

MILLSAPS COLLEGE  
Self-Designed Major Guidelines

The Self-Designed Major (SDM) is a customized major designed by a student working closely with appropriate faculty. The curricular, instructional, and administrative framework for the pursuit of an SDM is not, by contrast with that of standard majors, already in place. It must be constructed by a special effort. Although members of the faculty and administration of the College stand ready to help the student at many points along the way, the initiative for this special effort lies with the student. Consequently, a higher degree of self-motivation may be demanded of a person desiring an SDM than those traveling the more established routes to graduation.

**REQUIREMENTS:** The following requirements apply to all SDMs:

1. **Theme:** The proposed SDM must focus on a coherent theme or issue and demonstrate an integration of the contributing disciplines.
2. **GPA and Timeline:** The applicant must have at least a 3.0 GPA and ideally should file an SDM petition and application in the spring semester of the sophomore year, though SDM applications filed later than this will be considered depending on feasibility.
3. **Courses:**
  - a. The proposed SDM will normally include at least 12 courses from two or three departments (including a Senior Seminar);
  - b. The proposed SDM must include at least 5 courses in one department, including at least one class at the 3000 level or above—the purpose of this requirement is to ensure analytical rigor and depth, so that SDM is not overly broad, introductory, or scattered around disciplines;
  - c. No credit will be awarded toward a minor in a discipline included as part of an SDM;
  - d. One appropriate IDST core course may count toward the major.
4. **Senior Seminar:** The proposed SDM must include among the 12 courses a Senior Seminar. Depending on the needs of the student and the instruction of the SDM faculty committee, the student may satisfy this requirement in one of three ways:
  - a. Take the Senior Seminar of one of the component disciplines, focusing studies on the SDM topic (in this case, sign up for the Senior Seminar of the component discipline and use its senior seminar number);
  - b. Take a Senior Seminar in the specific area of the SDM and take Comprehensive Exams, all specially designed for the student by the SDM faculty committee (in this case, sign up for the special SDM Senior Seminar, designated SDMA 4900);
  - c. Take a Senior Seminar in the specific area of the SDM and write a Thesis, in consultation with and defended before the SDM faculty committee (in this case,

also sign up for the special SDM Senior Seminar, designated SDMA 4900).

5. Core and Degree Requirement: The proposed SDM must include satisfying all Core and Degree requirements as specified in the College Catalog, including the Core 10 reflective paper. The Core 10 requirement must be part of any of the Senior Seminar options.

PROCEDURES: The following procedures must be followed for all SDM applications:

1. Once a student has an idea for an SDM, they should make an appointment to see the Chair of the Curriculum Committee. The student will discuss their idea with the Chair who will make suggestions as to which courses ought to be taken and which members of the faculty might appropriately serve on the student's faculty committee. Also, the student will receive an "Application for Self-Designed Major" form. The student should remain in contact and consultation with the Chair of the Curriculum Committee throughout the application process.

2. The applicant should then speak to a specific faculty member whom they believe would be a good choice to serve as their advisor. The applicant should investigate the feasibility of the proposed SDM, discuss what courses might be appropriate for the SDM, and discuss what other faculty members might be appropriate to serve on their faculty committee—a committee that will act as the applicant's "department" until all requirements are met. Normally this committee consists of at least three members, typically one from each participating department. This may vary somewhat depending on the nature of the applicant's SDM program.

3. The applicant should then speak to the other members of the faculty whom they believe (in consultation with their SDM advisor) would be good choices to serve on their faculty committee. The applicant should investigate the feasibility of the proposed SDM with these faculty and discuss what courses might be appropriate for the SDM.

4. The applicant should then develop a petition, supported by the members of their faculty committee that explains the rationale for this SDM. The petition should explain a) why the applicant wants to pursue this proposed major; b) why the applicant's goals can be better accomplished by this program than by one or more of the regular major programs offered by the College; and c) a clear indication that the applicant will in fact be able to complete the proposed major as described. The petition should not exceed 1000 words (see SDM Application Form, part 3).

5. This petition will be part of the formal application (see SDM Application Form), which should include the names of the faculty committee; a list and schedule of proposed courses, field research, directed studies, and internships; and a plan for meeting the Senior Seminar requirement. Regarding proposed coursework, the student should not simply list courses that they wish to take. They must consult with the faculty members who normally teach the courses that are of interest to make certain courses will be taught and must get their tentative approval (indicated on the final version of the SDM application by signing the application form, part 5).

6. The petition and completed application, approved and endorsed by the SDM faculty committee members, should be discussed with the Chair of the Curriculum Committee. After consultation and possible revision, the completed application should be submitted to the College Curriculum Committee for final review and approval. This Committee may require further revision or clarification.

7. If the SDM is approved by the Curriculum Committee, the applicant must secure all final signatures, including the signature of each faculty committee member; the Coordinator of Records; the Chair of the Curriculum Committee; and the Dean of the College. The final application should then be taken to the Records Office.

8. The courses listed on the final, approved application that the student places on file in the Records Office are those that the student must complete in order to graduate with the Self-Designed Major that he/she has created. Should changes be necessary (i.e. due to schedule conflicts, courses not being offered or additional courses becoming available), the student must complete the Petition for Change in Self-Designed Major Form and consult with and secure the signatures of his/her advisor and the Curriculum Committee Chair. The Petition for Change in Self-Designed Major Form should then be taken to the Records Office. Should the advisor, Chair of the Curriculum Committee or the Coordinator of Records feel that the requested change alters the substance of the major, they will refer the proposed change to the Curriculum Committee for review. The Curriculum Committee may then approve, deny, or request revision of the proposed change.

**TIMETABLE:** The following timeline is suggested for all SDM applicants (dates refer to the spring semester of the applicant's sophomore year):

1. February 1—initial conception of SDM major.
2. February 15—make appointment with the Chair of the Curriculum Committee for the purpose of discussing the conception and obtaining application forms.
3. March 1—select an advisor for your proposed major, consult with advisor about the courses and faculty committee members appropriate for your program. Select other members of your SDM faculty committee. Complete first draft of the Application in consultation with your advisor and committee members.
4. March 15—submit first draft of the Application to Chair of the Curriculum Committee for initial assessment. Revise proposal as needed in consultation with Chair of Curriculum Committee and advisor of the major committee.
5. April 1—finalize Application, and submit completed Application (electronically) to Chair of the Curriculum Committee for full, formal Curriculum Committee assessment (though you do not need instructor signatures at this point, be certain to have secured verbal agreement from all instructors that they will offer the classes you need at the times you need them according to your proposed schedule).
6. April 15—receive approval, request for revision, or disapproval of the Application. If approved, or approved pending revision, secure signatures of all relevant parties (including instructors, SDM committee members, and authorizing college officials) and submit final Application to Coordinator of Records. Provide a copy of the completed,

approved Application to your advisor, committee members, and retain a copy for yourself.

7. If at any time you wish to make changes in the SDM program of study, discuss the proposed changes with your advisor, faculty committee members, and Curriculum Committee Chair and submit the Petition for Change in Self-Designed Major Form with all required signatures to the Office of Records.