



BROWN

New Undergraduate Concentrations Guidelines and Considerations

Overview: As part of its broader charge to oversee Brown's undergraduate curriculum, the College Curriculum Committee (CCC) approves new programs of study, including concentrations, degree options (AB, ScB), and optional or required tracks, as well as modifications to existing programs of study. See the [addendum](#) below for additional requirements for non-departmental and interdepartmental concentrations.

Pre-submission consultation with the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning:

Early in the curriculum development process, faculty and other departmental leaders should also be thinking about a process for assessing student learning outcomes. Prior to submitting a proposal for a new program, please reach to the Executive Director of the [Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning](#), who will help you arrange a consultation with a Sheridan staff member to discuss your program's learning objectives, curriculum mapping, and approaches to developing an [assessment plan](#).

Proposals for new undergraduate concentrations must include the following:

- 1) A compelling rationale for developing a new concentration, including available data (if any) on student interest and a discussion of similarities and differences with existing areas of study at Brown;
- 2) An articulation of the key [learning objectives](#). What specific knowledge or skills should every concentrator have gained by the time of graduation?
- 3) A coherent articulation of the curriculum, ideally mapping it onto the program's learning objectives, noting if any new courses must be developed and what the impact might be on existing courses, concentrations, and departmental resources;
 - a) required and elective courses and plans for the frequency with which these will be offered; policies around transfer credit and overlap with another concentration (maximum allowable, etc.);
 - b) whether there is a capstone requirement (required for interdisciplinary concentrations, [strongly recommended](#) for all other concentrations), and if so, what are its learning objectives, acceptable format(s), preparation, advising structure, etc.;
 - c) requirements and expectations for Honors candidates;
 - d) the role of discipline-specific or thematically-appropriate diversity questions in the curriculum;
 - e) the role of writing in the curriculum: what does writing competency look like in this field? how should students work on their writing?
- 4) A realistic plan for concentration advising that demonstrates the academic unit(s)'s commitment to this concentration and accounts for transitions, including faculty leaves and departures, etc. What are the goals of your advising program? What process do you have in place to ensure that advising is working? How are you thinking about nurturing a sense of academic community for your concentrators? For example, what role do you envision a potential Departmental Undergraduate Group (DUG) playing?
- 5) Quality and Rigor: How will you verify that graduates have met the articulated learning objectives?

Assessment: New programs are assessed alongside existing ones under the standard [CCC review process](#). If advising and teaching needs are unmet or there is insufficient student interest, the concentration will be phased out without further review.

Questions may be addressed to the Deputy Dean for Curriculum & Co-Curriculum (college@brown.edu).
Approved by the CCC on April 10, 2018, revised June 3, 2022.

New Inter- and Non-Departmental Undergraduate Concentrations Additional Guidelines and Considerations

Overview: Among the distinctive strengths of Brown's research and teaching community is its commitment to fostering collaboration across and beyond intellectual and other boundaries, often coalescing within the institution's various Institutes and Centers. Nonetheless, faculty, staff, and students affiliated with concentrations that exist outside of a departmental home often face several common challenges, including lack of faculty oversight and a shortage of advisors, relevant courses, and other resources (including funding for student research and other co-curricular pursuits). In the case of jointly-administered concentrations, these issues are no less acute, as there may be inconsistency or disagreement among the faculty involved about which department is the institutional "home" for the concentration, its curriculum, and its students.

For these reasons, in the case of new concentrations proposed by an academic center or more than one academic department and/or centers, additional conditions must be met for CCC approval.

In addition to the requirements above, proposals for new non-departmental and interdepartmental concentrations must include the following:

6) Commitment of resources:

- a) For non-department concentrations: By proposing a new concentration, non-departmental units wishing to offer an undergraduate concentration must explicitly articulate a commitment of faculty and administrative time and other resources for the purposes of a) staffing core courses (including graduate teaching assistants); b) managing the declaration process and changes to concentration course plans, including approval for non-Brown courses; and c) concentration and thesis/capstone advising from year to year and during temporary or permanent faculty transitions such as sabbaticals and departures.
- b) For multiple units proposing jointly-administered concentrations: A Joint-Concentration Agreement is required. Faculty members in each unit must formally articulate and agree to a set of conditions for the administration of the new concentration. Not unlike a Memorandum of Understanding, this agreement would include assignment of key faculty responsibilities and administrative time and other resources for the purposes of a) staffing core courses (including graduate TAs); b) managing the declaration process and changes to concentration course plans, including approval for non-Brown courses; and c) concentration and thesis/capstone advising from year to year and during temporary or permanent faculty transitions such as sabbaticals and departures.

7) Additional and more regular assessment procedures: New non- and inter-departmental concentrations will be reviewed within three years of the first incoming cohort and have check-ins with one or more CCC members every three years thereafter, depending on the concentration review timeline of the participating departments (if relevant).

8) Add something on DoF/Bio-Med/Public Health

If at any point, the unit(s) are unable to meet advising and teaching needs as articulated in the agreement referenced above, the concentration will be phased out without further CCC review, allowing declared concentrators to complete the program but approving no new declarations.