

Bridging Disciplines Programs

Integration Essay Guidelines

To complete your BDP and earn your certificate, you must write a 3-4 page integration essay that draws together the various parts of your experience.

You might think of your integration essay as the **roadmap** to your BDP—your opportunity to **reflect** for yourself and **articulate** for others how your coursework, your research and internship experiences, and your other experiences on and off campus have together shaped your intellectual and professional interests, accomplishments, and goals.

REFLECT FOR YOURSELF

Writing is not just putting down on paper what you already know; rather, the writing process can be a powerful means of coming to a deeper, more sophisticated understanding of what you know and believe. Your integration essay is a piece of reflective writing through which you should come to a more sophisticated understanding of what your BDP experience has taught you.

You might think of your BDP application essay as the first step in a longer process of defining yourself as an interdisciplinarian. Your integration essay is the culmination of this process, and it should allow you to reflect on how you've grown and changed through your experiences in the BDP and at UT.

ARTICULATE FOR OTHERS

The integration essay is very similar to two other kinds of writing you will have to do as you continue in your academic and professional careers: the personal statement you write for graduate school applications, and the cover letter you write for job applications. In all of these types of writing, you have the challenging task of telling an outsider in a short piece of writing not only *what* you have accomplished, but also *who* you are and *how* you will be a valuable addition to the program or organization. Your integration essay should be able to tell someone who doesn't already know you what you have accomplished in your BDP and what those accomplishments tell about you.

INTEGRATING YOUR BDP EXPERIENCE

As the name suggests, the primary purpose of the integration essay is to integrate, or draw connections among the disparate experiences and disciplinary perspectives that you have brought together through your BDP. Some of the questions you should consider as you write your essay include:

- How has your BDP allowed you to make connections across different disciplinary perspectives?
- What issues, problems, or questions related to your BDP topic have you been able to understand more fully by seeing them from multiple perspectives?
- How have your research and/or internship experiences connected to your BDP coursework? What has this first-hand experience taught you that the coursework could not? And conversely, how has what you've learned in class made you a stronger researcher or intern?
- Has your BDP experience impacted your future career goals? How?
- How has your BDP connected to your major? What have you learned through the BDP that you would have missed if you had not had this experience?

GUIDELINES FOR YOUR ESSAY

1. Your integration essay is due to the BDP office no later than the deadline for applying to graduate from the university in your last semester at UT. (Please consult the BDP web site or office for the actual deadline during the semester you plan to graduate.) You may either drop off a hard copy at the front desk in FAC 33, or you may email your essay as a Word (.doc) attachment to bdp@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

2. Your essay will be read by the BDP staff and by members of the faculty panel for your BDP. Please keep in mind that the faculty members are part of your audience.

3. If the faculty panel determines that your essay does not reflect the level of knowledge, understanding, or articulation expected for earning the BDP certificate, you may be asked to revise your essay. The integration essay is a requirement for earning your certificate.

4. We will be reading your essay with the following criteria in mind:

- ***Essay is well-written.*** Both in terms of structure and organization, and at the sentence level, your essay must be clearly and effectively written for the appropriate audience.
- ***Essay demonstrates disciplinary awareness.*** Your essay should refer to disciplines relevant to your BDP focus, referring to questions or issues that might be addressed through a particular discipline and demonstrating understanding of disciplinary perspectives, tools, or methods.
- ***Essay demonstrates interdisciplinary awareness and ability to think comparatively across disciplines.*** Your essay should bring together the perspectives offered by more than one discipline relevant to your BDP focus, demonstrating understanding of the perspectives, methodologies, and knowledge offered by different disciplines related to your subject and showing how awareness of multiple disciplines has helped you to understand the subject in a more sophisticated way.
- ***Essay demonstrates ability to transfer knowledge and skills from one context to another.*** Your essay should articulate how knowledge you have gained in one context has impacted your understanding in another. You might discuss how what you have learned in the classroom has been useful in your hands-on connecting experiences, or you might describe how your connecting experiences have enlarged your understanding of something learned in the classroom.
- ***Essay demonstrates self-reflection.*** Your essay should reflect on how your interests have developed through your BDP and other UT experience, including how your experience has helped you shape or refine your goals for the future.
- ***Essay demonstrates understanding of the BDP subject.*** Your essay should discuss issues related to questions, knowledge, or skills relevant to the BDP subject, showing an understanding of what it means to study the BDP topic.

5. Use examples in your essay to give specificity to your discussion.