

Guidelines for Special Majors

Students may wish to pursue a major that does not fit an established major. A special major proposal should be developed with and must be approved by a minimum of two faculty advisors in appropriate fields. When particular fields are highly represented in the special major, the advisor(s) must come from those fields. Students may, of course, have additional advisors that do not come from these fields. Students must have at least one Pitzer advisor, so if both special major advisors are from off-campus, the student must have a third Pitzer advisor.

Students must attend the information meeting on Special Majors before they are allowed to submit a Special Major proposal. Proposals should be submitted to the Registrar's Office to be forwarded to the Curriculum Committee for their review, comment and approval. The criteria detailed below will be used by the Curriculum Committee in evaluating proposals.

The Curriculum Committee will not accept Special Major proposals during the senior year, unless the special major proposal could be accepted without revision. Students from study abroad (or other) experiences their senior year that have served to synthesize and clarify their academic trajectories. Students will be notified of Curriculum Committee decisions via Pitzer e-mail. Special Major forms are available in the Registrar's Office and contain two components:

1. An explanation for the Special Major including:

Title: The title must correspond with the course list and rationale for the major.

Purpose: Proposals must state the goals to be achieved through the implementation of the desired major and explain why these goals cannot be met with existing majors.

Student Learning Outcomes: Proposals must clearly state the expected knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies, and habits of mind that student will acquire through the completion of the Special Major. These should be demonstrated by the capstone experience.

Coherence: The proposed courses must demonstrate a cohesive, feasible and organized program of study and explain how the courses work together to achieve the desired goals. There will be no more than four introductory courses, and at least 6 upper level courses in a Special Major.

Mastery: The proposed major must exhibit sufficient depth and rigor, including a substantial number of advanced courses. There must be some theory and/or research methods courses in the Special Major.

Capstone: The proposal must discuss plans for a synthesizing paper, project, seminar or thesis. The course list should include a full-credit independent study devoted to completion of this thesis or project, or explain how an existing advanced seminar would serve this purpose. The capstone experience should integrate the knowledge gained through the special major.

2. Course List:

A completed Major Declaration form must be included, listing both educational objectives and a course list, including a minimum of 10 courses for the proposed special major. The course list should match the explanation for the Special Major and should be consistent with curricular capabilities of The Claremont Colleges.

Approval of student's statement by the advisors

When faculty members sign the Special Major Declaration form, they agree to be an advisor for the Special Major. They agree to advise the entire Special Major, not just a part of the Special Major. They confirm that they are in the field(s) represented by the Special Major. When advisors go on sabbatical or leave, they agree to continue advising their Special Major advisees or to find an appropriate faculty member to do the advising for them.

The advisors will also write a supporting letter to accompany the proposal, a letter in which they defend the quality and integrity of the Special Major to the Curriculum Committee.

Suggested guidelines for faculty writing letters of recommendation for special majors:

- (1) a thorough explanation of why the proposed set of courses provides for a coherent education in the field of study;
- (2) a thorough explanation of why the field of study cannot be completed within an existing (5C) major;
- (3) a sense that the faculty member and student have thoroughly discussed the special major, and the plan for completing it; and
- (4) an articulation by the faculty members of why they are appropriate advisors for the special major.