

AREA OF STUDY GUIDELINES: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AREA OF STUDY GUIDELINES

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Purpose

To provide context for the area of study guidelines.

Definitions

Area of Study Guidelines: This set of guidelines helps students plan their degree plans by spelling out what the academic world and many employers understand a particular concentration to mean. The guidelines are found in many academic publications.

Disciplinary – A program of study guided by the existing framework of a discipline.

Interdisciplinary – The simultaneous and interrelated study of two or more disciplines.

Problem Oriented – A program of study organized around a problem.

Professional/Vocational – A study which focuses on acquiring knowledge and skills needed for specific career performance and applications. It also entails inquiry into the conceptual foundations of the profession, the role of the professional in that career, and the relations between the profession and society at large.

Thematic – A program of study focusing on a particular theme or set of ideas.

Statements

The area of study (AOS) guidelines help students plan their degree programs. There are other sources of help: advice from professionals in the field and from mentors; catalogs of other colleges/universities; students' own research into their areas of interest; and more extensive resource materials developed by some areas of study, generally in handbook format or online on the university web site (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/faculty-staff/>). The guidelines deserve special attention because they spell out what the academic world and many employers understand a particular concentration to mean. For example, a concentration titled business administration that does not include economics is misleading: the guidelines guarantee truth in packaging. Specific concentration guidelines are included in the Student Degree Planning Guide (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/degree-planning-academic-review/degree-program/student-degree-planning-guide/>).

The guidelines have authority but they are not a fixed set of course requirements. They are open to interpretation; many of the studies they list can be undertaken in a wide variety of ways, and encourage concentrations that differ from traditional majors. The principle

which governs degree program planning is individualization: Empire State University students design programs which, within very broad parameters, meet their own needs and interests. Many students' needs and interests are best met by concentration in one of the conventional academic disciplines, and they follow the guidelines carefully; others use the guidelines as a point of departure in defining their distinctive approaches to their studies.

As you begin planning your degree, your mentor will explain the area of study guidelines to you and help you interpret them. When your program is submitted to the assessment committee, they will use the guidelines as part of the basis for their review. When you write your degree program rationale, you should address the university's expectations for the academic content of concentrations within your area of study. Several areas of study have provided specific concentration guidelines, in addition to the broader, general guidelines. For example, in Business, Management and Economics, there is a specific title for business administration which lists topics to be included in a disciplinary degree with that designation.

If you wish to depart from the guidelines, a different concentration title or organizing framework might be chosen; this option provides flexibility in designing your degree. For example, if you choose to design a degree in business without including several of the topics listed in the concentration guideline, you might select another framework and develop a title that better describes your degree plan.

The university offers students the opportunity to select one of five organizing frameworks for designing concentrations within the areas of study. This allows flexibility in curriculum design and ensures that students' academic plans serve their needs and, simultaneously, communicate to the outside world a coherent degree plan.

These organizing frameworks are:

Disciplinary – a program of study guided by the existing framework of a discipline.

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Thematic – a program of study focusing on a particular theme or set of ideas.

All SUNY Empire students develop their skills in reading, speaking and writing, so that they may communicate clearly, correctly and effectively. The university also expects students to acquire mathematical, technical, language or other skills that are essential to their particular programs of study, as well as to develop skills in analysis, synthesis and evaluation. In addition, students are required to meet the SUNY general education requirements.

A student who successfully completes a degree program at SUNY Empire is an independent, self-sufficient learner. We expect an educated person to have developed many different perspectives, e.g., on international, gender-related, multicultural, historical, literary, aesthetic and scientific

questions. Therefore, the overall degree program and the concentration should have breadth, coherence and progression.

Related References, Policies, Procedures, Forms and Appendices

University Learning Goals Policy (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/policies/?search=cid%3D61278>)