

Union Institute & University
Bachelor of Arts Program

Culminating Study Guidelines

Overview

Culminator is the B.A. Program term for a learner in his or her final independent term of study. The *culminating study* refers to the academic work accomplished during a final term. The culminating study ordinarily grows out of the B.A. concentration. Students pursue in-depth study, demonstrating the skills expected of a college graduate by producing a written document that is presented in academic form, clearly written, logically organized, researched, and appropriately documented.

What follows are content, format, and submission guidelines for the culminating study.

Content

The culminating study evolves out of your progress through the program and ordinarily demonstrates advanced and focused work in your concentration area. As with previous studies, culminating studies require the equivalent of at least 16 books of new reading for a 12-credit study; 20 books for a 15 credit study; 27 for a 20 credit culminating study. You may, however, make reference to ideas that you have explored in prior semesters, building on them and/or including specific references you read before the culminating term.

Your final document will become part of UI&U Library's permanent collection as an electronic document. Instructions for converting your final product into an electronic document are at the end of these guidelines. The document must follow the format below:

Components of the Final Document:

Abstract. The abstract is a short (one page maximum) summary of the document, similar to an expanded table of contents. It should include a statement of purpose and a sentence or two describing each chapter or section. It should be single-spaced.

Preface. The culminating study begins here with reflection on and evaluation of your educational journey. The preface provides an opportunity to place the final study in the context of your previous B.A. Program work, and, where relevant, in the context of other educational and/or life experiences that have contributed to your journey to this point. To that end, it may:

- tell the story of your progress to and through the program
- explain how you arrived at this particular culminating study project

Focusing on your concentration and degree criteria #3 and #7, the preface should also include a discussion of how you understand your ethical and social responsibilities as an educated person in your field and how you place yourself in the global community, explaining briefly how your educational journey has shaped that understanding.

Body of Work. The body of the work can take one of two basic forms:

- A document of at least 10,000 words (*EIC: 40 pages x 250 words/page*) of finished writing demonstrating the learning you accomplished in your final independent study term. Going beyond merely reporting, it includes reflection upon new information you absorbed this term, reflection upon the scholarly ideas you studied, and reflection on your learning process. The document should cite or quote directly authors whose concerns are germane to your work, with appropriate acknowledgement in a “works cited” or “references” section. Note that these studies may also include creative studio work, a hybrid between this format and the one explained below.
- A studio study which includes both studio work and writing. The final product consists of an essay of at least 5,000 words where you reflect on your own creative process and the work you accomplished; on the genre or medium used, including the most substantive issues it posed for you; and on the scholarly ideas you studied this term, above and beyond your own work. This reflective essay must include citations and/or direct quotations from authors whose concerns are germane to your work, with appropriate acknowledgement in a “works cited” or “references” section. In addition to the essay, the studio work, such as photographs, paintings, sculpture, short stories, non-fiction essays,

Note: Page numbers may appear at the top or bottom, middle or right side of the page. The positioning of page numbers must be consistent throughout the document.

b. Title Page

The following should be centered and spaced to fill the page:

Title of the study.
Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of Bachelor of Arts at Union Institute & University

Learner's name
Date

Faculty Advisor: Faculty Advisor's name

Second Reader

All final products are reviewed by a faculty advisor who did not advise the study. Ordinarily, a final draft of the document must be in the second reader's possession by 10 days to two weeks before the final submission of the document to the program. [You will be advised of the exact date during your culminating term.] The second reader's response goes directly to your faculty advisor; you will receive second reader feedback including any recommended changes, from your faculty advisor. At the faculty meeting where completed culminating studies are presented, your faculty advisor shares the faculty transcript evaluation, and your second reader comments on the study and may have suggestions about the evaluation.

Culminating Presentation

At the end of the culminating term, you will make a presentation to the entire learning community based on your study. For residency options, such presentations generally are scheduled to last 50 minutes, with 10 minutes for questions and discussion.

Keep in mind the following guidelines:

- The presentation can't possibly cover everything you did and learned this semester. Be selective. Think about what is the most important learning for you and what will be of interest to and educate your audience.
- The most important part of your presentation should be your ideas, discoveries and/or creative products—how you arrived at your conclusions and how you supported them in your academic or creative work. Focus on teaching that content.
- Avoid extravagant technological shows that consume hours of preparation time. We are more interested in you – your mind, thoughts and feelings – and less interested in the bells and whistles of technology (which sometimes fail).
- Online learners should keep their level of technological comfort and resources in mind. Culminating presentations can consist of appropriate written documents, such as chapters or essays from the final document, with suitable introduction and discussion material. Avoid trying out techniques that are new to you, especially at the last minute of the semester. Have a Plan B ready in case your PowerPoint slide show won't upload. (Remember, satellite connections upload very slowly. Images should be re-sized to shorten loading time.)
- Online learners should be mindful of human attention spans (about 20 minutes, perhaps less in front of a screen). More is not necessarily better.

Submitting your Culminating Study Document to the Program Office in Portable Document Format (PDF)

The B.A. Program requires you to submit the final product of your culminating study as a PDF file, a format that retains all the elements of a printed document as an electronic image which you can view, navigate, print, or send to someone else. PDF files are created using Adobe Acrobat, or similar programs. A PDF file can be opened in a Web browser like Internet Explorer using the free Adobe Reader software, whether one uses a Mac or Windows-based computer.

What follows are instructions for submitting your final document and methods for converting your document to a PDF file.

Finalizing and Submitting your Faculty-Approved Document to the Program Office

1. Following agreement between you and your advisor on the final version of your culminating study document in proper format following the guidelines above, convert the document to a PDF according to the instructions provided below.
2. Check to make sure the PDF version of your final product is what you expect it to be: send the PDF as an attachment to your own e-mail address, open the PDF file, and review it carefully.
3. E-mail your complete, faculty-approved PDF document as an attachment to the Assistant Director who coordinates your enrollment option (see below). Include your faculty advisor's e-mail address on the message to your enrollment option's Assistant Director. Ensure that your attached document file is named according to the following convention:
yourlastname_yourfirstname.pdf
 - a. For B.A. Online: christine.estabrook@myunion.edu
 - b. For Montpelier Weekend: melissa.neilson@myunion.edu
 - c. For Brattleboro Weekend: sharon.sprague@myunion.edu
 - d. For Cycle: gail.macdonald@myunion.edu
3. If your advisor approves your final document as submitted, s/he will verify, via e-mail, the acceptance of your work for the program office. If there is a problem with the submission, s/he will contact you to clarify what you need to do to resolve the problem.
4. Make corrections as needed and repeat steps 1, 2 and 3.
5. When your faculty-approved culminating study document has been received by the program office, you will receive a confirmation e-mail from the Assistant Director. The confirmation e-mail will include information about the digital archiving of your work and instructions for locating your document on a Gary Library database.

Instructions for Converting Your Document to Portable Document Format (PDF)

Free PDF Creator - PrimoPDF

One way to convert your final paper document to PDF is to use PrimoPDF, free software available on the Web. This software converts an existing electronic file to a PDF file. Information about this software is available at <http://www.primopdf.com/>. Directions for how to download, install and use PrimoPDF can be found at <http://www.primopdf.com/free-pdf-userguide.asp>. Once you have installed the

software you can convert any document (Word, Excel, etc.) to PDF by choosing the “print” command for your file and selecting the PrimoPDF “printing” option. The document will not actually print but will convert to PDF format and will allow you to choose a name for your PDF document. Within this process, you must name your file according to the following convention: **yourlastname_yourfirstname.pdf**

Here are directions for converting to PDF with the free software download:

1. In the document-authoring program you have used to create your final product and with the final product’s file open, select **File>Print**. The **Print** dialog window appears.
2. In the **Name:** field at the top of the print window, select the **PrimoPDF** option from the list of available printers.
3. At the bottom of the print window, click **OK**. A dialog window for PDF conversion will appear.
4. Choose your **PDF Settings** by clicking on one of the radio buttons in the middle of the dialog window for PDF conversion. For your culminating study document you should choose **Screen**.
5. Near the bottom of the window, click the box to the right of the **Save As:** field.
 - a. Choose a location on your computer to save your PDF file.
 - b. In the **Save As:** field, give your file a name according to the following convention: **yourlastname_yourfirstname** (The symbol between the names is an underscore.)
6. Click **OK** to save the document as PDF. Once you save your file as a PDF you will not be able to make changes to it unless you purchase the Adobe Acrobat software mentioned in the section following this one.

For information about valuable security features of the free PrimoPDF software, such as the ability to create secure PDFs with 40-/128-bit encryption, visit the Web pages of the UI&U Instructional Technology Office: <http://faculty.tui.edu/it/>

Full Version of Adobe Acrobat Software

To edit PDF documents and benefit from other advanced features, you may purchase your own full version of Adobe Acrobat software. View the following Web page to see a chart comparing the various features in versions of Adobe Acrobat:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/matrix.html>

Via JourneyEd, Union Institute & University faculty, staff and learners may purchase Adobe Acrobat at an academic discount when they show proof of employment or enrollment:

<http://www.journeyed.com>

Macintosh Users

Macintosh computers running on version 10 operating systems have the ability to create PDF files from most of their applications. This means you can convert your text document directly from the application you are working in. Instead of using the “Save As” feature, you will have to “print” to a file by clicking on **File** from the menu bar and then **Print** from the drop down menu. Within the **Print** dialog box that appears you will find a button titled **Save as PDF**. Once you save your file as a PDF you will not be able to make changes to it unless you purchase the full version of Adobe Acrobat software noted above.

If you need to convert paper for inclusion in the final PDF document

If you have paper elements to include in the electronic version of your final product, such as photographs or drawings, you should follow one of the two options listed here.

- a. Have your paper professionally scanned instead of converting it to PDF yourself. Bring a complete version of your final product, including the elements not originally created in electronic form, to a copy center or office supply store for scanning to PDF format.
- b. Publish audio and/or visual elements of your culminating study on the Web. This can be done either on your own Web page or on an image or video hosting Web site such as Flickr or Shutterfly. If you choose this option, be sure to include the Web address for your work in an appropriate place within the final product you submit electronically to the program office. You should also be aware of the Web hosting service’s policies regarding short- and long-term access to your work. Please include any relevant notices of this nature alongside the Web address in your final product.

Whom to Contact for Help

If you have computer technology questions, please contact the **Information Technology Help Desk**. Help Desk hours and contact information are as follows:

Monday thru Thursday: 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Eastern Time

Fridays: 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Eastern Time

Toll-free:

888-85 UNION (888-858-6466) or

888-899-8501

help@myunion.edu

For questions that do not pertain to computer technology issues, please contact the program Assistant Director who is your primary degree progress counselor. Names and e-mail addresses for the four Assistant Directors appear on page 6 of this document.