

Academic Advising Syllabus 2025-2026

Individualized Education with “CUNY BA”

CUNY BA offers motivated and self-directed students the opportunity to create a unique, interdisciplinary bachelor’s degree (BA or BS) by drawing on courses and experiences across the entire CUNY system. This interdisciplinary approach empowers students to pursue unique academic and professional goals that may not fit within traditional majors, discovering hidden industries and fields of expertise.

The Value of Creating Your own Degree

CUNY BA’s individualized, interdisciplinary degree gives students access to opportunities not often available until graduate school (Wonham & Derby, 2023), providing a constellation of support, so students can build meaningful, flexible, innovative, high-impact programs of study.



Holistic Pedagogy: Individualized, Interdisciplinary Student Development

Layered CUNY BA assignments, such as the narrative and Area of Concentration Plan, help Laureates craft a meaningful, innovative interdisciplinary degree. Through these assignments, Laureates reflect on their personal, academic, and professional goals, ideally drawing on holistic models of learning, identity, and wellness. The eight Dimensions of Wellness helps students reflect on goals in eight areas of their lives: intellectual, occupational, social, environmental, physical, financial, spiritual, and emotional goals.

8 Dimensions of Wellness



Advising Philosophy

Holistic and individualized advisement, in a cohort model (assigned advisor), so it's relationship-based (more than transactional). Helping students consider:

1. Academic, personal, professional goals; Identities
2. Relevant opportunities (serving as an "opportunities matchmaker" to match you to opportunities that would enhance your education, especially high-impact learning opportunities such as research, internships, service, and study abroad.

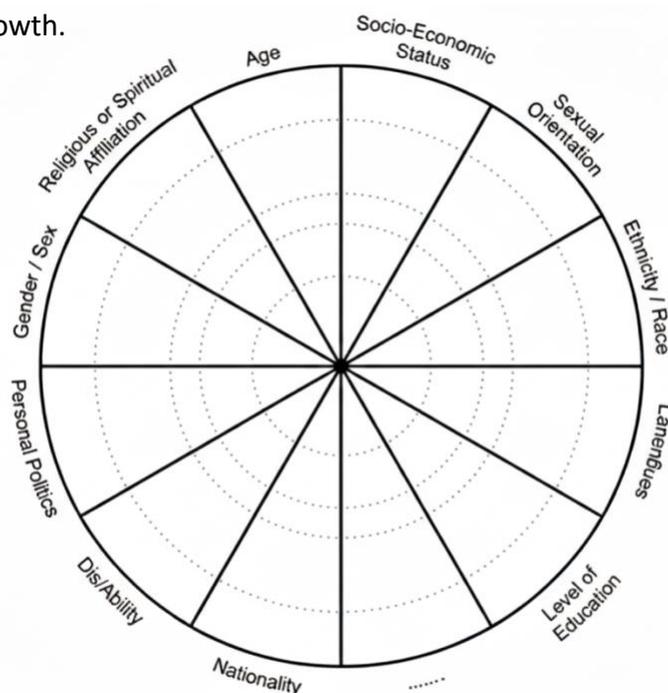
Advising in CUNY BA is learner-centered, to help students learn and navigate processes independently over time.

Your Responsibilities and the Role of Your Team

You have responsibilities and assignments to help you successfully craft your rigorous program of study and reflect on your learning. You have a team of support, including your Faculty Mentor, your assigned Academic Advisor and Peer Mentor. Each member of your team, of which you are the leader, plays an important role.

CUNY BA Student (Self-Directed "Laureate")	Faculty Mentor (Disciplinary Expert)
The Laureate (CUNY BA student) is responsible to:	The Faculty Mentor is responsible to:
1. Understand degree requirements, including Area of Concentration (AoC), general education (Pathways), and program policies, such as course and GPA requirements	8. Provide disciplinary expertise within their specific discipline(s). 9. Work collaboratively with the student to develop a rigorous, coherent, and academically sound Area of Concentration Plan (AoC).
2. Research ideas, disciplines, interdisciplinary connections, and courses that align with your academic and professional interests	10. Ensure the Concentration meets academic standards of depth, breadth, and interdisciplinary integration. Approve the official course plan for the AoC and guide students through necessary revisions to their course selections.
3. Articulate uniqueness of your planned program of study	11. Advise students on research methodologies, relevant literature, and opportunities for scholarly engagement within their AoC.
4. Participate actively in advising, preparing for meetings, bringing questions, a tentative agenda, and materials. Communicate proactively and professionally with your advising team (Advisor, Faculty Mentor, Peer Mentor) regarding your academic progress and challenges.	12. If possible, discuss professional development, such as potential graduate school programs, career paths, and professional opportunities related to the student's individualized field of study, or help connect student to resource
5. Keep abreast of CUNY BA requirements. Read and respond to communications in a timely manner.	
6. Seek support with CUNY BA and your home campus. Develop and practice strong self-advocacy skills, articulating your needs and goals clearly and respectfully.	
7. Complete assignments on time, including AoC proposal, narrative, degree audit after 90 credits, etc. (See assignments section.)	

Academic Advisor (Program Guide)		Peer Mentor (Transition Assistant)	
1.	Serve as your primary point of contact and navigators through the program's unique structure.	8.	Especially important during the first semester as a CUNY BA student, the Peer Mentor provides practical advice on administrative procedures and resources (e.g., campus logistics, ePermit, CUNY BA forms).
2.	Facilitate discussions around students' academic, career, and personal goals, helping them clarify their aspirations using the Wheel of Wellness.	9.	Welcomes new Laureates, providing a supportive and encouraging peer relationship, offering a space to discuss challenges and celebrate successes, connecting them with other students and fostering a sense of belonging.
3.	Provide accurate and comprehensive information regarding CUNY BA degree requirements, policies, and procedures.	10.	Paints a picture of opportunity, encouraging students to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible, such as research, study abroad, internship, capstones, etc.
4.	Connect students with appropriate CUNY BA and campus-based resources, including financial aid, counseling services, career services, and academic support.	11.	Shares advice on resources
5.	Assist students when encountering difficulty with administrative processes such as course registration	12.	Refrains from answering questions they don't know, assisting students find the resources together, such as in the Student Handbook.
6.	Provide an accurate degree audit, which serves as a credit check combined with graduation filing.		
7.	Maintain confidentiality regarding student information and provide a supportive and encouraging environment for academic exploration and growth.		



See the **Wheel of Identity Exercise** to reflect on your identities and how they connect to your goals and Concentration.

Putting It All Together: Integrating Experiences

To form a cohesive education, Laureates are encouraged to plan for integrative experiences such as capstones, internships, independent study, research, eportfolios, showcase presentations, and other high-impact experiences to help make connections across courses and connect what you learn in class to the “real world.” The CUNY BA Opportunities Passport serves as a framework for these important transformative experiences.

The CUNY BA Passport to Opportunity



Essential Capstone Integrating Experiences

We encourage you to pursue a capstone experience, such as a capstone course within a discipline, a senior thesis, research project, or culminating exhibition that synthesizes your interdisciplinary learning within your Concentration (AoC). This experience helps unify and apply knowledge and skills gained across multiple disciplines.

1. **Internships:** Paid and unpaid internships help you gain professional experience, build networks, and apply classroom learning in a practical setting. CUNY BA provides resources and funding opportunities for quality unpaid internships and can be thoughtfully integrated into your Concentration, if relevant.
2. Meaningful **student leadership and service experiences**, with CUNY BA or your home campus, also help build personal and professional skills.
3. **Research Projects:** Engage in undergraduate research, whether through programs, independent projects, or as part of a faculty's research team. This includes qualitative,

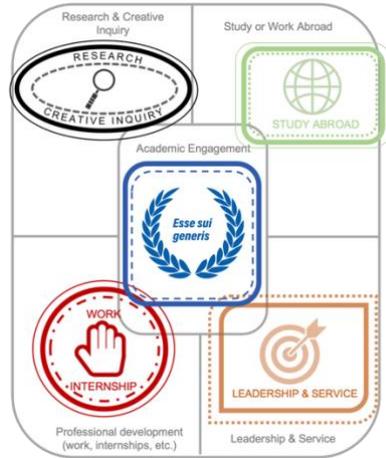
quantitative, and creative research and allows for in-depth exploration of a topic within your concentration, fostering important skills.

4. Students are encouraged to participate in the **CUNY BA Student Showcase**, held in May each year. Students present a research project, artistic project or performance, business idea, or other substantial project.

5. **Independent Studies:** Create your own independent study under the guidance of a faculty member to delve deeper into specific topics not covered in traditional courses. These should align with and enhance your AoC, making connections across courses. See your home school’s rules for independent study courses.

6. **Study Abroad:** Immerse yourself in different cultures and perspectives through study abroad programs, while earning credits. CUNY BA encourages students to explore CUNY-affiliated programs; the courses don’t have to align with the Area of Concentration and could be used as electives.

7. **ePortfolio Reflection:** Laureates are encouraged to create an ePortfolio or engage in other reflective practices (e.g., journaling, presentations, etc.) to help them articulate their learning outcomes, connect experiences to their AoC, and prepare for future academic and professional endeavors. Students may join the CUNY Academic Commons, or any platform of their choosing.



Milestones



Assignment Checklist

	Milestone Assignment(s)	Due	Support/Resources
<input type="checkbox"/>	Narrative: Your roadmap to <i>research and reflect</i> on your interests, identities, values, and plans. Plan for integrating experiences and courses (capstones, internships, research projects, independent study)	Dec. 1 (Summer/Fall acceptance); May. 1 (Spring acceptance)	Advanced Area of Concentration Strategy Session: small group advisement with Academic Director
<input type="checkbox"/>	Annotated Bibliography (optional) Research your field of study, prepare for a Faculty Mentor, and build research skills	Optional.	See Writing an Annotated Bibliography video and assignment sheet.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Find a Faculty Mentor <i>Define the mentorship you want and ask a faculty member (or multiple faculty) for guidance</i>	Dec. 1 (Summer/Fall acceptance); May. 1 (Spring acceptance)	Finding a Faculty Mentor Workshops
<input type="checkbox"/>	Submit Area of Concentration Course Plan Form <i>To plan your courses for your major</i>	Dec. 1 (Summer/Fall acceptance); May. 1 (Spring acceptance)	Area of Concentration Strategy workshop: small group advisement with Academic Director
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make a graduation audit appointment with your advisor. Review that you are on track with meeting <i>graduation requirements</i> . You will be added to tracking for graduation.	After completing 90 credits & AoC(s) approved	With your assigned Academic Advisor. Serves as your application for graduation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Finalize any changes to your Area of Concentration before your last semester, to allow for time for processing, ensuring that classes you've taken match what is on your approved AoC Plan form.	No later than Sept 15th for January degrees or February 15th for June degrees	Beginning with your Faculty Mentor and your assigned Academic Advisor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete self-evaluation and senior survey. <i>Seniors</i> connecting courses and experiences into cohesive whole, e.g., present at Showcase; create eportfolio, complete outcomes worksheet	No later than January 1st for January degrees and June 1st for June degrees	CUNY BA Student Showcase; ePortfolio options, "Telling my CUNY BA Story Persuasively" workshop

REMINDER Prior to entry: Submit signed **degree agreement** to your advisor to finalize your acceptance, no later than two weeks after your admissions interview.

Important Policies (See the **Program Handbook** for more information on policies)

Academic Integrity Statement CUNY BA Laureates are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in all your coursework and academic endeavors.

Statement on use of AI In addition to respecting CUNY and individual class policies on using AI tools, we encourage you to use your ethical judgment, making decisions with your learning foremost in mind. See the current full **CUNY BA policy on AI use** in academics and writing (including scholarship applications).

FERPA

The City University of New York (CUNY) adheres to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a federal law which gives students certain rights with respect to their education records, including the right to inspect and review records, request amendments, and control the disclosure of their information. See the complete policy in the CUNY BA Handbook and CUNY Graduate Center websites.

1. CUNY generally requires written consent from students before disclosing their educational records to third parties, including parents.
2. Directory Information: Certain information, like name, enrollment status, and major, may be considered directory information and can be disclosed without consent unless a student opts out
3. Students can inspect their records within 45 days of a written request to the Registrar's office.

Citations

Wonham, M., & Derby-Talbot, R. (2022). Questions instead of majors: implementing a self-authored concentration program. *Studies in Higher Education*, 48(4), 582–594.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2022.2151998>

Swarbrick, P. (2006). A Wellness Approach. *Psychiatric Rehab Journal*, 29(4), 311-314. (Dimensions of Wellness adapted by SAMHSA). See <https://library.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/sma16-4953.pdf>

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