



Baccalaureate
for Unique and
Interdisciplinary Studies

Partners in Learning

Faculty Mentor Handbook

Enhancing Access to Excellence through
Individualized Learning



Since 1971

Increasing Access to Excellence

Dear Faculty Mentor,

Thank you for mentoring an engaged, self-directed CUNY BA student (a “Laureate”)! Like our motto, *esse sui generis*, our students aspire to be unique, one-of-a-kind. With your expertise and guidance, these highly motivated students design their own majors (called concentrations) and often go on to success, pursuing graduate degrees, fellowships, social change, and professional excellence. Often, this level of freedom and flexibility is not available until graduate school.

Created over 50 years ago during a turbulent era filled with social and technological change, the program was created to give students the power to create a future-forward degree, adapted to a world that continues to be what the Harvard Business School calls “VUCA” -- volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. Current students join over 8,000 alumni in crafting an individualized, interdisciplinary degree to prepare for careers that may not even exist yet.

We seek to connect more CUNY students to high-impact learning activities, such as undergraduate research, study abroad, internship, and leadership development. We offer grants to support experiential learning. This guide explains your role as a Faculty Mentor in helping your mentee develop a rigorous, coherent course of study for the student’s individualized area(s) of concentration. You’ll also find an overview of the program and resources for students, such as scholarships, advisement support, and community activities.

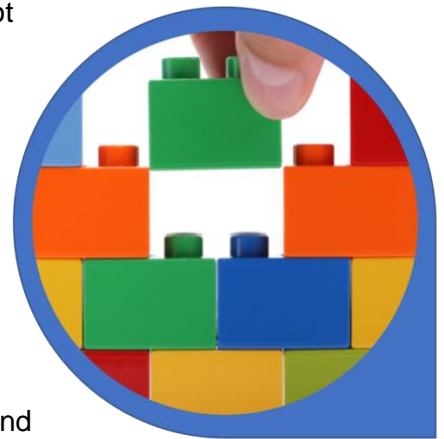
Again, thank you! Your support increases CUNY student access to an excellent education. We hope you find it as rewarding as we do, as we work together to give students important access to the best possible learning opportunities at CUNY. If we can be of assistance, please contact us. I hope that your mentorship experience inspires you, as you follow your student’s creative growth journey. We hope, also, that mentorship helps connect you to other faculty across CUNY who may share your academic interests or methodological approaches.

Welcome to our community!

Warmly,



Jody Clark Vaisman, PhD
Academic Director



Like a set of Legos, students can build the picture on the box (a traditional major), or they can take those same bricks (in this case, courses) and build something entirely unique!

Our Vision

*for every CUNY student to know about this opportunity
(and its value), whether or not they join.*

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BY THE NUMBERS

Giving CUNY students access to excellence



EMPOWERING STUDENTS SINCE 1971

With over 8,000 alumni, for over 50 years the CUNY Baccalaureate has opened doors to students from all CUNY campuses, working with prison-to-college programs, returning adult students, and students with unique interests.

8,000
ALUMNI
+

THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

CUNY BA seeks to:

- Make excellent, meaningful, flexible, and innovative education and intellectual exploration accessible.
- Empower students to build future-forward, interdisciplinary programs of study, allowing learners to draw on different disciplinary perspectives to explore a topic that is too complex to address with a single discipline
- Prepare students for fields of study and careers that don't even exist yet.



STUDENT SUPPORT

340K+

- CUNY BA unites a constellation of student support, including an academic advisor, faculty mentor, robust community of students and alumni, and CUNY home campus
- Thanks to generous donors and over 8,000 alumni, the program gives over \$340,000 of direct student scholarships annually.

ALUMNI JOBS

- CitiBank, KPMG, Bank of America
- Google, Microsoft
- Apple
- The Walt Disney Company
- US Department of State
- Columbia Presbyterian Hospital
- Oscar Health
- Spotify
- NYC Dept of Health
- Vera Institute of Justice
- YouTube
- Hetrick Martin Institute
- International Rescue Committee
- Accenture
- BuzzFeed



GRADUATE SCHOOLS

ALUMNI WERE ACCEPTED AT

- Harvard and Berkeley Law
- Yale, Brown, and Penn doctoral programs
- London School of Economics
- Harvard Divinity
- University of Cambridge
- CUNY Graduate Center



STUDENT SUCCESS & AWARDS

- Over 70% 4-year graduation rate
- Approximately 70% of students graduate with Latin Honors
- Awards include:
 - 20 Fulbright Awards,
 - 1 Marshall Scholar
 - 2 Truman Scholars (plus 2 finalists)
 - 2 Emmy Awards
 - and many more!



ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE &
INNOVATION



JOIN AN INFORMATION SESSION

www.cunyba.cuny.edu



1 History and Mission

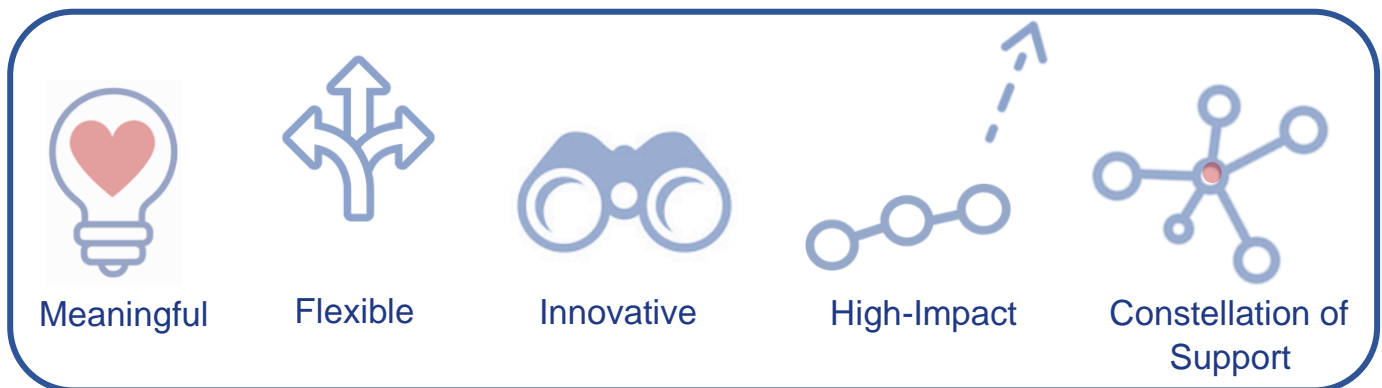
Program Overview

The CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies, CUNY's university-wide interdisciplinary, individualized degree program, is among the first "create your own major" programs in the country, created in 1971. The "CUNY BA" seeks to:

- Make excellent, meaningful, flexible, and innovative education accessible to CUNY students, allowing for intellectual exploration.
- Empower students to build future-forward, interdisciplinary programs of study, allowing learners to draw on different disciplinary perspectives to explore a topic that is too complex to address with a single discipline (Klein & Newell, 1996) and to prepare for fields of study and careers that don't yet exist.
- Unite a constellation of support around the student, including an academic advisor, faculty mentor, robust community of students and alumni, funding opportunities, and a home campus.

Individualized majors are an important nexus of equity, giving students access to excellent, meaningful, personalized education. While requirements to apply to CUNY BA are minimal (12 college credits and a 2.8 GPA), the graduation rate is higher than many CUNY campuses, over 70%, and approximately 70% graduate with academic honors. The level of self-directedness in creating a major is not usually available until graduate school (Wonham & Derby-Talbot, 2023).

Together, we make future-forward education accessible



Our Students

The major is intended for a student who has the vision and drive to design their own unique and interdisciplinary major, called an area of concentration (AoC). The majority of students who are attracted to CUNY BA tend to have clear career paths in mind before they enter the program,

although some are seeking career advancement within an existing field of employment or looking to make a career change. Upon graduation, more than half of students report receiving promotions or raises in their current positions, or starting new careers. Alumni surveys show that most CUNY BA students report going on to work in fields related to the AoCs they completed in the program.

CUNY BA aims to be a conduit of equity and access for diverse and nontraditional students in higher education: over half of CUNY BA students identify as women and 47 percent are under-represented minorities. In addition, more than half of CUNY BA students are over 23 years old, and all are transfer students; some began their studies at a CUNY community college or through the Bard Prison Initiative.

Pedagogical (or Andragogical) Approach

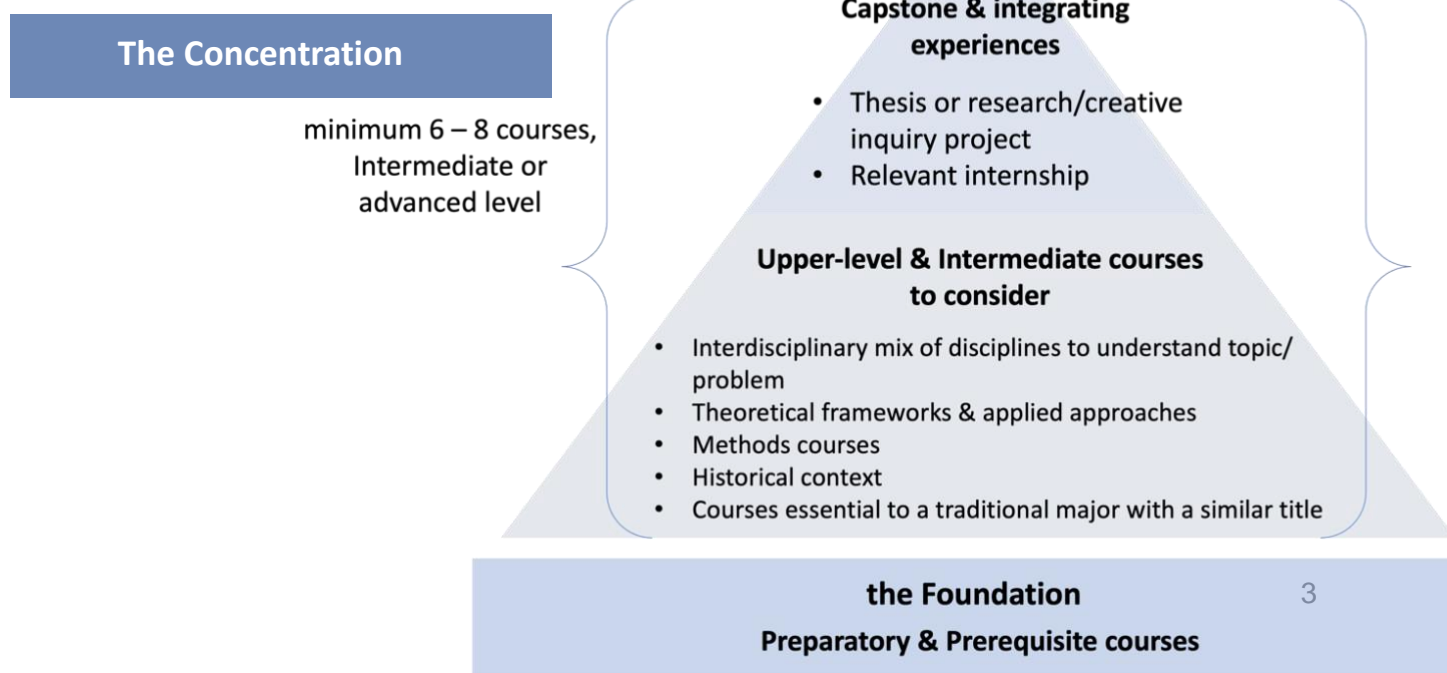
CUNY BA offers highly motivated, academically strong students greater responsibility for the design of their course of study. With over 8,000 graduates, alumnx report that the meta-learning, or learning how to learn in the process of creating their degree, is impactful.

Our self-directed students' academic goals transcend traditional majors. Students admitted to the CUNY BA create their own degree plans working directly with faculty mentors and academic advisors. Often, these programs are interdisciplinary, drawing on different disciplinary perspectives to explore a topic that is too complex to address with a single discipline (Klein & Newell, 1996)

Guided by an inquiry-based approach and embedding high-impact learning experiences, such as study abroad, research, and internship (Kuh, 2008), the program offers access to an opportunity not often available until much later, in doctoral study (Wonham, et. al, 2022). Concentrations (AoCs) are areas of study that are not available as a major/minor in typical departments at any of the four-year CUNY colleges. Each student can pursue one or two AoCs, under the advisement of at least one and up to two faculty mentors per AoC with expertise in those fields of study.

We ask that you help your students incorporate integrating experiences, such as a thesis, independent study, or capstone.

courses or appropriate



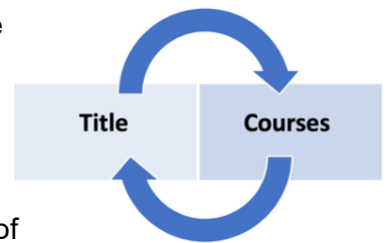
2 Faculty Mentorship

Faculty Mentor Role

The heart of the CUNY BA learning partnership is the relationship between students and their faculty mentors. The relationship between mentor and student varies, allowing students and faculty mentors to forge a unique rapport. Students must have at least one faculty mentor with expertise in the AoCs they choose.

Faculty mentors:

- provide area expertise, assuming critical responsibility of ensuring that their students' Areas of Concentration (AoC) will prepare them for graduate or professional work in their chosen field of study.
- guide student choices of courses to be taken for the concentration (AoC), approving revisions, if needed.
- ensure the title is precise, reflecting the courses and, conversely, that the courses reflect the title, especially if there are expectations in the academic and professional community about the meaning of the concentration title and expectations about courses a typical major would include
- approve the official course plan (AoC form), with the CUNY BA Academic Director, which then becomes the student's required program of study
- revise the program as needed, with their mentees.
- work with their students, typically, until graduation.



A successful mentor ensures that the student's AoC is academically sound, and contacts CUNY BA's Academic Director with any questions or concerns. A student may not remove or replace a mentor unless the mentor resigns or if other extenuating circumstances arise.

Faculty Eligibility

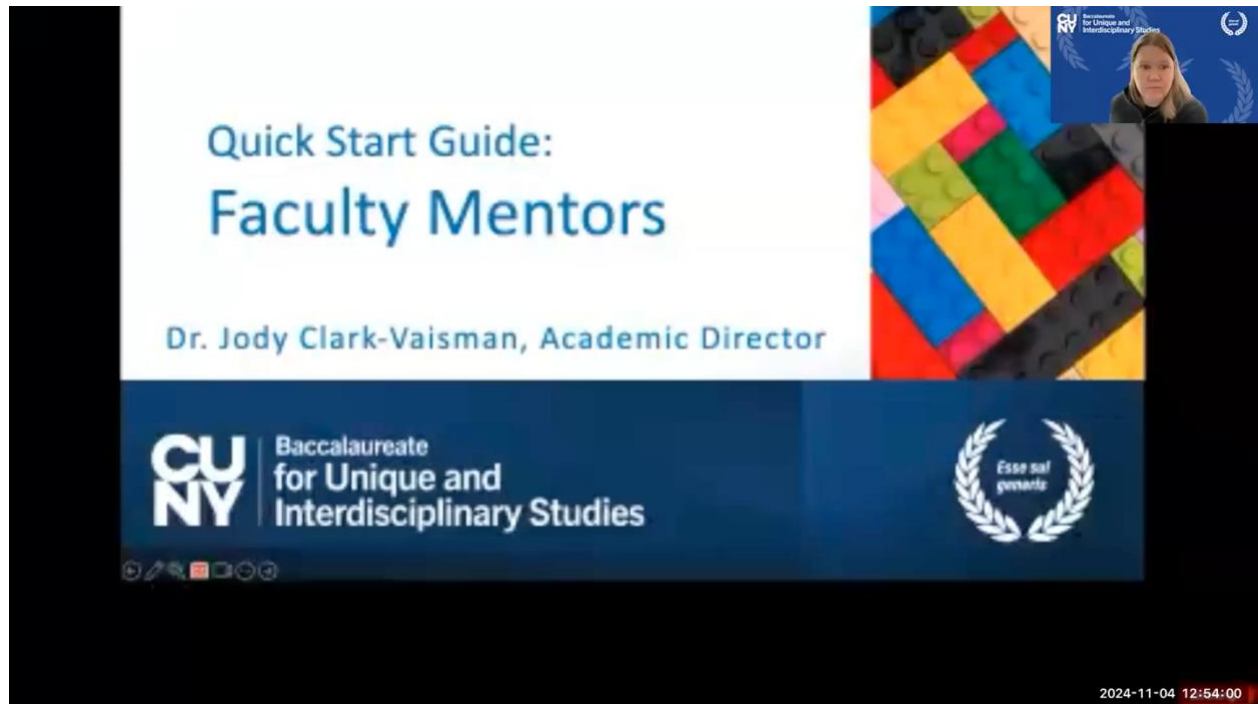
To be eligible to serve as CUNY BA faculty mentors, which is considered service, faculty must:

- have professorial rank or be lecturers with a full-time teaching position
- serve at any one of the CUNY colleges in a department related to the student's concentration.

Students pursuing interdisciplinary or dual AoCs may, in some circumstances, find one faculty mentor whose expertise encompasses both disciplines; otherwise, two mentors are required.

Faculty “Quick Start” Video

New to CUNY BA mentoring? Check out our short video “[Quick Start Guide](#)” for Faculty Mentors:



Your Decision to Mentor

Faculty mentorship is essential to the success of CUNY BA students. Faculty members report that they appreciate the way serving as a mentor connects them to other relevant disciplines or colleagues at other campuses and enjoy working with motivated students. However, as an act of service, the decision to mentor is up to you. When a CUNY BA student asks you to consider serving as their faculty mentor, you may wish to reflect on the following questions:

- Is the student self-directed, motivated, and academically able? Keep in mind that a 2.8 GPA is the minimum required for admission to the CUNY BA program; the average GPA of recently admitted students is 3.30.
- Does the student have defined, viable academic and professional goals?
- Has the student thought carefully about the concentration they wish to pursue?
- Can the student work independently, solve problems, handle obstacles, and benefit from the CUNY BA experience?

We can assist you. If you have concerns about students, or would like to discuss their program of study, contact the assigned CUNY BA Academic Advisor or Academic Director. We're here to help you and students.

“The most satisfying part of being a CUNY BA mentor is the communication with the students, seeing the work that comes out of the curriculum that they’ve constructed — the directions that they take and how the work grows over time.”

Prof. Ricardo Miranda
Film & Media Studies, Hunter

3 The “Major”--the Area of Concentration

An Area of Concentration (AoC) is meant to be a unique curriculum. Students and faculty mentors collaborate to develop an AoC that aligns with the student’s academic and professional goals. AoCs are often interdisciplinary in nature, containing courses offered through different departments and CUNY colleges.

By allowing students to design their own AoC(s) with guidance from a faculty mentor and granting them the opportunity to take courses across multiple CUNY campuses, CUNY BA promotes academic creativity and innovation.

CUNY BA students have created concentrations in many disciplines from across CUNY. See sample cluster areas, at right, and an actual concentration, below.



Sample Area of Concentration Curriculum: “Computational Cognitive Science and Behavioral Data Analytics”

| College | Dept | Course | Title |
|----------|--------------|-------------|--|
| UAB | NEUROBIOLOGY | 355 | Neuroscience II: Mechanisms of Synaptic Transmission |
| Brooklyn | PSYCH | 3530 | Advanced Cognitive Psychology |
| Brooklyn | PSYCH | 3580 | Artificial Intelligence and Philosophy |
| Brooklyn | PSYCH | 7791G | Independent Reading: Human Memory |
| Brooklyn | PSYCH | 5001 | Independent Research Course |
| Queens | DATA | 306 | Data Analysis and Modeling |
| Queens | DATA | 333 | Data Management, Processing and Visualization |
| Baruch | PSYCH | 3001 | Research Methods in Psychology |
| Hunter | GTECH | 38520/78520 | Data Analysis and Visualization with R |

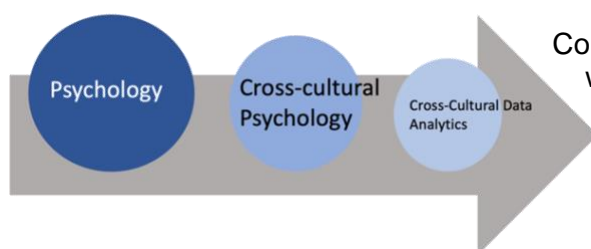
Sample Conceptual Approaches

Students create an overarching concept that drives their Area of Concentration curriculum plan. For students who are new to the idea of a self-designed major, one way to help them consider potential areas of study is to consider one of three approaches to their interests:

- Specializing within a discipline, or in a multidisciplinary area
- Solving a problem using an interdisciplinary approach
- Career-specific learning

Students can specialize, either within a discipline, or using multiple disciplines. See examples on the CUNY BA webpage. The concentration they created needs to be substantially different from majors available to them at the home campus.

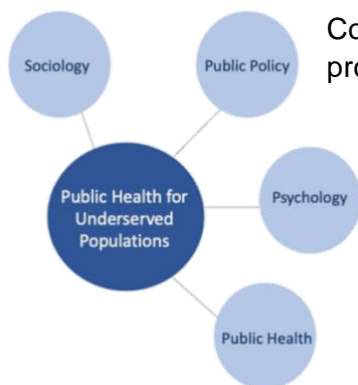
SPECIALIZE



Concentrations of students who specialized, either within a discipline, or using multiple disciplines:

- 20th Century African American Literature
- Computational Astrophysics
- Animal Behavior
- Imperial History and Postcolonial Studies

PROBLEM-SOLVE



Concentrations of students who created a concentration around a problem or question using multiple disciplines:

- Restorative justice
- Public Health for Underserved Populations
- Political behavior and analysis
- Equity in the arts
- Wildlife conservation

SKILL or CAREER FOCUS

Concentrations of students who created a concentration around a problem or question using multiple disciplines:

- Strategic project management
- Financial technology
- Dynamic web design
- Documentary film production
- Game design
- Health and exercise science
- Museum studies



Area of Concentration (AoC) Requirements

The Concentration should prepare the student for graduate study or for professional work in their chosen field.

Single Concentration

- For a single Concentration, the AoC must include a minimum of **8 courses and 24 credits**.

Dual Concentration

- For dual Concentrations, each AoC must include a minimum of **6 courses and 18 credits**.
- Both the course and credit minimums must be met, and mentors can require more than the minimum.
- If, in the faculty mentor's judgment, the minimum requirements of CUNY BA will not give the student a solid grounding in the discipline, they should require the student to complete more coursework.

| Area(s) of Concentration | | |
|---|--------|----------------------------------|
| | Single | Dual |
| Minimum Courses (intermediate & advanced) | 8 | 6 |
| Minimum Credits | 24 | 18 |
| Maximum internship or independent study (max 6 credits) | 2 | 2 (one each concentration) |

Transfer Credits in the Area of Concentration

A maximum of 50% of AoC courses can be applied if taken outside of CUNY.

Complete All Courses Required?

On the AoC Form, when listing more than minimum 8 courses (or 6 courses in the case of a dual AoC), there is a box for the mentor to indicate whether the student must complete all courses listed. If certain courses are essential to the plan of study, the mentor may also require the student to complete those courses. In the case where departmental course offerings are limited, it is recommended to list more than the minimum number of courses required to give the student options when courses aren't offered.

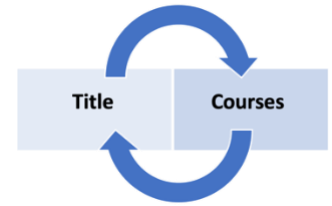


Prerequisites are Required

- Students **must complete prerequisite courses**, unless they receive a departmental waiver. While these lower-level courses aren't part of their AoCs, they fulfill electives.
 - Which courses qualify as intermediate and upper level can vary across disciplines, but, generally, a course is typically considered intermediate if it has a prerequisite in the same discipline.

Appropriate Title

- The title of the AoC should be appropriate and accurately reflect the chosen courses. (Likewise, the courses should likewise precisely align with the AoC title.)
 - For example, if the student has created a business major with one international business course, the title should not be “International Business,” since a typical business major might have one such course.
 - The plan of study needs to have sufficient courses in the specialty area to be included in the title.
- If the title is the same as a traditional major (for example, Sociology or Mathematics, not offered at the student’s home campus), use your expertise to ensure that important courses are included, or help the student shape the major to be interdisciplinary or specialized.



Course Levels

- Each course should be from a **department** that offers a bachelor’s-level (or higher) program in a senior college. Courses from departments leading only to an associate’s degree cannot be applied to the concentration.
- Each course should be at an **intermediate or advanced level** (generally these have at least one prerequisite in the same discipline, though other criteria may apply). Introductory courses cannot be applied to the concentration but will be used to fulfill any elective requirements.
- **Graduate-level courses** can be included if the faculty mentor believes the student is adequately prepared. Students are responsible for obtaining any necessary permissions from the faculty and department offering the courses.
- **Independent studies or internships** can be included (up to two in a single concentration or one in each of a dual concentration for a maximum total of 6 credits). If there is an academic reason to include more than two, this should be justified to the CUNY BA Academic Director. If part of the justification for the title relies on independent study, internships, or a thesis, CUNY BA will ask students for a description of the work.

GPA and Grading Requirements

- Students must maintain at least a 2.50 average in each of their concentrations, with a minimum grade of ‘C-’ or better in all AoC courses.
- Each course must be taken for a letter grade (not Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit, unless a particular course is only offered P/F or CR/NC and except for CUNY courses where ‘CR’ was earned in Spring or Fall 2020).
- Credits by examination, life experience credits, and courses taken on a Pass/Fail basis cannot be applied to the AoCs.

Two Components of an Area of Concentration Proposal

As part of the CUNY BA application, students submit a preliminary proposed Area of Concentration. Upon admission to the program, students find a Faculty Mentor and formalize their Area of Concentration courses in a form, along with a Concentration Narrative:

- (1) [AoC Form](#) – lists courses and title of planned concentration
- (2) [AoC Narrative](#) -- student reflects on their academic and professional goals, explaining the reasoning behind their concentration(s) and for selection of specific courses. Students who have a dual concentration complete one integrated narrative explaining both.

Students are encouraged to work with their faculty mentor to complete the documents and submit them **before the end of their first semester** in the program. Once submitted, the CUNY BA Academic Director will review and provide feedback to the student if any changes are needed. You will be notified via email when the Concentration is approved.

AoC form due: by end of first semester in CUNY BA

Concentration Planning Worksheet

Students are encouraged to use a planning worksheet (in the Appendix), to plan for courses, which helps track course descriptions, prerequisites, and college catalogue entries. (Sample below.)

| Campus | Course number | Course Title | Course Description from Catalog (cut and paste), include prereqs* | Course Description link | Intermed or Advanced level? | Rationale for including this course |
|--------|---------------|--------------|---|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | | | | Y/N | |

AoC Planning Worksheet: tool for student drafting and tracking, available on website

Residency in CUNY BA

At least 50% of the minimum required credits for the Area of Concentration AoC must be completed in residence. A minimum of 30 credits of coursework in CUNY must be completed as a CUNY BA student.

50%

The Area of Concentration Form(s)

The student submits an [AoC Form](#) for each Concentration to formalize their requirements. Students who have two faculty mentors for a single AoC should complete a separate AoC Form for each, so that complete contact information of the faculty mentors are included.

CUNY BACCALAUREATE FOR UNIQUE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AREA OF CONCENTRATION (AOC)

This form is an agreement among students, faculty mentors, and the Academic Director. Revised versions may be submitted if changes are needed.

TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT

If you have two AOCs, please use a separate form for each. If you have two faculty mentors for one AOC, please have each fill out a separate form.

Name _____ EMPLID _____
Email _____
Term Admitted _____

☐ This is a revised AOC form
☐ This is one of two AOCs

TO BE COMPLETED BY FACULTY MENTOR

I AM A FULL-TIME FACULTY MEMBER at a CUNY college, and I agree to serve as the faculty mentor for this student.

Name _____
Email _____
College _____ Department _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT AND FACULTY MENTOR

An Area of Concentration (AOC) is meant to be a unique endeavor. Students and faculty mentors collaborate to develop an AOC that aligns with the student's academic and professional goals. AOCs are often interdisciplinary in nature, containing courses offered through different departments and CUNY colleges. Below are points to help guide the development of the AOC. Changes to the AOC may be requested by the CUNY Baccalaureate program to ensure it conforms to program policies. CUNY Baccalaureate Academic Advisors can assist with questions about AOC requirements.

Please use the checklist as a guide to ensure base requirements are met:

- ☐ AOC title is appropriate and reflects the chosen courses; courses likewise align with the title.
- ☐ Courses form a coherent plan of study that maintains an adequate level of academic rigor for an undergraduate degree area.
- ☐ Courses are at an *intermediate or advanced* level (usually having at least one pre-req. in the same discipline, though other criteria may apply).
- ☐ Each course is at a senior college in a department that grants a bachelor's degree (courses leading only to an associate's cannot be applied).
- ☐ Both the course and credit minimums are met (note that more courses may be listed, and faculty may require more than the minimum):
For a student with *one* AOC (single AOC): This AOC includes a minimum of 8 courses *and* 24 credits.
For a student with *two* AOCs (dual AOC): This AOC includes a minimum of 6 courses *and* 18 credits.

Please also note that:

- At least 50% of any AOC must be completed in CUNY as a CUNY Baccalaureate student.
- Courses must be completed for a letter grade (C- or better; except for CUNY courses where CR was earned in Spring or Fall 2020).
- Independent studies or internships can be included (up to two in a single AOC or one in each of a dual AOC; maximum total 6 credits).
- Graduate-level courses can be included if the faculty mentor believes the student is adequately prepared. Students are responsible for obtaining any necessary permissions from the faculty and department offering the courses and cannot have any unresolved grades.
- For all AOCs in Psychology, Experimental Psychology must be included.

List Area of Concentration (AOC) courses completed, in progress, and to be taken. For completed courses, indicate semester taken and grade earned. For an independent study, indicate topic (if known). For an internship, indicate subject/field and location (if known).

Area of Concentration (AOC) Title: _____

| College | Course | Course Title | Credits/Term/Grade | OFFICE USE |
|--------------|-----------|-------------------|---------------------|--|
| Eg: Brooklyn | PSYC 2100 | Social Psychology | 3 / Spring 2019 / A | PTE GLC BS |
| 1. | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |

MENTOR: ☐ Check here if student must complete *all* courses listed

Student and Faculty Mentor: We agree to the AOC title and courses listed above. We have also reviewed the AOC narrative (if the AOC is being submitted for the first time).

Student's Signature Date

Faculty Mentor's Signature Date

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

☐ Approved
☐ Not Approved

Academic Director's Signature Date

Contact
information

Checklist
of relevant policies
for your review

Title (will appear
on transcript)

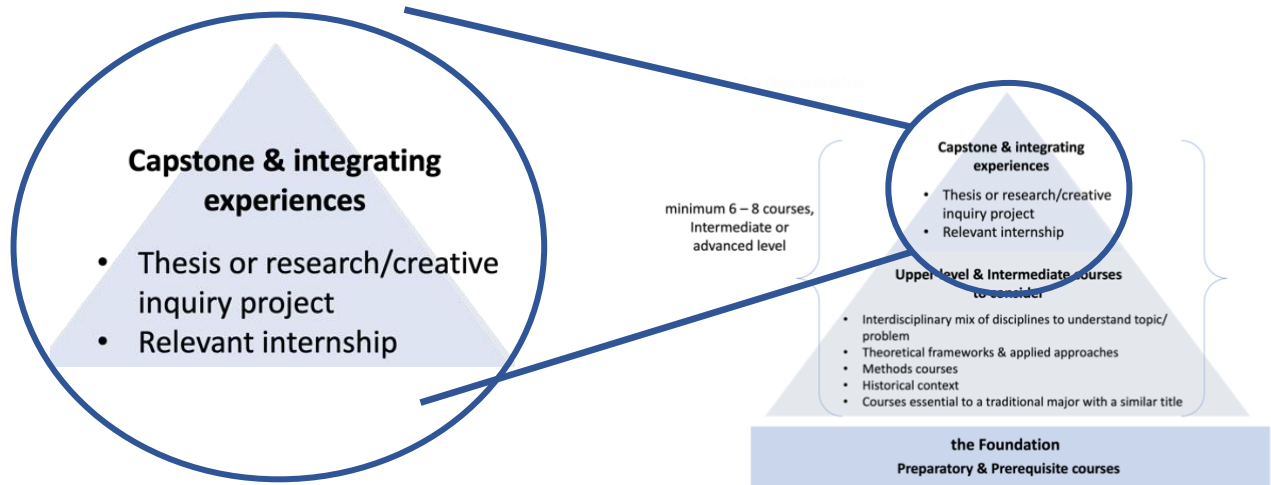
Course plan
(tracked internally)

Box to check if all
courses required

Signatures

Importance of a Capstone, Thesis or Integrating Project

Please help your students incorporate integrating courses or experiences, such as a thesis, independent study, or appropriate capstones from relevant disciplines. For all concentrations in Psychology, Experimental Psychology must be included.



4 Admission and Academic Standards

Admission Review

Prospective students should consider attending a CUNY BA information session. For the session schedule visit cunyba.cuny.edu or contact the CUNY BA office at 212.817.8220.

Eligibility

CUNY BA maintains high academic standards. To be eligible for admission, students must be:

- matriculated at a CUNY college,
- have passed (or been exempted from) all the required CUNY entrance exams,
- and have earned at least 12 credits with a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 2.80 overall (the average GPA upon admission is above 3.30).

Students must also have a valid academic reason for applying, such as a desire to complete an interdisciplinary or otherwise unique Area of Concentration (AoC), or to complete an area of specialization not available at a CUNY college. These are the minimum criteria only and do not guarantee admission to the program.

Average GPA at
Admission

3.3

How Students Apply

Prospective students apply online with:

- a concise essay (statement of academic and professional purpose) and
- a draft of their Area of Concentration
- official transcripts of all previous college work.

Applicants not yet matriculated in CUNY must also apply for admission to a CUNY college (referred to as the Home College, described later in this section). Although applications are continuously reviewed, students are encouraged to apply as early as possible before the start of the semester in which they intend to begin in the program. For further details about applying to CUNY BA visit our [website](#).

After Admission

When all documents have been evaluated, qualified applicants are invited for the next steps, to:

- Complete an admission appointment with the CUNY BA advisor who will be assigned to them for an explanation of the transfer credits accepted and the remaining credits to meet requirements for a degree.
- Complete an online, asynchronous 10-minute required module about CUNY BA and
- Attend a live New Student Orientation to meet staff, faculty and other students and receive important information.

Home College

CUNY BA students must be matriculated at one of the CUNY colleges. Like a “dual citizen”, the student has rights and responsibilities to both the home campus and CUNY BA. The home college is where:

- the student pays all tuition and fees,
- registers for classes, and
- handles all nonacademic matters, such as financial aid and obtaining a college ID card.

The student’s college of matriculation receives the tuition, fees and headcount; the college(s) the student attends receives the Full Time Enrollment credit. The student’s first senior college of matriculation receives the graduation credit. Students graduate with a degree from CUNY BA.

Transfer Students

Most students matriculate into CUNY BA from within CUNY; however, some students apply from outside of the CUNY system. All students must be matriculated (or become matriculated before entry into CUNY BA) in a CUNY college.

Applying from a CUNY Community College

A community college may be the home college until a student has earned an **associate's degree** or accumulated **68 credits**, whichever comes first. At that point, the student must officially transfer to a senior college, which becomes the new home college.

Degree Contract

Upon admission to the program, CUNY BA students receive a Degree Contract that they review with their CUNY BA Academic Advisor which details:

- transfer courses and credits being accepted by the program,
- Estimated remaining degree requirements, and
- any additional documents required of the student (e.g., official transcripts or AP scores)

Students sign the degree contract to verify that they understand and accept the requirements of the program that must be satisfied in order for their degree to be conferred. The CUNY BA staff ensures that students satisfy the program's degree requirements, including completion of the courses approved by the faculty mentors for the AoC.

Degrees Conferred: B.A. or B.S.

CUNY Baccalaureate degrees are awarded by The City University of New York. The program is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and by the New York State Education Department. Students can earn a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) or a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree through CUNY Baccalaureate.

Credit Requirements

Students can earn either a B.S. or a B.A. degree when they graduate from the program.

- For the B.S., students complete a minimum of 60 credits in the liberal arts and sciences
- For the B.A., students complete at least 90 credits in the liberal arts
 - Within those credits, students must satisfy the CUNY Pathways curriculum.
 - Up to 30 credits can be earned through non-collegiate work (further details about non-collegiate work, including credit for prior learning, are provided later in this section).

Students may complete one or two AoCs (similar to a single or double major).

Classroom Credits

At least 90 credits of the 120 minimum required for the degree must be earned in regular course work (as differentiated from internships and life experience credits).

Credit Load/Credit Limits

Students may not register for more than 18 credits per semester (12 credits in the summer) unless they obtain prior written permission from the CUNY BA Academic Director. Approval is given only to students who have no outstanding grades (such as INC) and who consistently deliver high-quality work.

Pass/Fail Option

Students may take up to 12 credits on a Pass/Fail basis, provided that the course is not part of the area of concentration and that the department giving the course offers this option.

Degree Components (minimum 120 credits)

Pathways General Education

- Common Core (12 cr)
- Flex Core (18 cr)
- College Option (6-12 cr)

Area(s) of Concentration (AoC)

- 8 courses (single); 6 courses each (dual)
- Intermediate & advanced courses

Liberal Arts Requirements

from Pathways, AoC courses, and electives:

- BA (90 cr min)
- BS (60 cr min)

Graduate Courses for Undergraduate Credit

With permission from the appropriate graduate departments and CUNY BA's Academic Director, students may take graduate courses for undergraduate credit at:

- CUNY senior colleges
- School of Professional Studies
- School of Labor and Urban Studies
- School of Public Health
- School of Journalism
- The Graduate Center

To be eligible for graduate courses, students must:

- have no pending grades
- have an approved area of concentration form on file with the CUNY BA office
- have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 and consistently deliver high-quality work

To graduate, students must not have any incomplete grades ('INC').

Community College Credits

No more than 68 community college credits are accepted toward the CUNY BA degree.

Credit for Prior Learning

Students may earn up to 30 credits for non-collegiate work such as courses completed through the National Program on Non-collegiate Sponsored Instruction (NPONSI; administered by The University of the State of New York), the American Council on Education (ACE), and credit by examination (e.g., CLEP). Non-collegiate credits do not apply toward CUNY BA's 30-credit residency requirement. Up to 15 of the 30 non-collegiate credits may be awarded for prior experiential learning. See the CUNY BA webpage on Credit for Prior Learning.

Remedial and English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) Credits

No credits earned in remedial or ESL courses apply toward the degree, though such courses do appear on the student's transcript if they were taken in CUNY.

Repeating Courses

CUNY BA follows the University policy on 'F' grades which states that effective fall 1990, students may re-take up to 16 credits of 'F' earned in courses taken in CUNY after September 1984. The course (same number and title) must be repeated at the college where it was originally taken. The student must earn a 'C' or better in the repeated course to have only the second grade count in the index, although both courses will continue to appear on the transcript.

If a student repeats a course for which *any* passing grade has been received (i.e., 'D-' or better), only the first passing grade will be counted toward the CUNY BA degree. The second course and grade will appear on the transcript, but will not be counted in the GPA.

Residency and Credit for Prior Learning

A minimum of 30 CUNY classroom credits must be completed as a CUNY BA student. Credits

for Prior Learning and credits by examination are not counted toward residency. At least one-half (50%) of Area of Concentration courses must be taken while a CUNY BA student.

Good Standing in CUNY BA

Students are reviewed for good standing at the end of each fall and spring semester (and potentially summer and winter sessions) for review of academic progress. The goal of this process is to support student success. Advisors reach out to students about items of concern, such as incomplete grades, CUNY BA deadlines to file an AoC or for an audit, etc. Under the Board of Trustees' policy, all CUNY students are required to make progress toward their degree. The CUNY BA Academic Director is responsible for certifying that CUNY BA students are in compliance with this policy. Students may be dismissed from the program for:

- Poor academic performance;
- Excessive withdrawals or incomplete grades;
- Failure to make progress toward the degree;
- Persistent failure to observe program regulations, including failure to submit an Area of Concentration (AoC) form on time.

“Under Academic Review” Status (formerly Academic Probation)

Students admitted to the program with overall GPAs of 2.80 or higher (that is, not admitted “provisionally”) whose cumulative grade point average overall or in the AoC(s) drops below the program's minimum requirements (2.50) are placed on “Under Academic Review” status.

Academic Dismissal

Students on review who are unable to improve their academic performance to at least a cumulative 2.50 during the following semester are subject to dismissal from CUNY BA.

Provisional Acceptance

Students admitted to the program provisionally (with cumulative GPAs below 2.80) will be subject to academic dismissal immediately following any term in which their semester GPA fall below 2.50 or immediately following any term in which they receive any incomplete grades (unless the student experienced extenuating circumstances for which they received an incomplete grade and can provide supporting documentation).

Students admitted under the regular admissions policy who do not maintain the minimum cumulative grade point averages required by the program, or who consistently fail to observe other program or CUNY requirements or regulations, are subject to dismissal. Dismissal is from the CUNY BA program and not the student's home campus.

Grade Point Average

Once admitted to the program, students must maintain at least a 2.50 GPA overall and a 2.50 average in their AoCs for all coursework done in CUNY.

5 Student Opportunities and Resources

Beyond the Classroom – the “Passport to Opportunity” co-curriculum

CUNY BA students are encouraged to engage in the enormous range of opportunities offered within and beyond CUNY, complementing their classroom experiences with high-impact learning experiences (“bang for the buck” educational activities), such as research, internships, independent study, study abroad, and capstone seminars.

While academic engagement is at the core, to build cultural and professional capital, CUNY BA supports high-impact activities with advisement and exclusive grants, such as up to \$3,000 for full semester (fall or spring) study abroad. We encourage faculty mentors to share additional opportunities they come across through professional listservs, academic society websites, and their departments.



Academic Engagement: create own degree, reflect, connect courses and experiences; challenge yourself; find special courses; create portfolio



Study or work abroad: semester or winter/summer); Scholarships and Fellowships (including post-grad)



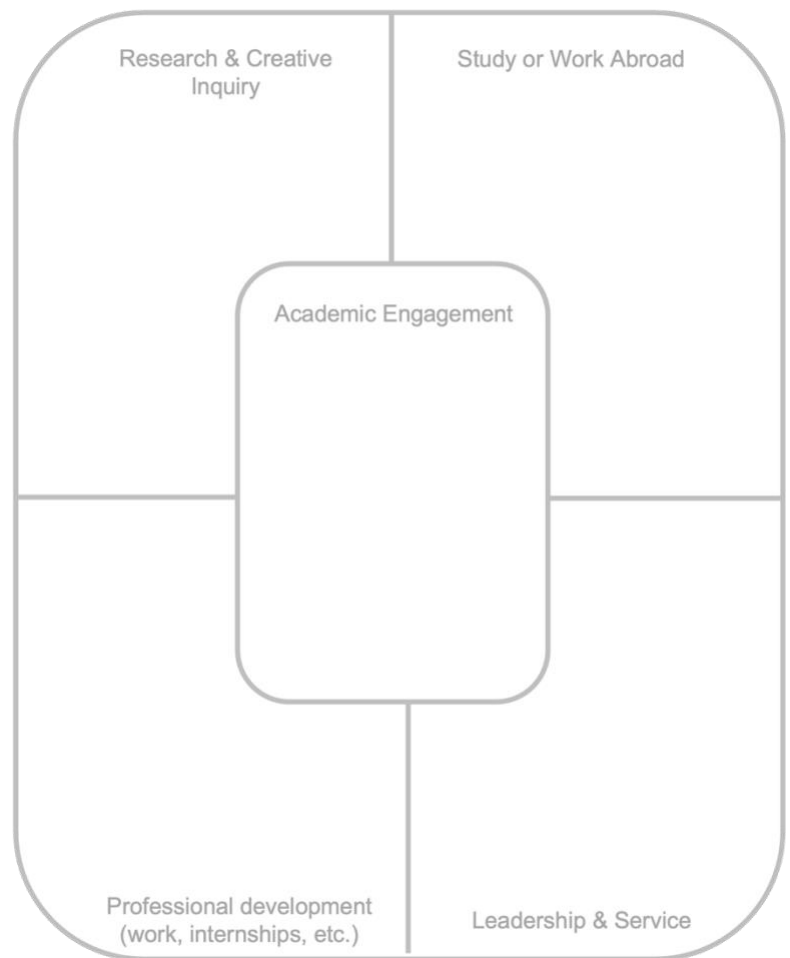
Research: Write a thesis; work in lab; create culminating project



Leadership & service: Volunteer in clubs and organizations



Professional development: Work, internships, skills workshops



The Passport to Opportunity: Helping Students Build Academic, Cultural, and Professional Capital

Funding Opportunities

There are a number of funding opportunities to which CUNY BA students may apply, including those exclusive to CUNY BA students and nationally competitive awards. For example:

- Barbara Price Opportunity Fund -- experiential learning grants for study abroad, research, and unpaid internships, only for CUNY BA students
- Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship
- Critical Language Scholarship
- Melon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship
- Truman and Marshall Scholarships
- The Point Foundation Scholarship
- Women's Forum Education Fund Scholarship
- Fulbright Study/Research and English Teaching Assistantship Awards

Exclusive Scholarship Funds

\$340K+

Annually

CUNY BA students have been awarded the Truman Scholarship, Marshall Scholarship, National Science Foundation Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, and more. Faculty mentors should encourage their students to consider applying for any funding for which they may be eligible. For additional information, please visit the [scholarships](#) section of the Opportunities page on the CUNY BA website.

Thomas W. Smith Academic Fellowship for CUNY BA Students

The Thomas W. Smith Academic Fellowship is made possible by the generosity of Mr. Thomas W. Smith. Awards of \$4,000 per semester are made to full-time students, prorated for part-time students. Eligible students, once receiving the award, receive it every term until they complete their minimum degree requirements, which typically means around 120 credits (subject to the availability of funds and maintenance of good academic standing.) CUNY BA determines funding eligibility beyond 120 credits.

As of Fall 2024, almost **1,110 students** have been named Smith Academic Fellows since the inception of the awards in 1994. This Fellowship is competitive; award decisions are based primarily on academic performance, the applicant's essay, and a letter of recommendation, typically from the Faculty Mentor. Applications are reviewed by a scholarships sub-committee of the University Committee on CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies.

Other CUNY BA Scholarships

Other scholarships have also been established for CUNY BA students, including major-specific awards:

- Barbara Price Opportunity Fund, for Study Abroad, Research, and Unpaid Internship
- Barbara Price Scholarship
- Memorial Scholarship for Students in Social Work, Education, Health or Human Services
- Anne Duncan Somsen Memorial Scholarship
- Barbara Sproul Scholarship
- B. Diane Gibson Memorial Scholarship

For graduating students, the CUNY BA Alumni Fund supports outstanding graduates continuing their studies in graduate programs. Between 3-5 awards are presented at commencement.

6 CUNY BA Team

Contact Us

CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies

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CUNY BA Doctoral Fellows

fellows@cunyba.cuny.edu

The [CUNY BA Doctoral Fellows](#) program selects exceptional doctoral students from the Graduate Center, CUNY to support the CUNY BA. Their responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Organizing programming to build community among students, faculty, staff, and alumnx
- Creating and facilitating academic and professional development workshops for students and alumni
- Producing and circulating regular communications and announcements for the CUNY BA community, including newsletter, flyers, and social media
- Enhance student leadership and peer mentorship opportunities, including the Student Leadership Council and peer mentor program
- Assisting new student recruitment

Collecting data to track the evolving needs of
CUNY BA students and faculty

Bard Prison Initiative (BPI) Liaison to CUNY BA

Nikko Vaughn, Bard Associate Director of Ed. Programs, Persistence, & Student Success
nvaughn@bard.edu

Campus Coordinators and Registrar Contacts

Each undergraduate campus has a designated [CUNY BA Coordinator](#) who serves as a link between the program's staff and the home campus. On some campuses, that role is filled by a faculty member, and on others it is filled by an administrator. The Coordinators provide information to students, publicize the program, and help solve problems.

The Registrar's office at each home campus also has at least one [contact person](#) to assist CUNY BA students with registration procedures. CUNY BA Campus Coordinators and Registrar Contacts are available as a resource to CUNY BA students and their faculty mentors.

Faculty Governance: University Committee on the CUNY BA Program

The [University Committee](#) on the CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies program is the governing body of the program and is composed of faculty, students, and administrators from across the University. The entire Committee advises the Academic Director on the administration, coordination, and development of the program, and its faculty members officially recommend the awarding of degrees to the CUNY Board of Trustees. This committee is responsible for approving, auditing, and certifying the academic policies and procedures governing CUNY BA and serves as an appeal body for programmatic matters, policies, and procedures.

The membership of the Committee numbers at least fourteen, not including two alternates:

- Six faculty and two alternates from different disciplines chosen by the University Faculty Senate for staggered three-year terms
- Five CUNY BA students nominated by the Academic Director for one-year terms
- The Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (or his/her designee), ex-officio
- The President of The Graduate Center (or his/her designee), ex-officio
- A CUNY college president chosen by the Council of Presidents for a one-year term (or his/her designee)

Each academic year, the University Committee elects a chairperson from among the Committee's faculty members. Faculty who are interested in serving on this committee should contact the CUNY BA Academic Director.

7 Scholarly Work on Individualized Majors

Born out of a call for social justice and curricular innovation of the 1960's, "create your own" (individualized) major programs offer students access to opportunities not typically available until graduate school (Wonham & Derby-Talbot, 2022). Combining courses from multiple disciplines allows learners to create future-forward educations, preparing for careers that don't exist yet. At the 2023 CUNY AI conference, Deloitte Consulting presenters predicted that 70% of jobs for current college students don't yet exist.

In the recent inventory of interdisciplinary and individualized programs, the first comprehensive survey of its kind, of 357 US programs at 310 unique colleges were surveyed. Over half of responding programs were large, with 100 students or more, and one-third had 200 or more (Frana, Chamberlin & Wiederock, 2023). The survey demonstrated that individualized programs often embed support for high-impact learning activities in their programs, such as study abroad, research and creative inquiry, portfolios (Kuh, 2018); and "high touch" advisement (Eagan, 2015). Responding programs indicated that they incorporated (in order of frequency):

- Research (37% of programs)
- Service learning (22%)
- Creative projects (21%)
- Student leadership (16%) and
- Global study (13%) (Frana, Chamberlin & Wiederock, 2023)

Despite the fact that the first individualized programs were created over 50 years ago and, according to the College Board, 44% of US four-year colleges offer individualized programs (Wonham & Derby-Talbot, 2023), little scholarly research explores the learning process of these students. Despite the lack of comprehensive research, below are a selection of relevant articles.

Relevant Literature

Allemand, K. (2013, June). "Just tell me what classes to take": How to advise students in a non-prescriptive major. *Academic Advising Today*, 36(2). Retrieved from <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Just-Tell-Me-What-Classes-To-Take-How-to-Advise-Students-in-a-Non-Prescriptive-Major.aspx>

Baxter-Magolda, M. B. (1999). *Creating Contexts for Learning and Self-Authorship: Constructive Developmental Pedagogy*. Vanderbilt University Press.

Boix-Mansilla, V. (2010). Learning to Synthesize: The Development of Interdisciplinary Understanding. In R. Frodeman, J. T. Klein, & C. Mitcham (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* (pp. 288-306). Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Reference ; BD255 .O94 2010]

Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences, revised and updated: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. Jossey-Bass.

Frana, P., Chamberlin, M, Wiederock, A. (2023, March 15-17). *A first Census of Individualized Postsecondary Programs in the United States*, IMP Network 2023 Conference, New York, NY, United States. <https://cunyba.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/imp2023/First-Census-of-IMPs-IMP-Network-Conference-2023-.pdf>

Egan, Kevin D. "Empowerment through Advising: Academic Advising in Individualized Major Programs." *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. Volume 16 (2014). Retrieved from: <http://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2014/07/empowerment-through-advising/>

Egan, Kevin. "Academic Advising in Individualized Major Programs: Promoting the Three I's of General Education." *Journal of General Education* 64, no. 2 (2015): 75–89.

Ferren, Ann S., and Chad B. Anderson. "Integrative Learning: Making Liberal Education Purposeful, Personal, and Practical." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 2016, no. 145 (March 1, 2016): 33–40. doi:10.1002/tl.20172.

Haynes, Carolyn, and Jeannie Brown Leonard. "From Surprise Parties to Mapmaking: Undergraduate Journeys toward Interdisciplinary Understanding." *The Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 81, no. 5, 2010, pp. 645–66. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40835722>. Accessed 18 Jan. 2024.

Klein, J. T., & Newell, W. H. (1996). *Advancing Interdisciplinary Studies*. In J. G. Gaff, J. L. Ratcliff, & Associates (Eds.), *Handbook of the undergraduate curriculum. A Comprehensive Guide to Purposes, Structures, Practices, and Change* (pp. 393-415). Jossey- Bass.

Kuh, George D., "High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter." AAC&U.

Pollauf, Kim and Reising, Matt; "Developing Self-Authorship in IMP: A Think Tank Round Table". March 17, 2023, presentation in https://cunyba.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/THURSDAY_Breakout-Room1_Developing-Self-Authorship-in-IMP-A-Think-Tank-Roundtable_Pollauf-and-Reising.pptx.pdf

Pilling-Cormick, J., & Garrison, D. R. (2013). Self-directed and self-regulated learning: Conceptual links. *Canadian Journal of University Continuing Education*, 33(2). <https://doi.org/10.21225/d5s01m>

Tur, G., Castañeda, L., Torres-Kompen, R., & Carpenter, J. P. (2022). A literature review on self-regulated learning and Personal Learning Environments: Features of a close relationship. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2022.2121726>

Wonham, M. & Derby-Talbot, R. (2023) Questions instead of majors: Implementing a self-authored concentration program. *Studies in Higher Education* (48.4), 582-94.

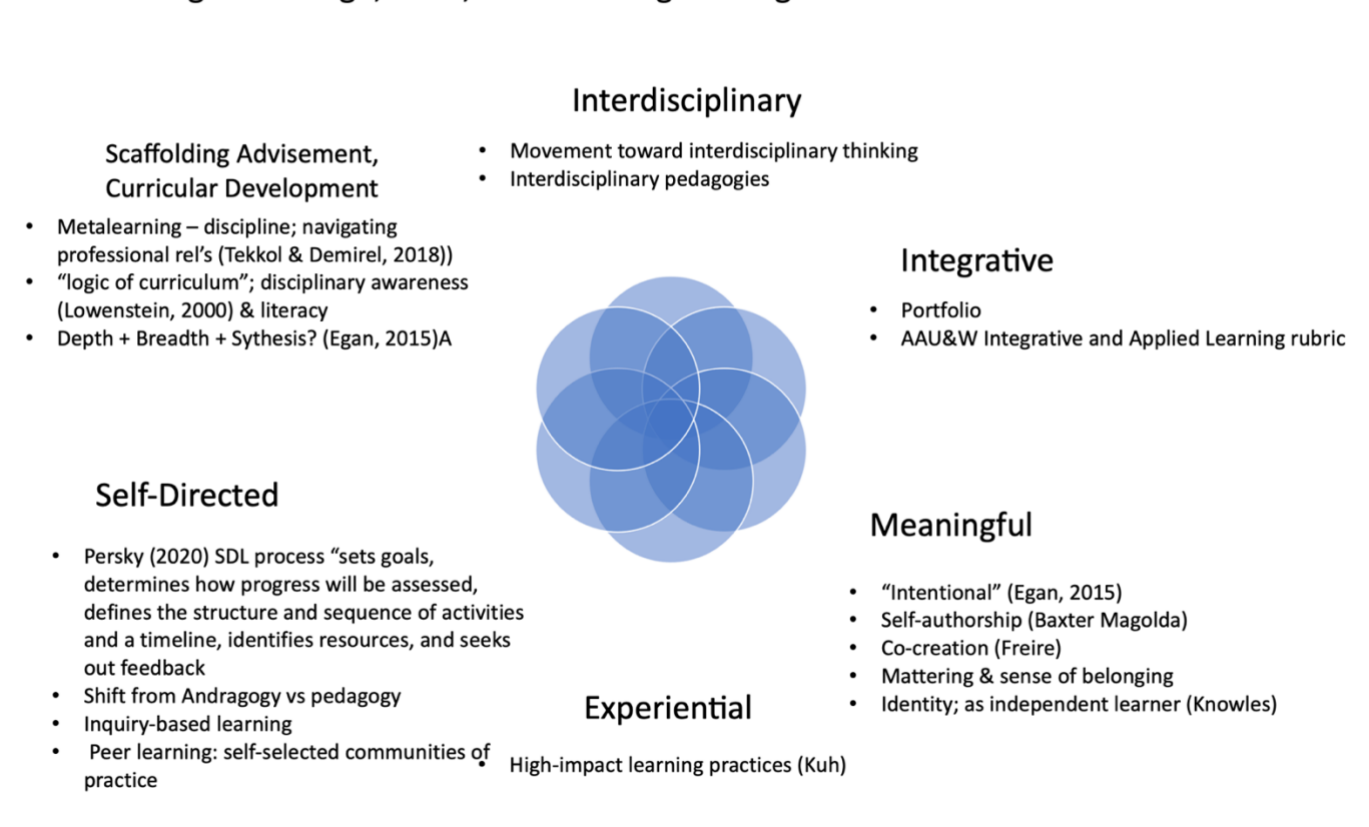
How Do We Connect these Literatures?

The CUNY BA hopes to study student learning processes in order to scaffold thoughtful degree-design and reflection, intentionally building knowledge, skills, and meaning-making. Through this study, the program hopes to better understand student and alumna reports of meta-learning from building their own major; the practical and intellectual work of students forging a unique major is an important aspect of designing an individualized degree.

We continue to refine assignments to help students plan and reflect on their degree design. For example, in the college narrative assignment, students outline academic and professional goals and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses as learners. This helps them form a scholarly identity, “narrating selfhood”. Below is a working model mapping relevant literatures to the degree-design process which shapes our aspirational approach.

Learning in Individualized Majors:

Scaffolding knowledge, skills, and meaning-making to increase access

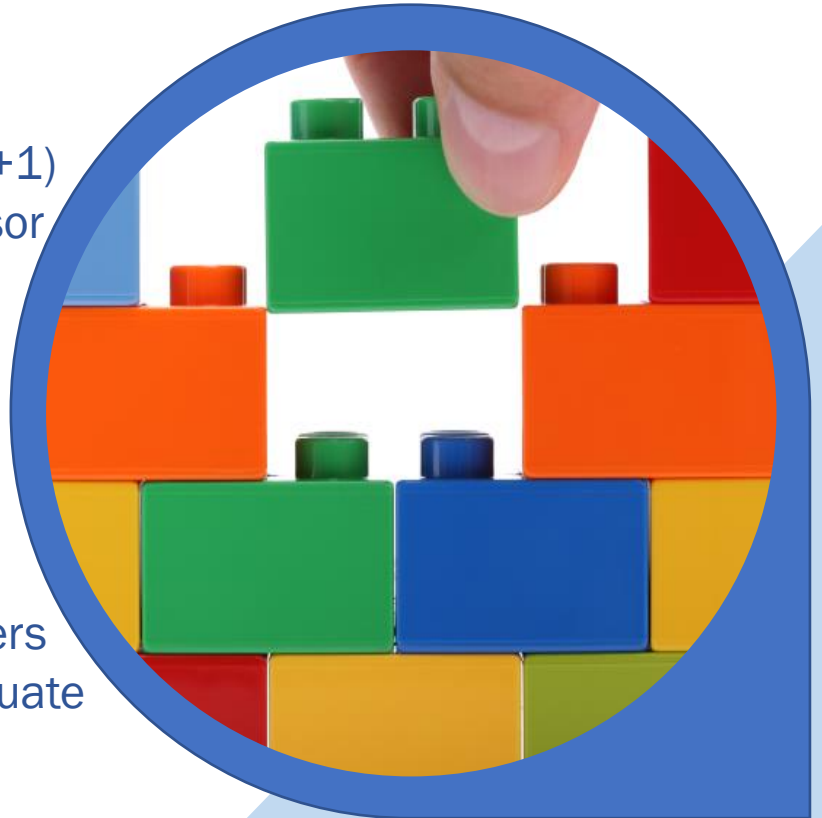


The Interdisciplinary and Individualized Studies Network

CUNY BA takes an active leadership role in the national organization, IMPNetwork.org, and hosted the 2023 annual national conference for faculty, staff and students. The IMP Network webpage features a bibliography, resources, and a list of partner programs.

DESIGN YOUR OWN DEGREE

- Create your own area of study
- Combine multiple fields
- Take graduate courses (Two 4+1)
- Benefit from an assigned advisor
- Apply for special scholarships
- Be unique (CUNique!)
- Follow your own interests
- Work with a faculty mentor
- Choose a BA or BS degree
- Get creative!
- Make the most of all CUNY offers
- Stand out to employers & graduate schools
- Flexibility



INFO SESSIONS
Every 3 weeks

SAMPLE FIELDS OF STUDY

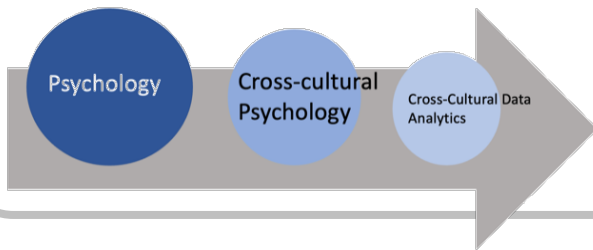
- Social justice (e.g. The Black Freedom Movement)
- Science (e.g. Bioinformatics)
- Technology (e.g. Cybersecurity)
- Arts (e.g. Documentary Film Production)
- Environmental studies (e.g. Wildlife Conservation)

More examples on our website!

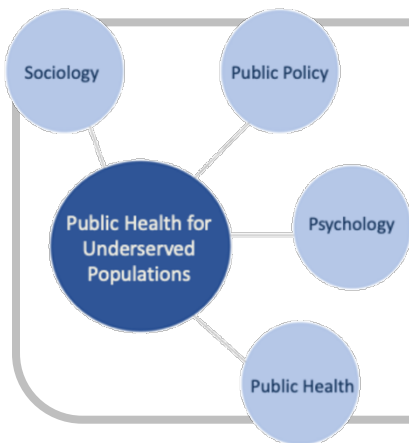
HOW TO DESIGN YOUR PERSONALIZED DEGREE

Do you have unique interests? Want to keep up with a rapidly changing world? At CUNY, you can design your own major! You can join the CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique & Interdisciplinary Studies from any Senior College in CUNY. For example, to design your degree, you could:

SPECIALIZE



- 20th century African American Literature
- Computational astrophysics
- Animal behavior
- Imperial history & postcolonial studies



PROBLEM SOLVE

- Restorative justice
- Public Health for Underserved Populations
- Political behavior and analysis
- Equity in the arts
- Wildlife conservation

OR

CAREER FOCUS



- Strategic project management
- Financial technology
- Dynamic web design
- Documentary film production
- Game design
- Health and exercise science
- Museum studies

ELIGIBILITY

- Enroll at a CUNY Senior College
- Once you have 12 credits (including AP, IB, and College Now), you can apply
- and a cumulative GPA of 2.8

HOW TO APPLY

For the online application, you will need:

- Educational history (e.g. college credits)
- A personal statement (a brief essay on your goals and why you want to create your own major)
- An initial proposal planning for courses you would take, for one or two “Areas of Concentration”
 - Single concentration: 8 courses/24 credits
 - Dual concentration: 6 courses/18 credits each

OTHER EXAMPLES



TECHNOLOGY

Cybersecurity
Game design
UX/UI



BUSINESS

Entrepreneurship
Industry-specific areas



SOCIAL JUSTICE

Race, class, gender,
abilities studies
Issue-based area



ARTS

Museum studies
Artivism



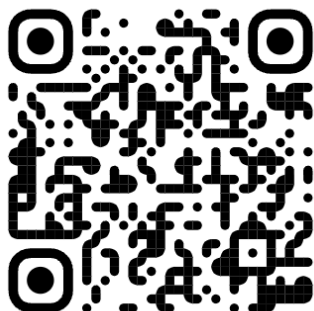
SCIENCES

Neurobiology
Sustainability
Public Health



STORYTELLING

Digital narratives
Entrepreneurial
storytelling



^See instructions and
link to application

SAMPLE DUAL CONCENTRATION 1: MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

| | | | |
|---|------------------|------------|---|
| 1 | City College | ANTH 25500 | Anthropology of Health and Healing |
| 2 | City College | ANTH 20300 | Human Origins |
| 3 | City College | ANTH 29500 | Bio-Cultural Anthropology |
| 4 | City College | ANTH 32100 | Health Issues and Alternatives |
| 5 | City College | ANTH 31964 | Decolonizing Education |
| 6 | Brooklyn College | HNSC 4152 | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health |

2: GENDER STUDIES

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-----------|--|
| 1 | Macaulay Honors College | MHC 320 | Gender, Sex, and Bioethics |
| 2 | City College | WS 10000 | Women's Gender Roles in Contemporary Society |
| 3 | City College | ANTH 365 | Birthing Justice |
| 4 | Hunter College | WGSS 3700 | Queer Theory |
| 5 | John Jay | Gen 356 | Sexuality, Gender, and Culture in Muslim Societies |
| 6 | Brooklyn College | WGST 3352 | Transgender Theories and Politics |

You'll receive
feedback on
your proposal
and you can
modify your
plans