

Behavioral Decision Sciences (BDS) FAQ

Most questions that most people have about BDS are answered in this document.

General resources

Refer to the [Bulletin](#) for information on concentration requirements.

To get extra context on the concentration, visit [this website](#).

Who should concentrate in BDS?

BDS is not for everybody. It's for students who have a question about decision making that they're willing to devote a significant portion of their undergraduate years pursuing.

It's for students who want a focus on research and a strong foundation in research methods.

What is the specialization? How does it work?

- In BDS, you have to design your own personal specialization area and choose 3 electives related to it. These will be counted toward the 13 required credits in BDS.
- The specialization area must be sufficiently narrowly defined that it can be covered by 3 courses. "Economics" is not a specialization area; it is much too broad. "Behavioral economics" is also too broad. Examples of specialization areas that students have chosen can be found [here](#).
 - Note: You don't need to do one of these. We only show you these for inspiration. What is expected is that you will choose your own specialization, and choose three electives to cover it.
- In addition, you must do an independent research project in your senior year on a topic within your specialization area. This is your capstone project. The specialization area is pursued on your own, independently. This requires initiative and perseverance.
- Your specialization topic, as well as the 3 elective courses in it, must be approved by the concentration advisor before you declare the BDS concentration. A good way to do that is to go to a concentration advisor's office hours.

Which courses can count as electives for the specialization?

- You need to take 3 electives in total.
- Any Brown course above the 1000 level ("advanced course") is eligible as an elective. The 3 electives together must provide coverage of your specialization topic.
- These courses can (but do not have to be) in a single department. The ones listed in the [bulletin](#) under "electives" are just examples.
 - So yes, you can take (for example) one course in ECON, one in CLPS, and one in SOC, so long as the three of them are above the 1000 level and will inform your specialization topic.
- It is highly recommended that you take these *before* your senior year, so that the courses' content can inform your capstone project.

- The three electives must be approved by the concentration advisor before declaring the concentration on [ASK](#).

What should I know about the capstone project?

- You will have to do a semester of independent research as your capstone project.
- This will happen during the fall semester of your senior year.
- The capstone's topic must be the same as your specialization. The idea is that the three electives you take inform this project.
- You should try to secure an advisor for your capstone project *before* your senior year.

How do Honors work in BDS?

- If you decide to do an honors thesis, you will first do the capstone project like everyone else, and then you will do one more semester of independent research to build on your capstone research. To learn more about the honors program, visit [this website](#).
- Candidates submit their application for the program at the beginning of semester 7.

Is BDS research-focused? Is independent research required?

- BDS has three methods requirements, which is more than any other concentration in the CLPS department.
 - For example, [cognitive science](#) (A.B.) only requires one methods course. cognitive science (Sc.B.) requires one methods course and one laboratory course (two in total).
- Because of this and the mandatory capstone project (independent research), this is a research-heavy concentration.
- It is highly recommended that you take your methods courses before senior year so that you can use that knowledge to do the independent research for your capstone project.

What does a good timeline for completing the requirements look like?

The timeline is mostly up to you.

However, it is highly recommended that you:

- complete your methods courses before your senior year (before your capstone course).
- complete your elective courses for your specialization before your senior year (before your capstone course).

It is also recommended that you:

- Take CLPS 0220 ("Making Decisions") as soon as possible. This is the gateway course to BDS and will give you a good sense of central topics in the concentration.
- Don't leave requirements until the last year. Many courses aren't offered every semester, or even every year. Many courses also have unexpected time conflicts with each other.

General recommendations from a fellow BDS-concentrator:

- Look into other, related concentrations to determine which one would suit you best (cognitive science, cognitive neuroscience, psychology, economics, ...).

- BDS requires more effort into planning your concentration than most other concentrations. This isn't for everyone.
- Look into the prerequisites for classes you may want to take early on.
 - Since BDS combines courses from many different areas, many of these courses will themselves have prerequisites that aren't listed on the BDS concentration requirements.
 - For example, you can count "Artificial Intelligence" for the BDS concentration's advanced courses requirement. But you can only take this course if you've already taken all of its prerequisites.
- Connect with other people in the BDS concentration! Ask upperclassmen questions. You can join the BDS DUG Google Group to get updates from the BDS DUG (Departmental Undergraduate Group). To do so, go to Google Groups from your email page and then search for BDS DUG and request to join.

What restrictions should I be aware of?

- Students will be expected to take at most 6 courses below the 1000-level within the concentration.
- Students with multiple concentrations may not apply more than 2 courses from a second concentration to the AB in Behavioral Decision Sciences.
- There are requirements in BDS (see the bulletin page [here](#)). The concentration is quite inflexible about those requirements. Do not expect to be allowed substitutions.

Is BDS an A.B. or Sc.B. concentration?

BDS is A.B. only.

Does BDS offer STEM-OPT extensions for international students?

Yes. Here is the [official list](#) of STEM concentrations. BDS' CIP code is [30.1701](#). If you're not international, this doesn't affect you. For more information visit [this site](#) or talk with people in the Office of International Students and Scholars Services ([OISSS](#)).