

Self-Designed Major Program

The Self-Designed Major Program offers opportunities for self-directed students to arrange the courses offered by the University of Southern Maine in a way unique to the student's interests, and within specific guidelines. Reasons for applying for a Self-Designed Major may be for the purpose of qualifying for graduate school admission in a particular field, preparing for employment in a particular job, or for self-fulfillment. The rationale for the following policies and requirements is to achieve a quality program leading to a viable degree for each approved Self-Designed Major.

GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- ❖ The optimal time to declare a Self-Designed Major is the second semester of the student's sophomore year (between 45 and 60 credit hours). ***Do not wait!***
- ❖ Students with a previous baccalaureate degree or who transfer to USM with **60 or more transfer credits** must meet with the coordinator of the Self-Designed Major Program (SDMP) in their first semester of attendance in order to be considered for the program. ***There is no guarantee of acceptance.***
- ❖ Permission is required from both the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences (C.A.S.) and the Self-Designed Major Committee before students can be officially admitted to this major.
- ❖ At the time of the student's proposal, a letter of recommendation and endorsement must be completed by at least two faculty members (the primary advisor must be full time and from the College of Arts & Sciences) who are willing, able, and committed to advise the student and offer ongoing advising and guidance regarding the student's Self-Designed Major.
- ❖ The completed proposal must conform to the guidelines in effect at the time it is submitted to the Self-Designed Major Committee.
- ❖ Proposals will not be scheduled to be presented to the Self-Designed Major Committee until ALL required materials have been completed and received by Pam Edwards, the Coordinator of the Self-Designed Major Program (see checklist).

Note: Materials must be submitted to Pam Edwards, Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the expected proposal date. Proposals are scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis. Once available times are filled, students will be moved to the next available meeting date.

To first receive a copy of the SDM Newsletter contact Pam Edwards, Coordinator at 780-4221. Once you have begun to research programs comparable to the one you want to propose here at USM, please call for an appointment to discuss proposing your very own self-designed major. *Note: It is advised you bring to the meeting copies of comparable programs you have located at other institutions.*

For the latest information, see our Website at: <http://usm.maine.edu/cas/sdm/sdmajor>

Self-Designed Major

CHECKLIST

Note to students: These guidelines, policies and restrictions are intended to assist you as you gather information and create your own self-designed major. By following the process outlined here you will save yourself time, and end up with a quality product with which both you and the University of Southern Maine will be proud.

- You should plan to meet with the SDMP coordinator **at least twice**; once prior to beginning the proposal process after having read the SDM Newsletter, and again when you submit your proposal. You should set up each appointment allowing approximately **one hour** for each meeting.
- Plan to give yourself enough time to prepare a SDM proposal of which you will be proud. Do not rush through the process. **TIP:** neatness counts, be thorough, do spell check, and grammar check.
- At your **first meeting** with the coordinator you should bring a list of your questions and any research of comparable programs you have gathered so far. **At this meeting you will receive complete instructions for proposing your SDM, which are also available on our website:**<http://usm.maine.edu/cas/sdm/sdmajor.html>
- Your SDM proposal must be typed or word processed.
- Proficiencies must first be met in mathematics and writing.
- To apply, you must have first completed 30 credits of College of Arts and Sciences (C.A.S.) course work (must include at least 15 C.A.S. credits at USM).
- Cover letter/introduction to SDMC addressing content as indicated in section B.
- Copies of **at least two** programs comparable to the one you are submitting as your SDM proposal. Include a graduate program if you have plans of pursuing graduate study. These comparable programs should be from other regionally accredited institutions and should currently be in use at these institutions.
- List of courses already taken, currently being taken, and to be taken separated by CAS and non-CAS courses. Total the 200-level course credits in each category. Use recommended format, and include course descriptions when not available in the current USM catalog. **YOU MAY USE ONLY ONE COURSE IN YOUR SDM TO ALSO SATISFY A CORE CURRICULUM REQUIREMENT (Please asterisk (*) this course).**
- Check with department chairs to be sure “Courses To Be Taken” are expected to be offered when you have planned to take them.
- Include a provision for a senior Thesis/Project. You do not have to indicate the topic at this time.
- Letters of recommendation from at least two faculty advisors who met the required criteria. Your **primary advisor must be from C.A.S.**, be full-time, and expect to be at USM (not on sabbatical) for the next academic year. Recommendations may be sent directly to the SDM coordinator, or be included with your proposal.
- USM transcript (unofficial is acceptable). This is available from the Advising Services Center in Portland, or the Registrar’s Office in Gorham for no charge to currently registered students.
- Have all faculty advisors date and sign their name on the *Proposal Agreement* as listed in the instructions, indicating their approval of your SDM proposal.
- Ask one or more SDM faculty advisors to attend your SDM proposal meeting.
- Submit the Proposal Agreement signed by you with your SDM proposal.
- Contact the SDM Coordinator to determine the date and time of your SDM proposal before the SDMC.

Note: Students are not self-designed majors until officially notified in writing of the SDM committee’s final approval of their proposed program of study.

Self-Designed Major

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

A. RESTRICTIONS

To be eligible to apply to the Self-Designed Major Committee (SDMC) for an individual Self-Designed Major (SDM), you must meet the following criteria:

- satisfied the minimum proficiency requirements in effect at the time of application (math and writing);
- cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 2.50;
- completed 15 credit hours of College of Arts and Sciences (C.A.S.) courses at the University of Southern Maine (USM);
- completed a minimum of 30 credit hours of C.A.S. courses (may include transfer courses);
- have completed NO MORE THAN 30% of the proposed SDM courses;
- have at least two faculty advisors, one of whom is a full-time faculty in the College of Arts & Sciences, and anticipates being at USM for at least one more year;
- submit to the SDM committee a proposal of intent to self-design a major using the format guidelines in effect at the time of the proposal;
- once accepted into the SDM Program, you must receive prior approval from the SDMC for any course substitutions, additions or deletions to the approved SDM.
- proposals will be neat and either **typed or word processed**.

B. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Your Self-Designed Major Proposal should include all of the following:

1. A cover letter/introduction completed by you, the student, addressing:
 - ~ the title of your proposed self-designed major (SDM),
 - ~ how your interest in this major developed,
 - ~ your goals and objectives,
 - ~ how the SDM will help you achieve those goals and objectives,
 - ~ the rationale for the organization of the particular courses in the major,
 - ~ a statement indicating why, considering your goals, none of the related programs USM offers is appropriate,
 - ~ a statement indicating whether you plan to pursue graduate study and if so, how the proposed Self-Designed Major will assist you in the goal of admission and successful graduate study. We understand this may be tentative.
2. A USM transcript (unofficial is acceptable) showing grades of all college level work you have done to date,
3. All appropriate SDM forms completed,
4. Provision for a Senior Thesis/Project (this is required--see Thesis Guidelines),
5. A letter of recommendation and endorsement from all participating faculty advisors,
6. Documentation for two or more similar programs currently in use at other regionally accredited institutions that may serve as relevant points of reference for the program you are proposing (this must include course descriptions for those courses required for the major as well as foundation courses).
7. Your SDM proposal must be reflective of those programs submitted in content and total number of credits.
8. If you plan to pursue graduate study, documentation is required for at least one program you would be interested in attending. This could serve as an indicator of prerequisites for admission to that program.

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PROPOSAL GUIDELINES (cont'd)

IN ADDITION, ONCE APPROVED, YOU AGREE TO:

- submit an annual report on your progress to the Self-Designed Major Committee (SDMC) no later than May 1st each spring semester.
- notify the SDMC if and when it becomes necessary for you to interrupt, and subsequently resume your course of study,
- obtain **prior** approval for any course substitutions, deletions, additions or changes to your SDM (including any major courses to be taken off campus),
- have your senior thesis/project proposal approved by both faculty advisors prior to submission to the SDMC,
- present your proposal for your senior thesis/project to the SDMC no later than the semester **prior** to the semester you plan to graduate (if graduating in May, you must present your senior thesis/project proposal no later than the previous fall semester)
- supply the coordinator with one copy of the product of your senior thesis/project one week prior to the presentation date. This copy of your thesis/project will be kept on file in the C.A.S. Dean's Office and/or the USM Library.

*Note: presentations take place during finals week of the semester you plan to graduate (fall and spring **only**) at the "Drop-In and Show Off."*

C. FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

To Student: It is recommended that you give a copy of this section to your faculty advisor.

1. Faculty Advisors (at least one advisor **must** be from C.A.S.) **must** be full-time and expect to be at USM for the next academic year.
2. Faculty advisors must write a letter of recommendation and submit it to the coordinator of the SDMP **at least two weeks prior** to the date the student expects to propose the major to the SDMC. The letter of recommendation must address the following:
 - ~ familiarity with the student's work and objectives,
 - ~ familiarity with, and approval of, the student's SDM proposal,
 - ~ familiarity with comparable majors at other universities or at USM,
 - ~ willingness, ability and commitment to provide ongoing advising and guidance to the student making the SDM proposal.
3. At least one of the student's two (or more) faculty advisors must accompany the student to the proposal meeting to offer support and answer questions regarding the academic integrity of the proposed SDM.
4. **All** of the student's faculty advisors signatures are required on the proposal change submitted to the SDMC indicating approval of any subsequent changes, additions, substitutions, deletions to the SDM **before** a proposal change is submitted to the SDMC.

***** A dated signature from all faculty advisors indicating their approval is required for the original proposal, any requests for changes, and the Senior Thesis/Project.**

5. One or both of the student's faculty advisors is responsible for grading of the Senior Thesis/Project **at least one week prior** to the date of the presentation to the Self-Designed Major Committee and other interested members of the University Community. The faculty advisor responsible for submitting the grade will be determined as part of the Senior Thesis/Project Proposal process, and is subject to the approval of the SDMC. **The grade should be submitted to the SDMP Coordinator, Pam Edwards, in writing.** Presentations are generally 15 - 20 minutes in length and present an overview of the student's Senior Thesis/Project and should reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the SDM. The presentation is to take place prior to graduation (usually during final's week) during the student's last semester of attendance. Students **will not** be awarded their degree until the thesis/project **and** the presentation are satisfactorily completed.

*****Note to faculty advisors: Your signature of approval should not be given to the student until you are satisfied with the quality of work to be presented to the SDMC.**

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PROPOSAL GUIDELINES (cont'd)

D. PROPOSAL FORMAT

Please see the following page titled: Self-Designed Major Format Guidelines, for a detailed format example.

1. Your name, student ID #, title of your SDM, and current local phone number and address must appear as a header on pages produced by you for your SDM proposal.
2. Courses pertaining to your SDM should be categorized as follows (see pages 5-6):
 - ~ major courses already completed
 - ~ major courses currently being taken
 - ~ major courses to be taken (no courses numbered -99 may be listed in this category)
3. Each category should list the course number, title, credits, semester taken (or planned to be taken). College of Arts & Sciences (C.A.S.) courses should be separated from non-C.A.S. course work, and the number of credits for each category should be calculated separately. In addition, the number of credits of 200-level and above course work should be totaled for each category (see *Format Guidelines* on pages 5 - 6).

E. CONTENT OF THE SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR

The proposed SDM must include:

- a minimum of 50% of the major courses from the College of Arts & Sciences,
- a minimum of 30 credits of upper level courses with a reasonable distribution numbered 300-level and above (this is determined on an individual contract basis).
- no course work graded "D" or below will count as fulfilling requirements toward the SDM.

The proposed SDM should be reflective in content and number of credits required to the comparable programs submitted supporting the academic integrity of the proposed SDM.

F. ACADEMIC STANDING

If your cumulative grade point average (CGPA) drops below 2.50, you will be put on probation for one semester. If at the end of the probationary semester your CGPA is not at least 2.50, you will be dismissed from the program.

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FORMAT GUIDELINES

Please make a header in the upper left corner of each page marked with an ‘*’ (those produced by you, see below) and include: **your name, student ID #** (usually your social security number), **your SDM title and your current local phone number and address.**

Order of SDM Proposal information:

- Information should be single-sided without staples (paper clips are OK)
- Proposal Agreement (form)
- SDM Proposal Checklist (on reverse side of Proposal Agreement)
- *Letter of Intent to the Self-Designed Major Committee (SDMC) to propose a Self-Designed Major (SDM).
- Letters of Recommendation from faculty advisors (unless sent directly from the faculty advisor to the SDM Coordinator)
- USM Transcript (unofficial is acceptable)
- *Courses to be included in your SDM. **Please use the format listed below.**
- Documentation (this includes information generally found in an institutions catalog - textual information about the major, degree requirements, and any accompanying course descriptions) for at least two comparable undergraduate programs (and one graduate program, if applicable).

Section I. SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR COURSES ALREADY TAKEN:

Course Number	Course Title	Semester	Grade	# of Credits
College of Arts & Sciences (C.A.S.) courses:				
ABC 1XXJ	sample title	Fall 2001	A	3.0
Non-C.A.S. courses:				
XYZ 1XX	Sample title	Spring 2002	B+	3.0

C.A.S. credits: _____
 Non-C.A.S. credits: _____
 Total # of SDM credits already taken: _____
 200-level and above credits: _____

Section II. SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR COURSES CURRENTLY BEING TAKEN FOR _____ 200_:

Course Number	Course Title	Semester	Grade	# of Credits
College of Arts & Sciences (C.A.S.) courses:				
ABC 1XXJ	sample title	Fall 2002	B	3.0
Non-C.A.S. courses:				
XYZ 1XX	Sample title	Fall 2002	A	3.0

C.A.S. credits: _____
 Non-C.A.S. credits: _____
 Total # of SDM credits being taken: _____
 200-level and above credits: _____

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FORMAT GUIDELINES (cont'd)

Section III. SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR COURSES TO BE TAKEN:

Note: It is the student's responsibility to check with each department chair to be sure if courses will be offered the same semester you plan to take the course.

Course Number	Course Title	Semester Planned	# of Credits
College of Arts & Sciences (C.A.S.) courses:			
ABC 1XXJ	sample title	Fall 2003	3.0
Non-C.A.S. courses:			
XYZ 1XX	Sample title	Spring 2004	3.0

C.A.S. credits: _____
 Non-C.A.S. credits: _____
 Total # of SDM credits to be taken: _____
 200-level and above credits: _____

Section IV. COURSE WORK OR EXPERIENCE NOT INCLUDED IN THE MAJOR THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THE SDM:

Do not include these courses in the total number of credits for your Self-Designed Major.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CREDITS FOR THE SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR:

Section I. _____	Total credits 200-level and above: _____
Section II. _____	(must be 30 credits or more)
Section III. _____	Total C.A.S. credits: _____
	Total Non-C.A.S. credits: _____
	TOTAL # OF SDM CREDITS: _____

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PROPOSAL CHANGE REQUESTS

After a self-designed major proposal has been approved by the SDMC, the student must complete the entire course list as outlined in his/her proposal in order to be eligible to receive the degree. If, at any time, the student wishes to add, delete, or make course substitutions to her/his original proposal, approval must be granted by the committee **prior** to taking the course.

Note: Keep in mind that after any changes are made, your SDM proposal must continue to be reflective of those programs submitted as comparable in content and total number of credits.

Students requesting proposal changes should list the proposed changes in the same format as the original proposal. In addition, the SDMC expects students to give a rationale for how these changes affect your SDM in both content and in credit distribution. Be sure to maintain at least 50% College of Arts & Sciences (C.A.S.) courses, and a minimum of 30 credits of upper division course work. Changes must be typed or word processed.

Information to be included on any proposal change:

- Name
- Student ID #
- Title of your SDM
- Local phone #
- Current address
- The total number of credits of C.A.S. courses, total of non-C.A.S. courses, total of 200-level and above courses, and total number of credits for the Self-Designed Major.
- All faculty advisors' signatures are required at the time you submit any proposal change.

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SENIOR THESIS/PROJECT PROPOSAL

Name: _____ Student ID #: _____

Address (local): _____ Projected Graduation Date: _____

_____ Phone (local): _____

Self-Designed Major Title: _____

The Self-Designed Major Committee would like to hear what you plan to do for a senior thesis/internship/project (it can take any of these forms or may be some combination of them). Please give us a clear and concise statement of what you plan to do, how you plan to do it (stage by stage, if appropriate), and how it relates to or grows out of your self-designed major and/or your career plans.

Your Thesis/Project must address each of the following five topics:

- 1) **Learning Objectives:** What will you learn to do, to know or understand as an outcome of this project?
- 2) **Activities:** What will you do during the project? Be specific, indicating what you will observe, measure, perform or study, etc.
- 3) **Resources:** What will you need for the project? Include bibliography, people, agencies, equipment and budget.
- 4) **Evaluation:** What will you produce or perform which your faculty advisor will evaluate for a final grade? How frequently will you confer with your faculty advisors?
- 5) **Preparedness:** What has prepared you to carry out this project? Include courses or other types of instruction, work or other types of experience and sense of commitment.

Your Thesis/Project:

- may be based on any approved internship, research project, or other activity;
- must relate to the self-designed major, and to your goals and objectives;
- must reflect the interdisciplinary nature of your major;
- must be previously approved by your advisors and subject to ratification by the SDMC;
- must be supervised by your advisors on a regular basis;
- must indicate the regularity with which you will meet with your advisors;
- must allow enough time for you to make changes suggested by your advisors, and allow them BOTH time enough to assess your work.
- must be graded by your advisors at least 1 week prior to your scheduled presentation
- must be presented to an appropriate audience by the last semester of your attendance, prior to graduation (usually during finals week - see the SDM Coordinator for more information);
- must reflect an appropriate ratio of hours of work to hours of credit sought, as evaluated by your advisors and the SDM Committee.

Your typed proposal (3 - 5 pages) should have space for the dated signatures of all faculty advisors who signed on to supervise you in your major signifying their approval of your proposed project.

Note: Credit is awarded through the course SDM 400 - Self-Designed Major Thesis/Project. This is a variable credit course, 1-6 credits. You must contact Pam Edwards, Coordinator, to be assigned a CRN (course registration number) for registration purposes.

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PROPOSAL AGREEMENT

Name: _____ Student ID #: _____
Address (local): _____ Projected Graduation Date: _____
_____ Phone (local): _____ Address (home):
_____ Phone (home): _____
_____ Cumulative GPA: _____

Self-Designed Major Title: _____

Faculty Advisors: 1) _____

name department

2) _____

name department

- If your proposal is approved, the Self-Designed Major Committee requires that:
- If you interrupt your course of study, you must notify the SDMC when you interrupt, and also if and when you resume your academic career.
- If you propose to add to your major a course taken off the campuses of USM, prior approval must be obtained from the Self-Designed Major Committee. If you propose any deletions in the courses approved for your major, prior approval must be obtained from the Self-Designed Major Committee.
- If you propose any substitutions in the courses approved for your major, prior approval must be obtained from the Self-Designed Major Committee.
- You must make a presentation based on your Senior Thesis/Project to the Self-Designed Major Committee and other interested members of the University Community before your degree will be awarded. This is generally presented at the Self-Designed Major **Drop-In and Show Off** or other appropriate venue with prior approval of the Self-Designed Major Committee.

A final copy of the product of your Senior Thesis/Project must be given to the Self-Designed Major Coordinator to be kept on file in the College of Arts & Sciences Dean's Office or the USM Library.

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the Self-Designed Major Program policies and guidelines in effect at the time of my self-designed major proposal.

Approval of the Self-Designed Major Committee: _____ Date: _____

Approval of the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office: _____ Date: _____

This form is to be attached to your completed, typed Self-Designed Major (SDM) proposal at the time it is submitted for review and action by the SDM committee. You have been furnished with guidelines which specify conditions for applying for a self-designed major.