

LIBERAL ARTS

Non-Education Option Guidelines

Why Choose a Liberal Arts Degree?

The Liberal Arts Non-Education degree is designed for students who find that the degrees offered by CMU do not meet their specific academic interest or career needs. Students can customize their education by designing an interdisciplinary major to serve specific and well-articulated educational goals. For example, some students have created majors like “International Marketing,” “Gender Studies,” “Criminal Psychology,” “Studies in Pop Culture,” “Biological Illustration,” etc.

A common misperception is that a Liberal Arts degree is an option for students who have accumulated a lot of hours from a range of disciplines because they have changed majors several times, changed interests, or have simply found it difficult to choose a major. Accumulation of hours will not get you a degree. You cannot create a liberal arts program retrospectively.

The Process

1. Access a copy of the Liberal Arts program sheet available on the CMU website (Select “Academics” then select “Academic Programs” then find “Liberal Arts.”)
2. As the program sheet reminds you, you need to produce a written proposal which includes the following elements. Dedicate at least a paragraph to each section:

- Describe your career/academic goals as well as the key intellectual and applied skills you desire to acquire.
- Explain why no other CMU major helps you achieve those goals or acquire the skills, abilities, or knowledge base you describe above.
- Declare your desired major or field of study. Give it a name. Remember that you need to combine two or more disciplines. Also, describe how this new major will help you acquire the skills/knowledge described above.
- Identify a supervising professor in your primary area of study. This professor will help you choose an additional professor from your secondary area of study, and both will help you design your “new major.”
- With the help of these professors, complete the Liberal Arts program sheet by identifying courses that will help you learn the skills and acquire the knowledge described above. Note that you must complete the final 30 hours AFTER you declare your liberal arts major and receive approval of your program. Please keep in mind that these courses need to cohere, and you need to explain how each course contributes to your degree. In other words, you must justify your choices. How does each course serve your goals?
- Submit your proposal to the Department Head of your primary field of study, along with your transcripts. The Department Head will evaluate your work and either accept, reject, or ask you to revise your proposal.

Please remember...

Your proposal is an argument. You’re asking for a special degree plan, so you need to persuade us that a liberal arts degree is appropriate for you and your situation.

Please follow the directions. If you do not adequately address one or more of the sections, the Department Head will ask you to revise your proposal.