

Writing Your Proposal

Guidelines for a Successful Student Defined Honors Major Proposal

Writing an SDHM proposal will help you clarify your project and will give you valuable experience for any proposal writing you may do beyond NYU Shanghai. All proposals submitted are read and scored by a selection committee made up of faculty from each of the disciplines on campus. Your proposal will be read by someone familiar with the disciplines your major falls within but it will also be read by faculty members who are less familiar with the disciplines. For this reason, a successful proposal will be written in such a way that an intelligent reader who is not familiar with the fields can still understand the academic questions you are proposing and the significance of this course work in a larger context. The committee should be able to understand easily what you desire to study and why it is important.

Proposal Contents

Please follow the headings that are laid out below for Proposal I or Proposal II.

The effectiveness of your proposal will depend on your ability to explain the nature, context and scope of the SDHM. The selection committee will also be looking for an indication that your project will be a significant learning experience.

Please make sure to put the key question or theme at the very start of the paragraph. Readers should not have to search through the body of the paragraph for the answer to "what are you studying and why is it important."

Proposal Types

There are two types of proposals. Which of the two types - I or II - should you submit?

Most students should submit Type I proposals and follow the standard guidelines below.

For students who wish to work in the Arts and Creative Humanities, Type II proposals are most appropriate. If you are submitting a proposal in any of these areas, you should see the "Guidelines for Students Writing Art and Creative Humanities SDHM Proposals" below.

Both proposals follow the same proposal format in terms of length, font, and printing, and ALL students must submit a one-page biography. All students are encouraged strongly to work with their faculty advisors in assembling these documents.

If you are uncertain about whether Proposal Type I or Type II is most appropriate for you contact the Assistant Provost for Academic Affairs.

You are required to submit one full copy of your proposal (excluding the letters of support) by the published deadline to the Academic Advising Office.

Guidelines

If you are not requesting a grant, you may disregard the section on budget

A Note on Human Subjects

If you will be working with Human Subjects at any point during your major, you must:

- Receive approval from the NYU Shanghai IRB (Institutional Review Board) prior to human subjects enrollment.
- Submit the appropriate application, supporting documents, and Faculty Assurance form, and complete the Human Subjects Protection Training.
- Indicate that you understand these requirements in your proposal

For questions regarding the requirements above or any other aspect of IRB review contact the NYU Shanghai IRB, in the office of Regulatory Compliance Administration.

Application Checklist

Before the deadline:

1. Did you ask your advisors for letters of support?
2. Did you draft your proposal AND budget?
3. Did you meet with the Assistant Provost for Academic Affairs?
4. Did you register with the Academic Advising Office?
5. Did you fill out a Human Subjects Clearance Request, if needed?

Before you submit your final proposal:

1. Did you post a final copy of your proposal AND budget?
2. Did your advisors post letters of support for your project?
3. Did you physically hand in a copy of your proposal and budget to the Academic Advising Office?
4. If submitting the Arts and Creative Humanities (Type II) proposal, did you physically submit your supporting materials to the Academic Advising Office?
5. If submitting any color graphs or images, did you physically submit 5 copies of your materials to the Academic Advising Office?

Type I: Guidelines for Student Defined Honors Majors Proposals

Proposal Contents

The effectiveness of your proposal will depend on your ability to explain the nature, context and scope of the major. The selection committee will also be looking for an indication that your major will be a significant learning experience. Make certain that the proposal is in your words – not your professors' words.

Your proposal should include the following information:

- **Abstract:** A summary of your inter-disciplinary question and your major design. It is best to write the abstract after you have finished writing the rest of the proposal. Include it as the first section on the first page of your proposal.
- **Interdisciplinary Question and Significance:** What are the questions that you want to explore in your major and why are they interesting and important questions? In thinking about the significance, try to take the position of an educated newspaper reader. If she or he were to see an article about your major in the paper, how would it explain the importance of your major? Please be sure to put this information in your topic sentences.
- **Project Design and Feasibility:** How will you go about exploring your interdisciplinary questions? What will be your courses and timetable? How will these classes fit into your four year graduation plan? If there are elements that are not part of a course, how will you find the time necessary to do them? This section allows you to use discipline-specific language to explain the details of your major.
- **Background:** What courses or work experiences have prepared you to undertake this project? Why is this important to you? What are your career aspirations? What is your background? Have you done course or other work in these areas before? This important section allows the reader to know you better as a person.
- **Feedback and Evaluation:** Who will provide feedback on and evaluate your major and according to what schedule and what criteria?
- **Dissemination of Knowledge:** How will you share the results of your major? What form will your senior project take? Please be sure to mention the Undergraduate Academic Symposium and your senior thesis.

*** Budgets**

Please also consider your budget carefully. Include a list of all the items you propose to purchase and your best estimate of the cost of each item and they should include specific vendor information - where you plan to purchase the item(s) and how much each item costs. All expense items should be explained either in the body of your proposal or in a budget narrative included on your budget page. For example, if you are asking for funds to purchase a piece of software, is that software available in a public cluster? Does a

faculty or staff member have the software that you could use when they aren't there? The selection committee reserves the right to disallow certain line items and frequently approves partial budgets.

Please also consider:

- Conference fees are not allowed
- The committee rarely approves course fee requests
- Travel costs must be directly related to the proposed major and fully justified; the committee rarely funds airline tickets or international travel and does not provide funding for semester study at study away sites.
- Equipment purchases must be fully supported in the proposal and equipment must remain at NYU Shanghai; state who will be responsible for it when you complete your major
- Book purchases are approved only if you can show it is impossible to get what you need from a library or on loan

Proposal Format:

- Your proposal may be up to eight pages in length.
- At the top of the first page put your name and major title.
- The next item should be your abstract.
- Print single sided sheets only (double sided copies will not duplicate and the committee will not receive your full proposal). We recommend at least a 12 point, serif font (such as Times or Palatino), justified left (right ragged).
- Illustrations may be used in the body of the proposal but should duplicate well on a copier. If you are using color graphs or illustrations, please submit four complete copies of your proposal for the selection committee.
- Do not include a cover sheet, title page, or any other attachments: they will be discarded. Instead, include any relevant information in the body of your proposal.
- Check that all courses are identified in your check box sheet and in a logical sequence in requirements page and the sample schedule.
- Remember to check your grammar and spelling. You are asking for the creation of a new major and your proposal should be a reflection of your commitment to the project.
- You are highly encouraged to work with your faculty advisor on your proposal and to meet with the Assistant Provost for Academic Affairs at least once prior to submitting an SDHM proposal to review a draft.

Type II: Guidelines for Students Writing Art and Creative Humanities Self-Defined Honors Major Proposals

Your SDHM Art and Humanities Proposal should place your project in a larger creative context, while providing specific details about your objectives, process and product, as well as the anticipated impact on your development as an artist and/or humanist. A typical problem is to offer too broad a discussion and too much personal background. The directions below are intended to help you organize your proposal and present your information in a way that balances significance and detail and meets the requirements of an academic major. Please include the headings in the proposal exactly as they appear below. The proposal should be no longer than eight pages.

Part I. Abstract

The Abstract is a brief but specific statement of the major's objectives, methods, and impact you as an artist, musician, and/or humanist: what you hope to accomplish, using what means and resources, and why is the major important to you, your field, and to the larger world?

Part II. Major Narrative

The major narrative is a detailed discussion of your proposed major, including the objectives, the methods you plan to use, and how your major relates and contributes to the particular creative field(s).

Here is what you should include in your proposal:

A. A detailed description of the creative work you intend to undertake

1. What makes it significant?
2. Why is it important that you undertake this major?

Objective or goal: What do you want to achieve?

Conceptual approach: How are you approaching this major?

Issues: What concern, problem, or need will the work address?

Approach: What medium and genre will you be using and why are they appropriate for this work?

Vision: What is your vision for the final project?

B. A discussion of how the proposed work fits into and advances the related field's current creative context and conversation.

1. What are the sources of inspiration for this project?
2. How does it build on or differ from past or current work by others in the fields? In related fields?
3. In what specific ways will this work advance the current creative context and conversation?

Part III. Outcomes

Outline the outcomes of your major.

A. Benefit to the artist and humanist: How will this project/product enhance your interests and skills, directions and opportunities for further work?

B. Exhibition/Presentation: In addition to the Undergraduate Academic Symposium, how, where and when do you plan to present your work? If no additional exhibition beyond the Undergraduate Academic Symposium is planned, how will you disseminate the knowledge gained from the project?

Part IV. Supporting Materials

All proposals must contain supporting materials to clarify the proposal. These include prior art or creative work; links to CD/DVD documentation; music compositions; sketches of proposed work; preliminary research; archive information, etc.

Part VI. Budget

Consider your budget carefully. Include a listing of all the items you propose to purchase and your best estimate of the cost of each item. All expense items should be explained in a budget narrative included on your budget page and they should include specific vendor information - where you plan to purchase the item(s) and how much each item costs. For example, if you are asking for funds to purchase a piece of software, is that software available in a public cluster? Does a faculty or staff member have the software that you could use when they aren't there? The selection committee reserves the right to disallow certain line items and frequently approves partial budgets.

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