



## Policy Guidelines for Named Options within Academic Majors

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### I. Overview and Definition of Options

A named option is a formally documented sub-major within an academic major program.

Named options serve as a convenient way to distinguish a distinct curriculum or delivery format within a major. A named option is NOT a new degree or major. Authorization by the Board of Regents to deliver an academic program is at the degree/major level.

Named options appear on the transcript and are formally documented by the university on the student record. For undergraduate majors, they are also encoded in the degree audit system. Named options are used as a basis for advising, and are advertised to students in the Catalog and through other information related to the program of study.

They are subject to the same range of faculty governance oversight as other academic programs that are documented formally, including assessment, program review and governance of major structural changes.

In technical terms, named options are a type of subplan (OPT or HON) associated with plan type of major (MAJ).

Named options play an increasingly prominent role in the program array. They offer a kind of flexibility and nimbleness not as readily achieved with full degree/major programs. As described below, options are used in systematic ways that advance a number of the university's goals in relation to academic program delivery. As such, this document describes policy for the planning, approval and delivery of named options.

### II. Uses of Named Options

1. Area of curricular emphasis within the major for undergraduate programs: The named option provides a mechanism to denote an area of curricular emphasis within the major on the transcript while retaining the core curriculum of the major. Retaining a common core curriculum, with a common core of learning goals, is required for undergraduate majors with named options. This kind of named option represents a version of the major and the general expectation is that students will earn only one such option per major; earning two such named options is akin to earning the same major twice. Undergraduate named

options are encoded and available for advising and degree audit in the Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS).

What prints on the diploma: Bachelor of Science

What prints on the transcript: Bachelor of Science

Major: Biology

Option: Evolutionary Biology

2. Honors in the major for undergraduate programs: The named option provides a mechanism to denote student participation in honors programs associated with the major program of study. This includes the College of Letters & Science Honors in the Major and College of Engineering Honors in Research. This kind of named option may be earned in combination with other named options (Note that some honors programs are noted at the “plan” level while the ones listed above are noted at the “subplan” level, equivalent to other named options. Students who earn honors through high academic achievement at graduation are recognized as “Graduated with Distinction” regardless of participation in curriculum-based honors programs.)

What prints on the diploma: Bachelor of Science

What prints on the transcript: Bachelor of Science

Major: Biology

Option: Evolutionary Biology

Option: Honors in the Major

3. Area of curricular emphasis within the major for graduate programs: The named option provides a mechanism to denote an area of curricular emphasis relative to the major on the transcript. Graduate majors may establish named options that represent distinct curricula and may or may not retain the core curriculum of the major. Although there need not be common core courses, there should be common learning goals.

What prints on the diploma: Doctor of Philosophy

What prints on the transcript: Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Human Ecology

Option: Civil Society and Community Research

4. Non-pooled tuition revenue programs: Graduate and professional degree/major programs only. The named option is a mechanism to track students enrolled in a non-pooled tuition program; such programs require that students be enrolled in a distinctly identifiable program of study, and the named option provides the flexibility needed to implement and support these programs.

What prints on the diploma: Master of Science-Cartography and Geographic Information Systems

What prints on the transcript: Master of Science-Cartography and Geographic Information Systems

Major: Cartography and Geographic Information Systems

Option: GIS Development

5. Distance/Online Programs: Graduate, professional, or undergraduate majors. The named option is a mechanism to track students when both a face-to-face (campus-based) version and a distance/online version of the same major is offered. The face-to-face and distance/online versions of the major have the same learning goals. The named option aids in the application and enrollment of distinct student populations. Named options are not needed in cases when the degree/major program is offered in only one of these delivery formats.

What prints on the diploma: Master of Arts-Library and Information Studies

What prints on the transcript: Master of Arts-Library and Information Studies  
Major: Library and Information Studies  
Option: Campus Delivered Program  
OR Option: Distance Delivered Program

6. Off-Campus Location for graduate, professional, or undergraduate programs: The named option is a mechanism to track students enrolling in the same major with the same curriculum but at a different location or in collaboration with another university.

What prints on the diploma: Master of Social Work  
What prints on the transcript: Master of Social Work  
Major: Social Work  
Option: Part Time MSW, Eau Claire  
OR Option: Part Time MSW, Madison

A note concerning tracks: A consequence of this policy is that another type of subplan, tracks (subplan type TRK), will be phased out. In technical terms, tracks are coded as a type of subplan (TRK) associated with plan type of major (MAJ) in the student information system. Historically, tracks have been available as an informal tracking mechanism of students within a major. They were originally intended for local, within-program use to communicate to students about strands of emphasis within a curriculum or major. Over time, the distinction between tracks and named options has become less apparent. Currently, tracks serve many of the purposes listed above with the exception that they are not listed on the transcript. In addition, they have not been subject to governance oversight, ongoing review, and the monitoring attention given to formal academic programs. As of Fall 2015, there are more than 150 active tracks; approximately 50 of them have enrolled students. Because of the blurring of the distinction between options and tracks and the increasing value in documenting academic programs of study, over time, the use of tracks as a subplan type in the student information system will be phased out. No new tracks will be created and implementation of the policy on named options will include an effort to phase out and inactivate the existing tracks in SIS.

### **III. Guidelines and Stipulations for Proposing New Named Options**

Proposals for new named options must originate from and be prepared by members of the faculty, in keeping with the faculty's role in relation to the curriculum. Proposals must describe the purpose of the named option, the details of the curriculum, provisions for academic administration, advising and student support, and plans for assessment and program review.

1. Short Summary/Overview – List the option name, the major with which it is associated, the home department, and school/college. Provide information about any partner departments/units/schools/college, if relevant. List the chair of the major, primary faculty or staff contact for this proposal and primary school/college dean's office contact. Briefly describe the type and purpose of the named option. (See Use of Named Options above.)
2. Approval, Implementation, and Expectations for Review –Named options must be approved by the home school/college Academic Planning Council (APC), Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (graduate-level named options only), and the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC). All academic programs in the home academic unit must be up-to-date for program review before a proposal will be considered at UAPC.

The first term of enrollment in the new named option is typically the first fall after UAPC approval; sufficient time must be allowed for implementation and, especially for undergraduate programs, students are best served by making new programs available at the beginning of the traditional academic year. In some

circumstances, graduate-level named options may first enroll students two to three semesters after approval.

Beginning with programs implemented in 2012-2013, the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) requires a progress report from all new graduate-level programs (including named options) three years after implementation.

As with all new academic programs, the school/college dean's office will be required to conduct a review of the new named option five years after first student enrollment. The Office of the Provost will remind the school/college dean's office that this review be conducted in the annual program review update.

3. Background/Rationale – Proposals will describe the rationale and purpose for the named option. How does the named option relate to the major and to other named options in the major, if relevant? How does the named option contribute to the mission of the sponsoring unit? What is the evidence that there is a student demand for the named option?
4. Curriculum – Courses must be offered on a regular basis and have enrollment capacity for students in the named option. All courses required for the named option must be fully approved before the named option will be considered at UAPC. Units must maintain named option requirements so that they are up-to-date; all curriculum changes must be approved through the appropriate school/college academic planning council (APC) and/or curriculum committee. The school/college APC or curriculum committee will notify the Office of the Registrar and the Graduate School (for graduate-level named options) about approved curricular changes to the named option. Typically, any changes in requirements will be effective no sooner than the fall semester after approval.

For undergraduate programs, the named option curriculum should be composed in such a way that course substitutions will be kept to a minimum; if substitutions are being made on a regular basis, the curriculum should be re-examined. When course substitutions are made, the substituted course should be formally added to the curriculum through governance for inclusion the following academic year.

In some cases, planning for named options will benefit from mapping the curriculum for the named option against the original curriculum. For proposals, a full curriculum including all required and elective courses will be required.

Named options for undergraduate majors will have requirements totaling 120 credits and students should be able to complete the degree/major within four academic years. Proposals will be expected to include a "four-year roadmap" of course sequence for the named option. Named options for undergraduate majors must retain some common core curriculum within the major. Named options will be encoded in DARS and recorded on the student's transcript.

Named options in graduate majors are not required to retain some common core curriculum within the major. Named options in graduate majors that do retain a common core curriculum within the major are also acceptable. Master's level programs will include at least 30 credits of requirements. Doctoral level programs will include at least 51 credits of requirements. A chart outlining these minimum degree requirements and elements for satisfactory progress should be included in the proposal.

The named option may be face-to-face or distance-delivered. If the option is intended to provide a way to distinguish between students in a face-to-face or an online/distance delivered program, the proposal should provide information on how the distance program is developed and supported.

5. Assessment– Proposals for named options are to be accompanied by an overall major assessment plan. A summary of the plan will be expected in the body of the proposal. The summary will include a list of the learning goals for the major and any additional goals for the named option. The assessment summary should highlight how the named option is included in the overall assessment plan for the major. The named option must adhere to all learning goals for the major and may also have additional learning goals that are specific for the named option. The proposal should include a summary of the assessment plan that includes learning goals, key assessment methods and approaches and how named option assessment information will be reviewed and acted on. (For more on assessment see <http://provost.wisc.edu/assessment/>.)

6. **Overlap and Related Programs** - Overlap restrictions must be managed at the program level as part of the advising process. When proposing a named option that has the same name as an existing degree/major or certificate at the same level, the program will be required to put in place processes to ensure that students do not enroll in both programs with the same name. If the program faculty choose to limit any other overlap with other degree/majors, named options, or certificates a list must be specified in the proposal and the program faculty/staff will be responsible for monitoring and enforcing overlap limits. In the case of graduate programs, the Graduate School stipulates that graduate students may not earn a named option that has coursework that substantially overlaps with another academic program; proposals for named options for graduate programs must include a list of overlapping majors, named options, and certificate programs that are not to be earned in combination with the named option.

7. **Admissions & Enrollment** –

For undergraduate programs, the named option admission requirements should be consistent with admission requirements for the major with no named option, if the major has any admission requirements beyond admission to the University. Admission limits should be related to interest or aptitude for the content and not based solely on a high GPA cutoff; degree-seeking students have already faced competitive and selective processes for admission, so criteria should be designed to select for skill/aptitude/interest in the named option. The named option will be declared and canceled using the e-Declaration process in the student information system. Attention to timely progress to degree is important and program faculty/staff should not advise undergraduates to declare or remain enrolled in a named option if it will extend their time to graduation. Undergraduate students are to be discouraged from earning more than one named option that represents an area of curricular emphasis within the major.

For graduate programs, named options may have distinct admission requirements. The following questions should be addressed in the proposal: Does the proposed named option have limits on admission? If yes, explain the admissions criteria and process. What is the projected annual enrollment in the named option? What is the maximum enrollment (using existing instructional and student resources)? What are the contingency plans for supporting enrollments higher than the stated maximum enrollment?

8. **Advising** – Proposals should provide information about the program advisors and describe how there will be sufficient advising and academic support for all of the students in the major (both the existing major's students and the new students that will be served by the named option).

9. **Governance & Faculty** – The named option must be governed by the same department or academic unit that oversees the major. Any sub-committee governing the named option must report to the faculty governance committee for the major. In the planning process, the procedures for the sub-committee will need to be developed. Proposals will be expected to provide information on how program faculty are identified and provisions for transition in the committee. Proposals will be expected to include a list of the core faculty and staff with title and departmental affiliation(s).

10. **Fiscal Structure and Ongoing Commitment**— Proposals need to provide an overview of plans for funding the named option including but not limited to program administration, instructional/curricular delivery, technology needs, and program assessment. What impacts will the named option have on staffing needs beyond the immediate program? How are those needs being met?

For all named options, program faculty are responsible for seeking appropriate governance approval for renaming, suspending admissions, or discontinuing the named option.

For named options in graduate and professional programs that are supported using non-pooled tuition, proposals must be accompanied by additional documentation. Planned enrollment must generate enough paid tuition to cover instructional costs, direct student support costs, and any other fixed or required costs. Named options supported using non-pooled tuition should provide a fiscal annual summary including planned enrollment, estimated paid tuition, instructional costs, and estimated excess tuition available for reinvestment in keeping with the separate guidelines for non-pooled programs.

11. Comments from associated/sponsoring programs— Proposals must be accompanied by letters or memos submitted by the chair or director of other academic units that have overlapping interest. These notes may comment on shared resources, competition for students or other ways in which the programs will interact surrounding the named option. This will include departments/schools/colleges, share a student audience, represent a closely related area of study, have overlapping faculty, or have program names that are similar. (For graduate programs: When a named option plans to use courses from a non-sponsoring department in its curriculum, a Memorandum of Agreement between Departments is required to ensure that expectations for course scheduling, use and financing are satisfactory to both parties). See section 6 above.
12. Cover letter from the Dean of the school/college that will be the home of the named option— When a proposal for a new named option is forwarded for approval, it will have a cover letter to the provost from the supporting dean.
13. Relevant Appendices – Proposals must be accompanied by an assessment plan (<http://provost.wisc.edu/assessment/basic-assessment-plan.htm>). Programs supported using non-pooled tuition must attach the Core Criteria Checklist and Additional Requirements Checklist from the Non-pooled Program Requirements Process. Supporting memos must also be appended.

#### **IV. Guidelines for Renaming or Restructuring Named Options**

If program faculty decide to rename or restructure named options they should follow the policy for renaming degree/major programs ([http://apir.wisc.edu/uapc/NameChange\\_Whattothinkabout\\_May2011.pdf](http://apir.wisc.edu/uapc/NameChange_Whattothinkabout_May2011.pdf)). If the renaming is accompanied by considerable curriculum re-organizations and considerations associated with “teaching out” large numbers of students in the old name before adding the new name, it may be more straightforward to propose a new option and discontinue the option that is no longer needed.

#### **V. Guidelines for Suspending Admissions and Discontinuing Named Options**

If program faculty decide to suspend admissions to or discontinue a named option, they should follow the policy guidelines for discontinuing a major. However, because the students may continue in the major, just not in the specific named option, the named option may be discontinued on a more immediate and relaxed schedule compared to that requirement for a full major.

See <http://apir.wisc.edu/uapc/SuspendingDiscontinuingPrograms.V.May.17.2012.pdf>

#### **VI. Approval Processes**

##### Approval of Proposals Related to *Undergraduate* Named Options

1. Program faculty in the sponsoring unit will prepare a proposal according to the guidelines described above. Faculty are advised to consult with their dean and dean’s office and with the Office of Academic Planning and Institutional Research ([www.apir.wisc.edu](http://www.apir.wisc.edu)) in the planning stages.
2. The proposal process starts with approval by the sponsoring department(s)/unit(s). The department chair or equivalent academic leader forwards the proposal to the dean’s office for consideration.
3. The school/college academic planning council (or equivalent) reviews the proposal. After approval by the school(s)/college(s), the dean’s office forwards the proposal, attachments, and cover letter of dean’s support to the provost (copy to the director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research).
4. The director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research will review the proposal for alignment with the guidelines and to assure that all supporting documentation is provided. The director of APIR will

consult with the provost and schedule the proposal for consideration at a University Academic Planning Council meeting.

5. The UAPC will review the proposal and recommend consideration to the provost. The provost will formally announce the approval of a named option to University constituencies.
6. The school/college dean's offices and the program faculty will consult with the Office of the Registrar to implement the program. Typically, a named option will be implemented no sooner than the fall semester following governance approval.

#### Approval of Proposals Related to *Graduate* Named Options

1. Program faculty in the sponsoring unit will prepare a proposal according to the guidelines described above. Faculty are advised to consult with their dean and dean's office, with the Graduate School Office of Academic Planning and Assessment, and with the Office of Academic Planning and Institutional Research in the planning stages.
2. The proposal approval process starts with approval by the sponsoring department(s)/unit(s). The department chair or equivalent academic leader forwards the proposal to the dean's office for consideration.
3. The school/college academic planning council (or equivalent) reviews the proposal. After approval by the school(s)/college(s), the dean's office forwards the proposal, attachments, and cover letter indicating the School/College APC's support to the provost and the dean of the Graduate School (copy to the director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research as well as the assistant dean of Academic Planning and Assessment in the Graduate School).
4. The director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research will coordinate with the Graduate School to review the proposal for alignment with the guidelines and to assure that all supporting documentation is provided.
5. The Graduate School will schedule the proposal for consideration by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee. Upon approval by GFEC, the director of APIR will consult with the provost and schedule the proposal for consideration at a University Academic Planning Council meeting.
6. The UAPC will review the proposal and recommend consideration to the provost. The provost will formally announce the approval of a new named option to University constituencies.
7. The school/college dean's offices and the program faculty will consult with the Office of the Registrar and the Graduate School to implement the program. A named option will typically be implemented in the fall semester following governance approval.

#### **VII. Implementation**

Following approval of the requested named option or change to the named option, a formal notice is sent from the Office of the Provost to colleagues across campus including the Registrar's Office, relevant academic programs, school/college, the Graduate School and so on. Typically representatives of the dean's office or department that provided leadership for the proposal will convene an implementation meeting with interested parties to assure that information is shared so that implementation follows the plan as proposed.