



Date: 23 April 2024  
To: School/College Deans and Associate Deans  
From: Allison La Tarte, Vice Provost for Data, Academic Planning & Institutional Research  
Subject: Policy on Named Options for Academic Degree/Major Programs – Updated Policy for Review/Feedback

As you know, we in Data, Academic Planning & Institutional Research (DAPIR) undertake a process to regularly review existing policies, and when appropriate, propose updates and revisions. I am reaching out today to invite you to review and provide feedback on the attached updated Policy on Named Options for Academic Degree/Major Programs. This policy was originally introduced in 2016 and this is the first formal review/update since that time (see current policy [here](#)).

In terms of the specific updates proposed, the original 2016 named options policy pre-dates the Lumen system. As such, much of the existing policy details the process to propose new and make changes to named options. There is limited detail on the relationship and linkages between a named option and its associated degree/major program, and no real guidance on determining when a named option is an appropriate solution to establish a particular pathway within a degree program. The updated policy focuses on these two pieces, with particular emphasis on the required connections between a named option and its degree/major program (i.e., learning outcomes, CIP code, core curriculum, accreditation status, etc.).

We are inviting your school/college to offer your insights and feedback on/by May 15. If you will need additional time, please let me know. Please send your comments to Allison La Tarte, Vice Provost for Data, Academic Planning & Institutional Research, at [allison.latarte@wisc.edu](mailto:allison.latarte@wisc.edu). If you would prefer to meet to discuss your feedback, we're happy to do so as well. Once we receive feedback from our colleagues in the schools and colleges, we will revise as appropriate with the goal of taking the updated policy to the University Academic Planning Council for adoption in June 2024.

Thank you in advance for your time and we look forward to receiving your feedback.

#### **Copies**

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William Karpus, Dean, Graduate School  
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## **POLICY ON NAMED OPTIONS FOR ACADEMIC DEGREE/MAJOR PROGRAMS**

### **Rationale/Purpose of the Policy**

This policy establishes standards for named options for academic degree/major programs.

### **Definitions**

**Academic Program:** An area of study that leads to a degree/major, certificate, minor or named option.

**Academic Degree/Major:** Combination of the degree and the major, represented in the academic plan code, that signifies a credential that has been authorized for UW-Madison by the UW System Board of Regents.

**Academic Plan:** An area of study, such as a major, minor, or certificate, that is within an academic career.

**Academic Subplan:** A strand of activity within a degree/major/plan that comes in two varieties: 1) named option, and 2) honors in the major.

**Academic Structure:** The organization of the university by careers, academic divisions, departments, plans and subplans, and subject listings.

**Named Option:** A formally documented sub-major (subplan) within an academic major program. For example, EN, Entrepreneurship is a subplan under the major BUS 623, Business: Management and Human Resources, BBA.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all named options for all degree/majors at UW-Madison.

### **Policy Details**

#### **Overview**

A named option is an available component of an academic degree/major program's curriculum; degree/majors are not required to have named options. A named option is also referred to as a subplan. Named options were introduced into UW-Madison's academic structure to formally document an area of curricular emphasis within a degree/major and/or to distinguish one option/subplan from another relative to tuition structure, mode of delivery, location of instruction, etc. While named options are subject to the same range of faculty governance oversight as other academic programs, they are not recognized by nor reported to any entity outside of UW-Madison.

#### **Required Features/Components of All Named Options**

The following provisions apply to all named options at UW-Madison:

- In technical terms and related to the university's [academic structure](#), named options are a type of subplan (OPT) associated with a plan type of *major* (MAJ).
- Named options must carry the same number of total credits as their associated degree/major program. The total credits required to complete the degree/major is set at the degree/major level and any/all associated named options must require that exact same number of total credits.

- Named options provide a mechanism to denote an area of curricular emphasis within a degree/major but must retain the core curriculum of the degree/major program. The named option emphasis area must contain common, coherent elements within the degree program that all students in the degree complete. How the emphasis area branches off from the common area of study must be evident.
- Named options appear on the student transcript and are formally documented by the university on the student record. They are encoded in the Degree Audit System (DARS) for undergraduates and in the Graduate Student Tracking System (GSTS) for graduate students. Named options do not appear on the undergraduate application for admission.
- Program learning outcomes are established at the degree/major level and all associated named options are assigned those same program learning outcomes, no more and no less.
- The [Classification of Instructional Program](#) (CIP) code is established at the degree/major level and all associated named options are assigned that same CIP code.
- Accreditation is established at the degree/major level. Therefore, if the degree/major is accredited, all associated named options must also be accredited. Similarly, it is not possible to have an accredited named option if the degree/major is not accredited.
- At the undergraduate level, the admission requirements (i.e., *How to Get In* in Guide) are established at the degree/major level and cannot vary for or among named options.
- The [tuition structure](#) can vary between the degree/major and each associated named option.
- Named options are commonly deployed as a way to segment a degree/major program that will offer instruction at an [additional location](#), instruction via different modes of delivery (e.g., some face-to-face, some distance), and/or different [tuition structures](#).
- A named option cannot be elevated to a standalone degree/major until it has been offered for at least five (5) years and has completed its five-year [academic program review](#).
- Students can only earn one named option associated with a degree/major program, as earning two named options would be akin to earning the same degree/major twice.
- New named options and/or changes to existing named options must be proposed via the [Lumen Program form](#).
- Proposals to establish, rename, suspend/reinstate admission, and/or eliminate named options are reviewed/approved by the department, school/college, [Service-Based Pricing Program Committee](#) (if applicable, for programs featuring service-based pricing), the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) (as applicable, for graduate programs), and the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC). UW System and the Board of Regents do not review, approve, or recognize named options.
- Named options are featured in the [Guide](#), the university's online catalog. All requirements to earn a named option must be included in the Guide. This includes requirements such as specific courses, total credits required, grade point average, etc.
- Named options are subject to the university's [academic program review policy](#). New named options are subject to the GFEC Three-Year Check-In (as applicable, for graduate programs) and the university's first formal review five years after implementation. After the initial five-year review, named options are reviewed with their associated degree/major on the ten-year review cycle.
- Per the university's [Guidelines for Accurate Use of Academic Program Names](#), when referring to a named option in print and electronic materials (e.g., handbooks, applications for admission, social media, websites, the Guide, etc.), both the full degree name and the named option must be clearly stated in relationship one another. It is not acceptable to refer to only the named option name. For example, the MS-Engineering Mechanics has a named option titled "Aerospace Engineering." The College of Engineering cannot talk about or promote its "aerospace engineering program." It must indicate it offers the MS-Engineering Mechanics with an option (or area of emphasis) in Aerospace Engineering.

## Named Options Associated with Graduate-Level Degree Programs

Note the following specifications unique to named options for graduate programs:

- Named options must carry the same 1) minimum graduate degree credits, 2) minimum graduate residence credits, and 3) minimum graduate coursework (50%) credits as their associated degree/major program.
- If a degree/major has associated named options, there must be at least two named options. A lone named option cannot be proposed for a graduate-level degree/major.
  - To facilitate the addition of a single named option, the program may create a new “no-option option,” which essentially converts the existing degree program into a named option, moving admissions, enrollment, and degree awarding to the subplan level.
- If a degree/major has associated named options, all students must be declared in one of the available named option(s) under the associated degree/major.
  - The exception is when named options are added to a degree/major that previously had none, continuing students must be given the option to remain in the degree/major.
  - Conversely, if a named option is proposed for elimination, a teach-out plan must be established to enable those students to complete their studies in the named option if they so choose.
- Individual named options may have distinct admission requirements from the degree/major and from other associated named options.
- If a single named option for a degree/major remains active because of the elimination of a named option, subsequent action to either establish one or more additional named options or to eliminate the lone remaining named option must be taken within three (3) years of the approval action for the other named option.

## Financial Considerations for Named Options with Service-Based Pricing

Per the university’s [Tuition/Service-Based Pricing Programs Policy](#):

- When a new named option seeking to utilize one of the service-based pricing tuition tiers is being proposed, in addition to the standard university governance review process, the proposal will also be subject to evaluation by the [Service-Based Pricing Program Committee](#).
- The combined set of a service-based pricing program (i.e., a degree/major and its named options) must cover all instructional costs, direct student support costs, and any other fixed or required costs associated with administering the full set of programs.
- When a service-based pricing program is undergoing the academic review process, it will also be subject to a financial and operational review by the [Service-Based Pricing Program Committee](#).

## Considerations for Establishing a New Degree/Major Program vs a Named Option

The following guidance is intended to help faculty and staff determine if a new degree/major or a new named option will best meet the needs of the intended program of study.

### A new degree/major (plan) is appropriate when/if the following is true:

- There is not a shared common/core curriculum shared between the degree/major and the proposed area of study. The named option emphasis area must contain common, coherent elements within the degree program that all students in the degree complete. How the emphasis area branches off from the common area of study must be evident.
- The program learning outcomes are not the same between the existing degree/major and the proposed new area of study. Program learning outcomes are established at the degree/major level and all associated named options are assigned those same program learning outcomes, no more and no less.
- The existing degree/major and the proposed area of study will have different accreditation statuses. Accreditation is established at the degree/major level. Therefore, if the degree/major is accredited, all associated named options must also be accredited. Similarly, it is not possible to have an accredited named option if the degree/major is not accredited.

- The proposed area of study would not have the same number of total credits as the existing degree/major. Named options must carry the exact same number of total credits as their associated degree/major program.
- The proposed area of study would fall into a different Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) than the existing degree/major. The CIP code is established at the degree/major level and all associated named options are assigned that same CIP code.
- At the undergraduate level, the desire is for prospective students to see the named option on the application for admission. Named options do not appear on the undergraduate application for admission.

**A new named option is appropriate when/if the following is true:**

- The proposed area of study represents an area of emphasis within the existing degree/major program, providing students the opportunity to focus their studies in a defined area of an existing degree program.
- The new area of curricular emphasis can be built on the core curriculum of the associated degree/major program. While there is not a number of credits or percentage of overlap required, there should be significant common core requirements between the degree/major and the named option. The named option emphasis area must contain common, coherent elements within the degree program that all students in the degree complete. How the emphasis area branches off from the common area of study must be evident.
- The named options appropriately share the same program learning outcomes and Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code as the associated degree/major.
- Named options are commonly deployed as a way to segment a degree/major program that will offer instruction at an [additional location](#), instruction via different modes of delivery (e.g., some face-to-face, some distance), and/or different [tuition structures](#).

## Related UW–Madison Policies

[UW-1033 Tuition/Service-Based Pricing Programs](#)

[UW-1047 Departments and Department-Like Academic Units](#)

[UW-1052 Academic Structure](#)

[UW-1058 Academic Program Review](#)

## Related UW–Madison Documents, Web Pages, or Other Resources

[Academic Planning KnowledgeBase Site](#)

[Features of an Academic Degree-Major Program](#)

[Lumen Programs](#)

[Lumen and Guide KnowledgeBase Site](#)

[UW-Madison Array Management and Program Planning Process](#)

## Policy Administration

### Approval Authority

Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

### Policy Manager

Vice Provost for Data, Academic Planning & Institutional Research

**Policy Contact(s)**

Institutional Academic Planner	Policy contact's position title.	Policy contact's position title.
Karen Mittelstadt	Policy contact's full name.	Policy contact's full name.
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Policy History	
<b>Effective Date</b>	Select the date the policy goes (or went) into effect. <i>(required)</i>
<b>Date Issued</b>	4/15/2016
<b>End Date</b>	Select the date the policy is no longer in effect. <i>(optional)</i>
<b>Next Review</b>	Select the date the policy is next scheduled for review. <i>(optional)</i>

