

Academic Policies for Student Designed Coursework

Undergraduate students have many options for tailoring their study to fit their needs. Among them are independent majors; minors, particularly interdisciplinary minors; pre-professional preparation through internships and community-based learning; directed inquiries (independent study); teaching assistantships; consortium exchange with other colleges; and cooperative programs that offer dual degrees (bachelor's and master's) and majors not offered at Mary Baldwin. For more information not detailed below or in the General Information section of this catalog, please see your academic advisor or contact the Office of the University Registrar.

Independent Majors

Students, in consultation with their advisors, may design their own majors. Independent majors are formed by combining courses from two or more disciplines to meet a student's academic interests or to provide preparation for a career. The following general rules apply to all independent majors:

- The independent major must consist of at least 36 semester hours.
- The senior academic requirement consists of the writing and defense of a thesis or the completion of a project, study, or experiment. This work must demonstrate an integration of the bodies of knowledge and approaches the independent major combines.
- Independent majors must be approved by the coordinator for interdisciplinary studies.
- In the case of independent majors, the senior requirement approval and evaluation process will include appropriate representation from faculty in relevant areas.
- The proposal for an independent major must have a coherent plan and must be accompanied by a written statement of purpose. The appropriate form may be obtained in the registrar's office and must be filed with appropriate signatures at time of declaration of major.
- The Major/Minor Declaration form, with the completed independent major form, should be filed in the registrar's office at the close of the student's sophomore year, but it must be filed no later than the first day of classes of the student's final semester.
- A maximum of 24 semester hours in one discipline can be counted toward the independent major.
- At least one of the disciplines involved must offer a major.
- The independent major cannot be a variation of an existing major.

Directed Inquiries/Learning Contracts

Students are encouraged to work with faculty to design individual, nontraditional courses of study. To this end, most disciplines offer directed inquiries (learning contracts for MBU Online students) and, to advanced students, teaching assistantships. For residential undergraduate students, directed inquiries (DIs) can be supervised only by full-time faculty and can be taken only by full-time students. To register, the student must submit special forms to the Office of the Registrar. Forms are available in the office of the university registrar or found on MyMBU under registrar documents. Students do not normally take more than one directed inquiry per semester. They should have a C average. Freshmen do not take directed inquiries except in special cases. If a directed inquiry substitutes for an existing course below the 300-level, the DI is designated 290; if it substitutes for a 300-level course, it is designated 390. If a directed inquiry does not substitute for an existing course, the instructor determines the appropriate level based on content. Any exceptions to those policies must be approved by the university registrar.

Internships and Experiential Learning

Internships and other forms of experiential learning provide students with practical experiences in working with professionals in various career fields, and therefore are valuable testing grounds for possible future careers. Faculty may suggest opportunities; students may discover possibilities themselves; and the Spencer Center and the Office of Personal and Professional Development also can help. Normally students must be in good academic standing in order to engage in an internship. A student must complete the internship application prior to beginning the internship, including all necessary approvals. Failure to follow this process may result in not receiving credit for the experience. Normally students must be in good academic standing in order to engage in an internship. A student must complete the internship application prior to beginning the internship, including all necessary approvals. Failure to follow this process may result in not receiving credit for the experience.

Internship credit is added to a student's record the semester in which it is completed. In all cases, academic credit is awarded for experiential learning only if the experience produces work that can be evaluated by the supervising professor. Unless otherwise specified by the discipline, all internships are taken on a Pass/No Credit basis. Students must do a minimum of 50 clock hours of work on-site to earn one semester hour of academic credit. No more than 15 semester hours of internship credit may be applied toward the graduation requirement of 120. A student may not register for an internship after the fact unless that internship was arranged with the supervising professor prior to the commencement of work on site.

The student may register for experiential work as either a pre-professional experience or as a general career exploratory experience. A pre-professional level internship is designated EXPL 387, where EXPL is the acronym for the discipline (e.g., BIOL 387). A career exploratory internship is designated EXPL 287. Internships at the 387 level count toward the major requirements. Internships at the 287 level may apply to the major at the discretion of the faculty in the major discipline.

Students who are off-campus due to participation in experiential learning must assume responsibility for any additional costs of housing, meals, and transportation. Further information about internships may be obtained from the Office of Personal and Professional Development.

Summer Study

During the summer break, undergraduate residential students may enroll in courses offered online and in directed inquiries and internships that require direct supervision by Mary Baldwin on-campus faculty. Students are billed separately for summer courses and must abide by the policies and deadlines of the MBU Online.

Teaching Assistantships

During any term, qualified students may assist in the instruction of courses with the approval of the professor in charge. Tasks involve preparation of class materials, tutoring, teaching, and/or research. To register for Teaching Assistantship 380, students must submit an application form, available from the registrar's office. Credit for teaching assistantships is based on a minimum of 39 clock hours of work for each hour of credit. Students must have taken the course in which they are assisting or its equivalent.