

# FAQ: Making Changes to Major / Minor Requirements

*A short guide provided by Curriculum Committee, November 2024*

## What is the process?

### *How do you propose changes to the major or minor?*

1. The proposing department (a) fills out the [relevant form](https://shorturl.at/MuPC9) (<https://shorturl.at/MuPC9>) and (b) solicits letters of support from other impacted departments and programs (if applicable), which should be emailed directly to the Curriculum Committee.
2. The Curriculum Committee responds to the proposal, and may ask questions that require submission of further information. In determining feasibility of the major/minor requirements, per the by-laws, the Committee may consult with the Provost, CAP, or other relevant committees.
3. If needed, meetings are scheduled with stakeholders once the Curriculum Committee considers the proposal ready for discussion.

This process can take anywhere from a few weeks to many months, depending on the complexity of the changes and their potential impacts.

NOTE: Approval by Curriculum Committee of a major/minor change does not guarantee any additional resource allocation. Departments should consult CAP and the Provost.

### *What changes need to go through the Curriculum Committee?*

Short answer: all of them.

#### **What if they're small changes?**

Yes. Curriculum is tasked with looking at the big-picture and being up-to-date on the Curricular Rules.

#### **Really, all changes?**

Yes, all changes must go through Curriculum.

#### **What about changes to the senior experience?**

Yes. If it's in the catalog, you have to go through Curriculum.

#### **If a department is changing the regularity of major classes, do I have to go through Curriculum for that? (e.g., if we offer a course every other year, instead of every year)**

No. Staffing plans and frequency of course offerings are up to departments.

### **Do these same rules apply to Minors and Concentrations?**

Yes. If it's in the catalog, you have to go through Curriculum.

## **What is the timeline?**

### ***When can changes take effect?***

A student who has declared a major/minor must be allowed to complete the major/minor plan they started.

- A department cannot add or change requirements to a student's program of study once that student has declared the major/minor.
- So, if you change the major/minor in May of 2025, the changes will take effect for students declaring in Fall of 2025. Students who declared earlier must be allowed to finish their planned major/minor course.

However, if a department is removing requirements for the program of study, they might allow that change to take effect immediately (because it's making the major/minor easier to complete).

### ***When do we have to get these changes to Curriculum Committee?***

To change a major/minor in the catalog, departments need to provide catalog copy before April – BUT those **changes must be approved by Curriculum first.**

For some changes, we can approve them in one meeting. For other changes, we need to go back and forth with departments several times. If changes might impact multiple departments or programs, then it might take several months to get changes finalized.

Depending on the volume of requests for Curriculum and the complexity of the change, the latest you could submit these changes would be February (but the earlier the better!).

## **What are the requirements for a major/minor?**

### ***Underlying Ideas***

*When assessing major/minor requirements, Curriculum Committee looks for an overall vision, in addition to technical details.*

- A major/minor must have a vision. How does this major/minor contribute to the 21st century liberal arts education? What does the major/minor bring to the existing curriculum and the College community?

- A major must have learning goals. How do the goals of the major map onto the Bryn Mawr competencies/learning goals? What are the expected skills acquired/cultivated by the major?
- A major must serve students. How will the proposed changes impact students?
- A major should have a coherent pathway or ways: first take this course, then one of these three, finally this one, etc.

### ***What must be in a major?***

These are laid out in Curricular Rules II.B.4.b.

“The minimum course requirement in the major subject **shall be eight course units**, consisting of full year or semester courses of which at least one course **must be writing intensive** (or the equivalent of two writing attentive courses) at the 200 or 300 level, **at least two courses must be 200-level work and at least two courses must be at the 300-level or above**. For interdepartmental majors, at least two courses must be at the 300-level or above. The course requirements in the major subject usually consist of the following:

- two course units of first-year (100-level) work;
- two to four course units of second-year (200-level) work;
- one course unit of writing intensive work designed to be taken during the sophomore or junior year (200-300 level);
- and two to four course units of advanced (300-and 400-level) work.”
- NOTE: See “Examples” section below for more examples of how to structure a major

“A major should require no more than fifteen courses, including prerequisites and allies from other departments.”

- So, if your major requires ART200, but that course has a prereq of ART100, then those are 2 required classes for your major, even if your major doesn’t explicitly require ART100.
- For a major in French and Francophone studies, for example, you might need to take all the French language courses that would get you qualified for the major —> these courses don’t count toward the major, but the total number of major courses + these earlier prereqs is still less than 15
- Honors
  - Each department develops its own conditions for honors, subject to approval by Curriculum Committee (Curricular Rules, section II.E.3.)
- Writing within the Major:
  - “Courses that satisfy the writing requirement are identified by the sponsoring department or program, subject to review by the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum. [Criteria and goals for Writing Intensive courses may be found on the Curriculum Committee’s website.](#)”

- Senior Experience:
  - The faculty is currently voting on specific language; however, there should be a senior experience.

### ***Examples of different major structures***

- Most Bryn Mawr Majors have 10 to 12 courses, including:
  - One or more options for gateway course (100 or 200 level course)
  - One course unit of writing intensive work designed to be taken during the sophomore or junior year (200-300 level)
  - The rest are 200- and 300-level courses
    - Some majors have more specific courses at the 300-level
  - A capstone course or experience (different majors have different senior capstone course(s) and experiences—e.g., thesis, project, portfolio)
- Examples of different kinds of structure (e.g, sequenced: [Physics](#), modular: [International Studies](#), student-constructed: [Education Studies](#))

## **What are pathways, tracks, and concentrations?**

There is no college definition of “pathway” or “track”

- Our Registrar uses “pathway” to indicate how a student gets through a major. The Deans use it to indicate how students get through all their college requirements.
- Our Registrar uses “track” to indicate a cluster of courses within a major
- Some departments have “tracks” or “pathways” through their major:
  - Example: International Studies
    - All INST students do a Core Track: a set of classes all INST majors take
    - All INST students then develop an elective track: developed in conjunction with a faculty member to focus on a student’s particular interests

However! There IS a college definition of “concentration.”

- **College definition of “Concentrations”**
  - This is a credential that has to overlap at least two majors, e.g., Geo-Chemistry. It is 6 courses (though you could double-count more). To get a Concentration approved, you must go through the same approval process as a Major or Minor.
  - **NOTE:** the Registrar requests that we please stop using “Concentration” to mean a track or pathway within a major. A “Concentration” is an actual credential that goes on the transcript. A track through a major is a set of courses focused on a topic or skill set.
  - Actual “concentrations” are getting more rare. Most of these have shifted into a minor.

## What are the types of courses?

Table: Types of Courses - from Curricular Rules, section II.A.1.

Type	Credits	Meetings Per Week
Full Year	2	Three 50-minute sessions OR one 2-hour session in the case of advanced courses (except language and labs “may meet more often”)
Semester-long	1	
Half-course for a full year	1	Two 90-minute sessions
Half-course for a semester	0.5	

Course levels (from Curricular Rules, section II.A.1.):

- elementary (001)
- intermediate (002-020)
- first-year (100-199)
- second-year (200-299)
- advanced (300-399)

## What are general college requirements?

Many departments contribute courses that allow students to complete General College Requirements. Here is a summary of these:

Each student must complete:

- 32 credits
- 1 Emily Balch Seminar
- 2 units of foreign language (not taught in translation)
- 1 course in each of the four Approaches to Inquiry:
  - **Scientific Investigation (SI):** understanding the natural world by testing hypotheses against observational evidence.
  - **Critical Interpretation (CI):** critically interpreting works, such as texts, objects, artistic creations and performances, through a process of close-reading.
  - **Cross-Cultural Analysis (CC):** analyzing the variety of societal systems and patterns of behavior across space.

- **Inquiry into the Past (IP):** inquiring into the development and transformation of human experience over time.
- The Quantitative and Mathematical Reasoning Requirement. This can be completed by:
  - Q-Sem or passing the quantitative test, AND
  - Taking a quantitative course (QR)
- 1 Power, Inequality, and Justice course
- 6 terms of Physical Education
  - 1 term of PE = ½ semester, 6-7 weeks
- Swim test

**Double-counting:**

- If a student majors in a department, they can count 1 course from that department toward their Approaches to Inquiry and toward their major.
- A course can be listed as multiple Approaches to Inquiry – but a student can only use it to satisfy one of the AI requirements.

## **What about changing individual courses?**

**Can we restrict which students get into our courses?**

Yes. You just set the prereq on the course, or you can specify which students get priority (e.g., majors, then third-year students, etc.). This change does NOT need to go through Curriculum.

## FORM: Making changes to an existing major or minor

1. Name of Major/Minor:

2. Contact person:

3. Short Description of Changes You're Proposing:

4. Justification of the Revised Major:

When Curriculum is assessing this change, we will consider whether this major is consistent with college-wide goals, aspirations, and efficiencies: **Do the revisions to the major contribute to or take away from any of the following:** How does this major contribute to the 21st century liberal arts education? What does the major bring to the existing curriculum and the College community? What would a student accomplish via this proposed revised major that couldn't be achieved in an existing major at the College? How do the goals of the revised major map onto the Bryn Mawr competencies/learning goals? What are the expected skills acquired/cultivated by the proposed revised major? How will the revised curriculum for the major enhance the teaching/learning experience for faculty and for students?

5. Details of revised major

**If** the proposed revisions impact any of the following, please explain:

- a. **How many courses will the major now require?** The major is generally conceived as  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a student's program (typically 10-12 units). If it's less than 10 or more than 12, please explain why.
- b. **Explain the pathways through this revised major.** For example: How is your revised major sequenced? Are there any required courses? What courses require prereqs? What is the minimum number of semesters needed for a student to complete this revised major? How many courses must be completed in residence?
- c. **What advising tracks, if any, would be available through this revised major?**

- d. **How will this revised major accomplish curricular requirements?** For example: How will students accomplish the Writing within the major course? What will the senior capstone experience look like? Will there be a required thesis?
- e. **How will this revised major accommodate study abroad opportunities?**
- f. **How does this revised major plan compare to similar majors at peer institutions? (if applicable)**
- g. **How will students accomplish the minor? (if applicable)**
- h. **Does this change how you award departmental honors?**

## 6. Resources

**If** the proposed revisions impact any of the following, please explain:

- a. **Your staffing plan.** For example: Who are the faculty contributing to this revised major? Is this proposal reliant on a position request? Is this revised major reliant on interim hires? What would be the maximum number of majors that the current staffing can accommodate?
- b. **How your staffing plan intersects with other departments/programs.** For example: How will staffing of the proposed revised major affect the current departments/programs of participating faculty and staff? How, if at all, does this affect any relevant Bi-Co programs?

**If your changes will impact other departments or programs,** then letters of support should be submitted from the chairs of departments



directly to Curriculum Committee. *NB: a letter of support should not be conceived as a broad endorsement of the proposal, but should specify the anticipated level of commitment.*

- c. **Administrative needs.** For example: Does this change how your program will be supported administratively. Please consider both faculty and staff administrative duties.
  
- d. **How your revised major might change your department's budgetary needs.** *While budgetary needs are not part of Curriculum Committee's purview, we need to assess the viability of this revised major. We encourage you to think about them and be prepared to talk with CAP and the Provost about them.* Budgetary needs might include colloquia, lab costs, spaces, new course development funds, etc.

## 7. Catalog Information

We need this information for all changes so the Registrar can update the catalog.

- a. **Program Requirements and Opportunities:** Please include all the required courses and the pathway through the revised major, honors, study abroad, etc.
  
- b. **Courses:** List courses that would count toward the revised major: