The IPS major course list must include 51-70 credit hours of coursework, which will be agreed upon by the student and his/her faculty advisor.
 - b. At least 51% of the major courses must come from LAS disciplines.
 - c. At least 12 hours of advanced level course work must be included in the major.
 - d. The student will be required to complete all courses listed for the IPS major in order to receive his/her baccalaureate degree. However, in certain situations (e.g., a course is no longer offered), students may need to make small changes to the approved course list. Such changes must be approved by the student's faculty advisor and the college's IPS advisor.

3. General education requirements:
 - a. The student must list all courses he/she has already taken, or plans to take, to fulfill all of the LAS General Education requirements.
4. Semester plan (IPS courses only):
 - a. Students will provide a semester-by-semester completion plan for IPS courses.
5. Faculty advisor letter:
 - a. This letter should comment on the merits of the proposed program, and discuss how the plan differs from existing majors and what the student will be able to accomplish through IPS that could not be accomplished through existing programs.

Timeline:

1. The student must meet with the College of LAS Individual Plans of Study advisor to discuss their interests and to find out if IPS is a good option.
2. The student must identify an LAS faculty advisor whose interests are closely related to the student's IPS interests. Students may work with more than one faculty member, but at least one must be from an LAS discipline.
3. Together, the student and faculty advisor will develop a proposal which meets all of the requirements noted above (see Proposal Requirements). ***Please note: All students are encouraged to continue working towards an established major until approval has been given to pursue the IPS major.**
4. The IPS advisor will contact students, via email, to inform them of the submission deadline for the current term. Proposals are reviewed by a standing committee of LAS faculty once each Fall and Spring semester (see the attached "IPS Advisory Committee Program-Assessing Guidelines").
5. The review committee will send final decisions to the IPS advisor and students will be subsequently notified of the decision, via email.
6. If approved to pursue the IPS major, the student and IPS advisor will meet to fill out the appropriate form to change the student's major to *Individual Plan of Study*. The IPS advisor will submit a Major Plan of Study form.
7. Students are encouraged to meet with their faculty advisor once each semester to discuss progress.
8. Students in the IPS major have the opportunity to graduate with distinction (see the attached "Graduation with Distinction" guidelines).

IPS Advisory Committee
PROGRAM-ASSESSING GUIDELINES

All submitted proposals for LAS Individual Plans of Study will be assessed using the following guidelines:

1. Does the student meet the eligibility requirements listed in the IPS Program description (i.e., in clear academic standing, enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences)?
2. Is the proposed program appropriate for Liberal Arts & Sciences (e.g., does a program combining computer science courses with business courses seem congruent with the analytical, theoretical, historical, critical spirit of an LAS major OR could/should it be completed in the College of Business)?
3. Is the student unable to follow and complete the proposed program by way of an already existing major or specialized curriculum within LAS?
4. Does the proposed program appear to be designed in good faith (i.e., not designed to avoid the more stringent requirements of a traditional major/curriculum in LAS or of comparable programs in other UIUC colleges)?
5. If the student's advisor has approved an additional major or majors within LAS in addition to the IPS, have they submitted clear course plans for each?

If the response is positive to all of the above considerations, the following questions are addressed:

- Does the program proposal satisfy the College's graduation requirements regarding composition, foreign language, general education, advanced hours, and total hours?
- Does the program appear broad and general enough in course selection to provide the analytical, theoretical, historical and critical background expected of an LAS major (in contrast to a preparation for a very specific career or to unnecessary pre-professional training)?
- Is there a coherency and point to the selection of courses, and has the student managed to describe clearly the rationale operative in that selection?
- Does the program contain the "sufficient depth" recommended in the LAS policy defining majors (i.e., does it possesses shape and intellectual substance)?
- Does the accompanying letter from the student's advisor thoroughly describe the merits of the proposed degree program and explain sufficiently why the student's academic goals will be achieved better through IPS than through some traditional LAS major or combination of conventional programs?

If the majority of the Committee members conclude that the proposed program meets all of these guidelines, if the answer is "yes" to all of these questions, the program is approved as written.

Individual Plans of Study: Graduation with Distinction

To qualify for distinction in Individual Plans of Study, a student must maintain a grade point average of 3.25 or better in the courses listed in his/her IPS major course list AND successfully complete a distinction project approved by the student's distinction committee (see 1. below).

The distinction project may grow out of course work, but the scope must extend beyond regular course activities. The project may take any form suitable to the individual student's degree program and as approved by the distinction committee. If the student chooses to write a thesis, it must be prepared in conformity with the "Instructions for the Preparation of Bachelors' Theses" (<http://www.las.illinois.edu/students/honors/departamental/>).

1. Setting up a distinction committee:
 - With the help of the his or her faculty advisor, the student must identify at least two additional faculty members whose expertise is related to the student's IPS focus.
 - The student shall work with the committee members to formulate a suitable project and discuss how the project will be evaluated.
 - The distinction committee will evaluate the student's final project and make a recommendation for level of distinction based on the student's GPA (see 4. below) and overall quality of the project.
2. Declaring intent to complete a distinction project:
 - No later than the student's next-to-last semester, he or she shall notify the LAS Individual Plans of Study advisor, via email, of his/her intent to complete a distinction project.
Contact info is available here: <http://catalog.illinois.edu/undergraduate/las/indiv-plans/>
 - This email shall include a one-page description of the distinction project written by the student, as well as a signed letter from the student's distinction committee verifying approval of the project and a brief explanation of how the project will be evaluated.
3. Completing the distinction project:
 - The student must register for 4 hours of LAS 494 (or an appropriate course in an LAS department).
 - The project must be completed and evaluated by the distinction committee no later than May 1 for spring degree candidates and no later than December 1 for fall degree candidates.
4. Final recommendation for distinction:
 - Members of the student's distinction committee must submit their recommendation to the LAS Individual Plans of Study advisor, via email, by the respective date noted above.
 - Notification must be in the form of an attached letter signed by all distinction committee members, which states the recommended distinction level based on the student's GPA and quality of the project.
 - Distinction = major GPA of 3.25 or higher
 - High Distinction = major GPA of 3.50 or higher
 - Highest Distinction = major GPA of 3.75 or higher
 - Please note: The distinction committee reserves the right to evaluate the student's project as unsatisfactory, at which point no distinction will be assigned.