

## Guidelines for Drafting Your Concentration

A Concentration is a negotiated course of study that allows you to achieve advanced mastery in one or more disciplines or in an interdisciplinary field. It generally spans your second and third year at Hampshire. Your concentration includes the body of knowledge and skills you wish to master at an advanced level and that lay the foundation for your Division III independent project in your fourth year. The substance of the concentration is generally expressed in terms of recognized fields of scholarship and research. Some concentrations define coherent areas of study that combine traditional disciplines in very integrated ways. The ability to combine traditional fields allows you to tailor your work to your interests. Such combinations are sometimes in widely recognized, emerging areas of research, such as cultural studies or cognitive neuroscience. Other concentrations are similar to traditional college majors, such as physics, psychology, or philosophy. Still other concentrations have a character that is similar to a traditional double major or major-minor combination, with varying degrees of integration between fields. All concentrations at Hampshire are individualized in the sense that they express the student's personal curiosity and intellectual passions. Students concentrating in biology, for example, plan their studies not only to develop a broad base of knowledge but also to pursue particular interests within the biological sciences, such as genomics, exercise physiology, or microbiology. Students have the freedom at Hampshire to work with faculty members to tailor their studies to their interests in ways that are often not possible in traditional departmental majors. In addition, all concentrations allow you to bring out-of-classroom experiences into your studies.

You begin to articulate your concentration when you draft your Division II contract or plan. Although there is a great deal of flexibility in how you formulate your concentration, it is essential your description of your concentration include a coherent articulation of your core areas of study, the questions that drive the study, and your goals for your own learning. It is also vital that you discuss these ideas with your committee who will likely suggest some new ways to think about your ideas and suggest courses, internships, and other learning opportunities for you. In all concentrations you not only work to meet your own goals, but you must meet two college requirements: 1) that you engage with multiple cultural perspectives and 2) that you complete at least forty hours of community engaged learning. These are both done in ways appropriate to the your concentration and should be discussed with your committee.

## The Contract

### Description of the Concentration

In drafting the Division II concentration you are expected to (a) describe an ***intellectually coherent area of study*** that provides the foundational knowledge for what might become your Division III project, and (2) articulate ***the objectives and goals*** of your program of study.

This description will ideally include the following parts:

1. Overview: What are the constituent parts of the concentration and how do they fit together to create an intellectually coherent whole? What are the basic knowledge, theory, and other methodological and analytical tools that you want to master and that will provide you with the appropriate knowledge and skills to undertake a Division III project? Explain the logic that determines why you have chosen particular bodies of knowledge, theories and methodologies as the core of your concentration. To the best of your abilities, articulate the principles, concepts, and questions that connect them. Some of this gets easier in later drafts.
2. Goals: What do you want to know, understand, and be able to do by the end of your concentration? Each discipline has a unique disciplinary perspective or lens through which practitioners of that discipline view the world; this perspective informs the learning goals for students of that discipline. You should attempt to articulate the goals that follow from the field or fields in which you are studying. Consider such skills as research

methods, time management, collaborative skills, information literacy, leadership skills, presentation skills, inquiry skills, etc. Of course, as you move through Division II, it is expected that you will continue to make progress on the cumulative skills you began to address in Division I (writing and research, independent project work, quantitative skills, and multiple cultural perspectives). In addition, consider the ways that you are challenging yourself – what would the appropriate next challenge be? What did your Div I professors say you should be working on?

The better you are able to articulate these things, the easier it will be for your committee to guide you to the appropriate courses and other evaluated experiences that will help you meet your goals.

### 3. Your Plan – Coursework and other Evaluated Learning Activities

- a. Division II represents the equivalent of **four semesters' worth of work**, or approximately 12-16 courses or course-equivalent learning activities. These may include independent studies and projects, courses, reading programs, internships, and other forms of field study away from the campus. Of these, it is suggested that least 12 constitute the core of your concentration, with the remainder comprising additional studies outside the area of concentration as appropriate.
- b. The concentration however, should not be a random assortment of loosely related activities but a **structured program of study**. Learning activities included in your concentration should (a) build from work at foundational levels to advanced work, as well as (b) ensure sufficient familiarity with core sub-fields in the disciplines upon which you built the concentration.
- c. It is desirable to achieve both **depth and breadth** in your concentration; conceptual depth typically comes through advanced course work and independent study. You should also work in more distantly related areas that interest you; breadth allows you to engage with other perspectives and with the wider world and to put your specific interests in context.
- d. Thus, you should develop an **organizational structure** for your concentration that specifies both the **level** and the **content** of the learning activities you plan to undertake. To the extent possible, your plan of study should identify, semester-by-semester and year-by-year, all of the course or course-equivalent learning activities you have taken or intend to undertake in fulfillment of your concentration, and understand the goal that each learning activity is intended to fulfill. In addition, you should indicate which evaluated learning activities are considered an essential part of your concentration and which constitute "additional studies outside the area of concentration as appropriate"
- e. Given that unforeseeable factors might prevent you from being able to undertake those specific learning activities in the future, you should try to identify a few possible **alternatives for each course or activity** to have choice and flexibility in the future.
- f. In Division II, you should develop the research skills that you will need for a Division III project. Thus, as part of the concentration you should take courses in different methodologies as well as undertake **independent/project work** as a means of ensuring your readiness for Division III.

### The Multiple Cultural Perspectives Requirement

The guidelines for fulfilling the MCPR are already clearly laid out in NSNS

### The Community Engagement and Learning Requirement

The guidelines for fulfilling the CEL-2 are already clearly laid out in NSNS

### The Portfolio

You will have a portfolio of your work due at the end of Division II. Although it is due then, you ought to be keeping it as you go along. Bring your portfolio with you to your Division II committee meetings to show your chair and/or committee how your work is shaping up.

Your portfolio is your means for showing your committee what you have learned and what meaning you are making from putting the things together that you have selected. Be creative in what you put into the portfolio to demonstrate your learning out-of-class. Think about how to organize the work to bring the different parts together.

Your reflection on your own learning in your retrospective is extremely valuable. Write about the ways your thinking has changed – what caused that change and what are you poised to do in Division III as a result of your work in Division II?