

## Individually-Designed Field FAQ Sheet

1. *Why and how do I propose an individually-designed field?*

Individually-designed fields are intended for those with interests that are not well covered by the many “standard fields” created by the Department. If possible, try to stick to a standard field. An individually-designed field must be a cohesive and coherent set of courses that are motivated by intellectual considerations. You must be able to articulate why your needs are not met by a standard field, and justify your proposed field / courses.

2. *How many courses must be included in the individually-designed field?*

Three. Note that each one must be full-semester PhD-level course.

3. *How do I get approval for my individually-designed field?*

Submit the proposed course selection at least 2 weeks prior to the start of the fall semester to the DGS.

4. *What information do I need to include in the request?*

Include one paragraph explaining the rationale for your individually-designed field. Include the full course number/title/instructor/department and syllabus for each course. (An older but fairly recent syllabus is acceptable, so long as it is from the same instructor.)

5. *Can I take a course at a different university to fulfill the individually-designed field requirement?*

Yes, for more information about taking courses at local universities, consult the following [link](#). Check back for fall deadlines in July.

6. *If I want to take a course in a different department, what is the process to register for the course?*

For PhD courses at Columbia Business School, submit the request to Elizabeth Elam ([ee31@gsb.columbia.edu](mailto:ee31@gsb.columbia.edu)). Check back for fall course updates in July.

For all other departments: complete a [Registration Adjustment Form](#) (RAF) and send it to [gsasstudentaffairs@columbia.edu](mailto:gsasstudentaffairs@columbia.edu). For courses that require instructor approval, you may forward an email from the instructor that states their approval.

7. *Once I submit my request, when will I find out if the individually-designed field proposal has been approved?*

The DGS will get back to you promptly (typically within a week; if you don't hear within a week, feel free to email again).

8. *Are there any other steps required once the individually-designed field has been approved?*

Once the DGS approves the field request, the PhD Program Coordinator will log the information. No other action is required.

9. *What if I do not secure a grade of at least B+ for one of my individually-designed field courses?*

There is no field exam option for an individually-designed field. Accordingly, you must secure a B+ in all 3 courses. If you do not receive a grade of at least B+, you must retake it the following year; if the course is not offered then, you will need to take a substitute course that is approved by the DGS.

10. *If I receive an incomplete grade in either the fall or spring semester, what is the deadline to complete the work?*

All field-related coursework must be completed and graded no later than June 1 following Year 2 unless the DGS authorizes coursework that may be completed in Year 3.