
SPECIAL INTERDISCIPLINARY MAJOR

The purpose of the Special Interdisciplinary Major (SIM) is to permit exceptional students to complete a degree at Puget Sound through a course of study that draws upon the curricula of two or more departments, schools, or programs. The SIM may be in a recognized interdisciplinary field or in an emergent field. The course of study is designed by the student in concert with a multi-disciplinary faculty committee. The plan of study must present a coherent program in the liberal arts and include strong methodological grounding in the relevant disciplines. The plan of study must also include upper-division coursework sufficient for the student to develop knowledge and analytic tools sophisticated enough to permit interdisciplinary synthesis. The student must demonstrate this knowledge and analytical skill by preparing and publicly presenting a senior thesis or project.

The purpose of a SIM is not to dilute an existing major, but to allow students to pursue areas of study that cannot adequately be addressed through existing majors, minors, and programs. For some students the pursuit of a SIM may be preferable to the completion of a double major.

The SIM is supervised by a principal advisor from a relevant department with a committee of two or more other faculty members. At least one of the committee members must have their primary appointment in a different department or program from that of the principle advisor. All three committee members supervise implementation of the SIM, approve changes when necessary, and certify completion of the approved course of study.

Steps in the Development of a Special Interdisciplinary Major

Students interested in pursuing the SIM must do the following:

1. Create a SIM advisory committee composed of three faculty members from departments appropriate to the topic, including one as the principal faculty advisor. At least one of the committee members must have their primary appointment in a department or program different from that of the principal advisor.
2. With the SIM advisory committee, develop a SIM application (application forms are available online, in the Registrar's, Associate Deans', and Academic Advising offices).
3. Submit the proposal to the Curriculum Committee no later than first term, junior year. Proposals submitted to the Curriculum Committee by October 1 or February 15 will be acted upon before registration for the following term.
4. Complete the program plan approved by the Curriculum Committee. Modifications to the approved SIM program require approval by the SIM Advisory Committee and the Curriculum Committee. The Registrar will be notified of any modifications to the approved SIM program.

Prerequisites

A student must have completed twelve units at Puget Sound before applying for the SIM earning a cumulative GPA of at least 3.2. The student must also have completed at least four units of coursework relevant to the SIM before submitting a proposal.

Requirements for the Special Interdisciplinary Major

1. A minimum of 12 courses, of which 10 must be at the 200 level or above and of which 6 must be at the 300 level or above. The major may not exceed 16 units. Nine of the 12 required courses must be completed at the Tacoma campus.
2. No more than 2 Independent Study units may be applied to the SIM. If 2 Independent Studies are proposed, one must focus on

the integration of the fields within the SIM.

3. A Senior Project (SIM 490). Public presentation is required in the second semester, senior year.
4. A grade of C or higher in each course applied to the SIM.

Application

1. The student and faculty committee prepare a proposal for a degree plan that includes the title of the degree and a list of courses with departmental sign-off indicating when the course will be offered; educational objectives of the degree and a discussion of how the proposed major will meet the objectives; an explanation of how particular courses in the proposed degree program will address the requirement of a thorough grounding in methodology in the contributing disciplines, of breadth within the major, and of depth within the major; an explanation of how existing majors and programs are not adequate to meet the educational objectives of the proposed SIM; an explanation of how the proposed major will serve the student's broader academic and career goals; a statement of how the proposed major compares to established majors in the same field at other institutions; and a recommendation of whether the degree awarded should be a BA or a BS that at minimum addresses the type of degree typically granted by the disciplines represented or for a similar degree at other universities and, if a BS is proposed, the extent to which the proposed SIM prepares the candidate to do advanced research.
2. The application must include a letter from each faculty member on the proposed SIM advisory committee evaluating the merits of the proposal and specifically explaining the following: how particular courses in the proposed degree program provide a thorough grounding in methodology in the contributing disciplines along with exposure to the breadth and depth of the major; faculty preparation to support the proposed degree program; and a plan for how frequently the student, advisor, and full committee will meet (with an expectation that the full committee will meet at least once per year, excluding their presence at the student's public presentation of research).
3. The principal advisor forwards the completed package (proposal, letters, student transcript) to the Curriculum Committee for approval.

Only complete applications are considered.

490 Senior Project Students completing a Special Interdisciplinary Major must complete a senior project that integrates work in the major. The project can take the form of a thesis, creative project, or artistic performance. A prospectus for the project must be submitted to and approved by the student's SIM faculty committee in the semester prior to registering for the course. Completion of this course will include a public presentation of the project in the final semester of the senior year. *Prerequisite: permission of SIM committee.*