Criteria to Be Met by Proposed Interdisciplinary Minor Degree Programs

The objective of any minor is to provide a depth of understanding and expertise in an area outside of, or complementary to, a student’s major. This depth and expertise must be sufficient to enable the student to 1) appreciate the complexities and issues that are central to the minor area, and 2) to perform at a minimal working level in the minor area, e.g., sufficient to solve realistic problems and/or to make contributions to the field. The content and working skills associated with an interdisciplinary minor must, in addition, be sufficiently broadly based that they cannot be reasonably addressed by a minor within a single department. An interdisciplinary minor should provide educational opportunities that would not exist in its absence. The selection of subjects that constitute a minor should not be simply a concentration of subjects in an interdisciplinary area, but must form a cohesive program that meets the objectives for a minor degree and involves some synergism and complementary. For example, a successful interdisciplinary minor should result in the modification of existing subjects and/or the creation of subjects that bring together the concepts of the other subjects required in the minor. In this manner, it is expected that the subject requirements can be reduced to acceptable levels and that the collection of subjects will provide a unique focus that constitutes an educational experience greater than that of the sum of the individual subjects.

It is acknowledged as acceptable that students with different majors may be required to take a different number of subjects in addition to those required for their major degree. However, it is expected that the subject requirements for students who most commonly take a particular interdisciplinary minor should be the same as the number of subjects customarily required for a departmental minor program.

To assure that an interdisciplinary minor is viable and will be maintained, it must be formally supported by the department heads of all departments on which the minor depends, viz the departments that offer any subjects that are required for the minor. This support could entail commitment to staffing and/or the development of suitable subjects. While it is anticipated that most of the subjects for an interdisciplinary minor will be selected from existing subjects, the commitment to use these subjects in a minor program implies a continuing voice of those administering the minor program in maintaining appropriate subject content, so that that content does not deviate from the original intentions of the interdisciplinary minor program.

The structure of each minor program must provide vehicles for its administration and student advising, and a framework for oversight comparable to that provided for departmental minors, including the continual review of the minor’s viability, subject content, and relevance. Therefore, a review procedure must be approved for each interdisciplinary minor before it is instituted. At a minimum, the review must be conducted every five years, and the conclusions of the review communicated to the Committee on Curricula (Coc). It may also be appropriate, in establishing a new interdisciplinary minor, to specify a timeline and possible criteria for an intermediate review to evaluate the implementation and make any necessary adjustments.

Approved by CUP on December 14, 1994
Revised February 2, 2011