

Guidelines for the BASc – Personalised Concentration (Previously called “Individualised Study Concentration”)

Introduction

What is a Personalised Concentration?

Personalised Concentrations are currently exclusive to the BASc programme in the Faculty of Social Sciences. They represent interdisciplinary areas of learning and enquiry that centre around a major theme relevant to issues facing our local and/or global communities. Choosing to concentrate can focus students’ interdisciplinary studies, highlighting **one** overarching theme that connects their learning experiences, such as :

- ♦ Youth Mental Health
- ♦ Social Technologies
- ♦ Cosmetic Sciences
- ♦ Food Systems & Sustainability
- ♦ Globalization & Social Change
- ♦ Human Ecology & Development

A concentration should be neither so broad as to be meaningless (e.g., *Life on Earth*) nor covered by some other degree programme (e.g., *Finance*), nor too narrow that it becomes discipline-specific (e.g., *Sociology of Sport*), nor to limit students’ flexibility during their degree journey (e.g., *Cognitive Bias Modification in Mental Illness*). Naming the concentration is a creative process that requires critical reflection and planning. **If students wish to develop a concentration, they must consult with the BASc Programme Director.**

The concentration should involve inquiry that is *intellectual* and *integrated* in nature, engaging the work of academics from across HKU and the broader intellectual community. It should be oriented towards articulating how the integrated knowledge gained (via the concentration) can be applied in a real-world setting. Such applications can be further developed and refined through the Interdisciplinary Capstone Course - BASC4001.

Is it necessary to declare a concentration?

Concentrations are *optional*. BASc students may wish to continue using the degree’s flexibility to explore their interests and develop a broad range of knowledge/skills. However, if students feel that declaring a concentration would be beneficial to their future career/further studies, they are encouraged to plan for it early with peers, advisors and BASc staff.

How can students design and plan the concentration?

Students declaring a concentration must complete a **Concentration Portfolio**. This is comprised of a Learning Plan, an Intellectual Autobiography, 60+ credits of courses (including at least 24 credits from the Interdisciplinary Studies Major pathways), and a relevant capstone project in their final year. Students will come up with a title for their concentration in consultation with the Programme Director, which they can use to communicate to current/future stakeholders (e.g. employers, family and friends).

Other optional elements, such as extra-/co-curricular activities, exchange/internship experiences, or any other learning experiences can be included to strengthen the portfolio.

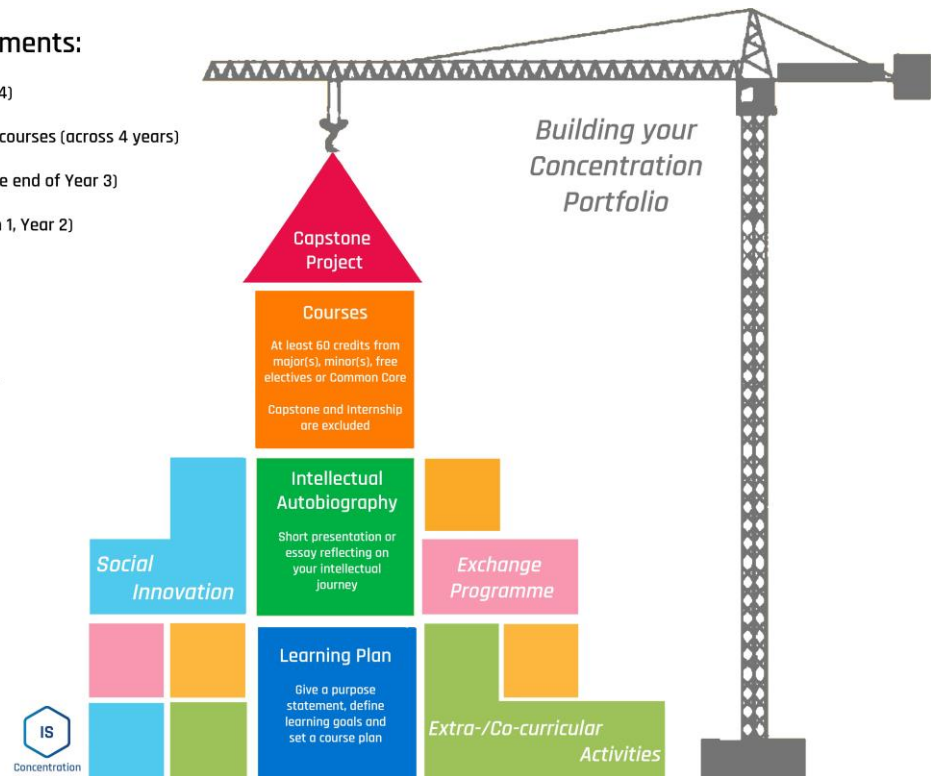
Concentration Portfolio Requirements & Components

Concentration requirements:

- Relevant Capstone Project (Year 4)
- At least 60 credits from relevant courses (across 4 years)
- Intellectual Autobiography (by the end of Year 3)
- Learning Plan (preferably by Sem 1, Year 2)

Optional components:

- Extra-/Co-curricular Activities
- Exchange Programme
- Social Innovation (Internship)
- Other Learning Experiences



A) Learning Plan (*preferably by semester 1 of Year 2, and revised throughout the years*)

The Learning Plan is required. It clearly states students plans, ambitions and concrete goals they hope to achieve during their degree. Importantly, a Learning Plan is not merely a list of courses, but a way to integrate learning experiences into something meaningful. Each Learning Plan must include:

- 1) **Statement of Purpose:** In this section, students articulate what they are passionate about learning and why it is necessary to develop this passion within the BASc degree (at least 700 words). Questions to consider:
 - a. What will my area of concentration be?
 - b. How can the concentration (Major in the Interdisciplinary Study of...) be referred to?
 - c. Why have I chosen this concentration?
 - d. How will I approach this concentration from an interdisciplinary perspective?
 - e. How might my concentration enable me to make an impact on the world?
 - f. Does my plan reflect curiosities about intellectual questions?
 - g. How does my concentration differ from other similar programmes available at HKU?
- 2) **Learning Goals:** In this section, students translate their statement of purpose into at least 5 concrete, obtainable goals that are meaningful for them. Success in the concentration can be indicated by whether students meet these self-determined

goals. They should consider and evaluate the reasonableness/feasibility of these goals before committing to them. *For each goal that students have set, they should also set clear criteria by which they can measure whether these goals have been achieved.*

- 3) **Annotated Course Plan:** In this section, students include at least 60 credits worth of courses (excluding FOSS2018 - Social Innovation Internship and BASC4001 - Interdisciplinary Capstone Course, and including at least 24 credits from pathways courses) and explain how each of these courses meet key aspects of their learning goals (i.e. through course topics, assessments, and learning experiences). *Students are required to complete and pass the courses they include in the annotated course plan.*

As unforeseeable events may occur, it is important to have a Plan B. For example, a course students intend to take may not be offered, so they should consider other courses. Perhaps an intended exchange opportunity may not be available in a given year, so they should consider another destination or form of experiential learning. *Students should consider and write down alternative options that will enable them to achieve your learning goals in the case that their original learning plan needs to change.*

B) Intellectual Autobiography (by the end of Year 3)

The *Intellectual Autobiography* is required. It is an opportunity for students to reflect on how they found their passion (the theme of their concentration) and how they would like to further develop it. It is an opportunity to reflect on their values, strengths, areas for further development, alongside hopes, dreams and aspirations. This will *usually* take the form of an essay of 1000-1200 words, but students can present this using other media (e.g., video presentation). Although there is flexibility in approaching these areas of reflection, students should consider the following key questions:

Passions and Interests	Goals and Ambitions	Holistic Development
What made me decide to study the BASc?	What are my educational and career goals?	What are my strengths?
Why is interdisciplinarity important to me?	Have these goals changed along the way, and if so, how?	What areas of myself do I wish to develop further?
What subjects have I been most interested in?	What kind of ideal future do I wish to work towards?	What experiences have shaped the kind of person/learner that I am, and the goals that I have?
What are some of my passions outside of academia?	What kind of ideal world do I wish to live in?	What kind of person do I wish to become, in the process of becoming educated?
What skills have I enjoyed using the most?		
What issues facing my local/global community have most interested me, and why?		

It is not compulsory to answer all questions. Instead, we hope students can use some of these to delve into the personal/professional/academic aspects of students' lives. This process may help students understand better who they are as people; as intellectuals with unique passions, interests, goals and ambitions that matter in the process of becoming educated.

C) 60+ Credits Across Relevant Courses (taken throughout your degree)

As courses comprise the major building blocks of students' formal studies, we expect students to include at least 60 credits (with at least 24 coming from the pathways), chosen across majors/minors/electives or Common Core Courses related to their concentration. The courses should align with the learning goals they have set in their learning plan, and planned in a way that allows them to build up knowledge and skills gradually (not all in two terms, for example). Note that internships and capstone courses for other majors are not counted towards these 60 credits.

D) Relevant Capstone Project (for BASC4001)

As its name suggests, the Interdisciplinary Capstone Course (BASC4001) and project is the summative (and arguably, most important) element of students' degrees. It is an opportunity to integrate the knowledge and skills they have learnt over the course of their studies.

As some students may face difficulties in coming to an agreement with their capstone supervisors on their most preferred topic, the capstone topic need not be identical to students' concentration. Nonetheless, students should clearly articulate the capstone topics' relevance to the interdisciplinary area represented by their concentration.

Is there a template that students can follow?

There are currently no templates beyond the guidelines suggested here. However, there will be some examples of Concentration Portfolios on the website (including those currently being developed by students). As each students' passions/interest are different, so too may be the modes of presentation for their concentration portfolios. Students should not shy away from being the first to walk their own paths!

See Appendix A at the end of this document for some examples.

Suggested Timeline

When should students complete their Concentration Portfolio?

A Concentration Portfolio is not a necessary requirement for graduation in the BASc programme. As such, this is a voluntary piece of work that is designed to enhance the BASc journey. Students can choose to declare a concentration at any time from the **second year onwards until the end of students' first semester in their final year**. We advise students to complete most of the concentration requirements and components *prior to the end of their third year*, so that it can act as a planning document for their capstone project.

Is the portfolio set in stone once it is complete?

The BASc programme values flexibility. We provide students the space to change their concentration as they continue their intellectual journeys. As such, the exact content and title of the concentration, and the plans within, can change up until the end of first semester of the final year. Until this point, students should work with their advisor and the Programme Director to make revisions to the Concentration Portfolios as needed.

How do students make changes to the portfolio?

In accordance with the spirit of this being a living document, we encourage students to update their original Concentration Portfolios by adding suggested changes to it. This means that current and future students can see the entire portfolio process, and not just the result. Students can create a separate document that finalises changes made throughout their study.

How will the Concentration Portfolio be reviewed?

As much as possible, we will try to stick to this timeline:

- 1) **Preparation** in consultation with peers, advisors and the programme director.
- 2) **Submission for peer review** where, in small groups of other students 'concentrating' at that time, students will review each other's portfolios and contribute one thing that they liked and one thing that they would change/clarify in a revised document. These meetings will be chaired by the Programme Director and/or academic advisors to ensure that there is fair and constructive discussion. This process ensures that even as students are 'concentrating', they are still mindful of the broader context in which students' degrees are being constructed.
- 3) **Revise** the portfolio.
- 4) **Public (within-BASc) consultation period**, where students can make their portfolio available for viewing/commenting by the broader BASc community (optional).
- 5) **Submit portfolio to advisor**, who will offer feedback. Students can then make any necessary revisions.
- 6) **Submit to the Programme Director** for final review and confirmation.
- 7) The Dean and Programme Director will then assess and approve the portfolio, enabling students to use their chosen title in communications and in their resumé.

Other Questions

Will the portfolio be available to others?

Our intention is for the portfolio to be an open, living document. As such, when a student completes their portfolio, our preference would be that they should upload it to Drive and make it shareable to others on the BASc. However, we understand some students may value privacy, in which case they can store their portfolio privately and make it available only to their advisor.

What are “Other Learning Experiences”?

Students can include work and volunteer experiences and experiential learning trips (for example) where they have developed knowledge and skills related to their concentration. This will strengthen the coherence of the concentration ‘across the curriculum’ and is highly recommended to be included, where possible.

What is the role of the academic advisor within the formulation of the Concentration Portfolio?

BASc students should have regular meetings with their academic advisor, who can help them reflect on their studies and shape their study plan. The Concentration Portfolio is an independent piece of work for which students can consult with their advisor the Programme Director. Students are free to seek advice when drafting any section of the Concentration Portfolio, such as the content of the intellectual autobiography and learning plans.

Will my chosen title appear on my transcript?

This will not be possible as the University cannot create ‘official’ degrees for every student. However, the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences has agreed to ratify any titles approved by the programme director, empowering you to feel confident that you can use these titles in your CV and other official correspondences such as applications for jobs and further studies.

Appendix A: Sample BASc Curriculum and Concentration Portfolios

Major in Interdisciplinary Studies (Concentration in Youth Mental Health)* with a Minor in Counselling	Major in Interdisciplinary Studies (Concentration in Cosmetic Science)* with a Minor in Science Entrepreneurship
<p>Learning Goals (for the Learning Plan):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (A) To develop knowledge and skills of assessment and intervention to better understand ways to support young peoples' mental health - (B) To learn about biological, psychological and sociocultural factors that influence human development in different societies <p>Relevant Courses**:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CCGL9007 – Youth in a Global World (B) - CCST9025 – Genetics and Human Nature (B) - SOCI1003 – Introduction to Anthropology (B) - SOWK2137 – Theories in Counselling (A) - SOWK3091 – Mental Health Sciences and Society (A/B) - SOWK3093 – Play Therapy (B) - PSYC2002 – Psychological Testing and Measurement (A) - JAPN2090 – Growing up in Japan: Youth, Culture and Society (B) - BIOL1309 – Evolutionary Diversity (B) - PSYC2101 – Foundations of Neuroscience (B) <p>Exchange Nagoya University (B) – learning experientially about different cultures and norms in Japanese society</p> <p>Internship Youth NGO in Hong Kong (e.g. Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong) (A)</p>	<p>Learning Goals (for the Learning Plan):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (A) To understand the biological and chemical mechanisms of action for developing effective skincare products - (B) To design ideas for a new skincare brand/company that combines traditional Chinese medicine and Western science <p>Relevant Courses**:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BIOL1110 – From molecules to cells (A) - CHEM1042 – General Chemistry I (A) - CHEM1043 – General Chemistry II (A) - CHEM2441 – Organic Chemistry I (A) - CHEM3441 – Organic Chemistry II (A) - CHEM4145 – Medicinal Chemistry (A) - CCHU9012 – Body, Beauty and Fashion (B) - CCCH9029: Ideas and Practices of Healing Arts in Traditional Chinese Medicine (B) - GEND1001 – Introduction to Gender Studies (B) - SOCI2019 – Modern Culture & Lifestyles (B) - ENTR3001 – Science-based Innovation Development (B) <p>Other Learning Experiences Science Entrepreneurship Seminar Series (B) – an 11-part series to learn knowledge and skills related to starting new business ventures</p> <p>Extra-Curricular Activities ACCA Business Competition (B)</p>

* These are just two examples of how a learning plan could be developed, and do not represent the only ways to design a concentration in these interdisciplinary areas.

** Listing courses alone does not necessarily show relevance to the concentration. This must be explained and elaborated upon in the Concentration Portfolio, with proof of relevant topics studied and assessments conducted.